INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY STUDIES:  
HISTORY, RIGHTS, JUSTICE, AND INCLUSION  
Spring 2023  
37:575:265

NOTE: This is a draft syllabus and not all guest lectures have been confirmed yet—some of the dates may be rearranged based on instructor availability.

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This course is an introduction to disability studies with a multidisciplinary perspective. It will explore economic, historical, political, cultural, and legal forces that have shaped social policy and the experiences of people with disabilities. We will study classic and current writings and videos on topics that include work and the labor market; attitudes, stigma, and discrimination; gender and race; politics and the disability rights movement; how people with disabilities are portrayed in the media; participation in arts and sports; accessibility of the built environment; the role of technology; and community and political engagement.

The study of disability can teach us not just about one particular group, but also about how society understands and responds to human variation and diversity in general. Through the lens of disability, we will explore assumptions about how society is structured, how those assumptions shape institutions and policies, and how society can be changed to improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups. The course should also help to strengthen your ability to read for analytical insight, summarize texts, pick out key ideas, and discuss and debate ideas in groups.

Classwork and Preparation for Class

This is a remote synchronous class that meets Mondays 10:20-1:20. The assigned readings and videos are on the Canvas website.

If you have a health problem or other emergency that requires you to miss a class, please inform me of the situation before the class if possible, or as soon after the class as you can. If you need a disability accommodation, I will be glad to make reasonable accommodations if you provide some documentation at the beginning of the semester or as soon as the condition develops.

It is important to participate in discussions and group activities. Explain your views. Don’t be afraid to ask questions! Also listen – don’t monopolize the discussion or ignore other views.
Requirements

1. Two current events stories on disability to be presented and discussed in class (10% of overall grade).

You will bring to class two different current items that involve people with disabilities. These items can be newspaper articles, magazine articles, web-based material, pictures of situations that impact on the lives of people with disabilities, and summaries of scenarios that involve people with disabilities. Your two submissions will be accepted from now until the last day of class. The original article should be submitted with a brief, half-page summary of why you chose that particular item.

2. Research paper (8-10 pages, more if you want) (20% of overall grade).

This paper will be on one of the topics we have covered that you find especially interesting, or on another disability-related topic. This paper should: a) summarize the main points, b) relate it to other relevant readings, including at least one book or article from outside the syllabus, c) evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the authors' arguments, and d) relate it to your own experiences or current events if relevant. You should submit your proposed paper topic in the class after the midterm. The full paper is due on xxx.

You should submit papers on Canvas. The Canvas site will submit papers to Turnitin.com to ensure that they are original and there is no plagiarism. Late papers will be downgraded by a third of a grade (e.g., A to A-) for 1-2 days late, two-thirds of a grade (e.g., A to B+) for 3-4 days late, and a full grade for 5 or more days late.

3. Two exams (40% of overall grade)

The first exam will cover the readings and presentations in the first half of the course, and the second exam will cover readings and presentation in the second half of the course (it will not be cumulative).

4. Class participation (20% of overall grade).

This course emphasizes student participation. There will be two types of participation: in-class discussions, and on-line discussion forums. All students are expected to attend class prepared to discuss the readings and participate in discussions.

There will be eight discussion forums, where you will be given a discussion question, and everyone is required to respond to the question as well as to two posts from your classmates. You need to participate in at least six of the eight forums. Extra credit will be given if you participate in more than six forums.

5. Choice of either:
a) Measuring exercise to determine ADA compliance of buildings (10% of overall grade)

Using the “ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal” (available on Sakai), with a tape measure and checklist that you will be given in class, you will pick a public building on the Rutgers campus or another location, and see if it complies with ADA requirements for accessibility. The completed checklist should be turned in by week 13.

b) Self-guided walkability audit looking at path of travel, say from the train station or bus stop to an RU Building, to be turned in by week 13 (10% of overall grade)

Readings and Videos

There are about 50-60 pages of reading in each week, plus videos. The readings and videos are available on the Canvas website. If you have any problems accessing the material please let me know.

Note: This draft illustrates the topics and material we will cover but this may change as guest lecturers add suggestions.

The topics are clustered under four broad headings:

A. Introduction (weeks 1 to 4)
B. Economic and Political Inclusion (weeks 5 to 8)
C. Social Inclusion (weeks 9 to 11)
D. Sports, Recreation, and Creative Arts (weeks 12 to 14)
A. INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (Class on January 23rd): Introduction

Videos for discussion on students with disabilities

Reading:
Joseph Shapiro, “Disability Pride: The High Expectations of a New Generation,” New York Times, July 17, 2020. (Note: there is also a 12 minute audio version available at this site.)

Non-graded discussion forum: Meet your learning community

Optional:

Week 2 (Class on January 30th): Stigma, Models of Disability, and Measurement

Discussion forum: Who has a disability?

Readings:
Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed
Ch. 1, pp. 1-26 (“Changing Views of Disability,” “Plan of Book,” “Models of Disability” “Measuring Disability”), and Ch. 5, pp. 118-121 (“Social Stigma”)


Video:
Stella Young, “I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much”

Optional:


Week 3 (Class on February 6): History of Disability and Disability Studies

Guest lecturer: Rich Cairn, Director, Emerging America, Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program at Collaborative for Education Services
Discussion forum: Questions on history of disability

Readings:

Ed Roberts, “Celebrating a Disability Rights Milestone: Ed Roberts' 504 Victory Speech” April 30, 1977

Can also listen to audio recording at Victory Speeches and Protest Songs | Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability (sfsu.edu)


Video:
“Abandoned to Their Fate”

Optional:
Disability History Museum, “Rev. Thomas Gallaudet,”

Dorothea Dix, Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts. (1843).
https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=737&page=all

https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=1123

Week 4 (Class on February 13): Intersectionality and Disability

Guest lecturer: Sarah Orsak, Doctoral candidate, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies

Readings:
Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed? Ch. 6 pp. 156-193 (“Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Disability”)

Erevelles, Nirmala, and Andrea Minear. “Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality.” Journal of Literary &


“Since Slavery Black Disabled Separated from Black Community,” 1 page

Videos:
“The Beauty of Disability”
“Murderball”

**B. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INCLUSION**

**Week 5 (Class on February 20): Employment and Economic Inclusion**

Guest lecturer: Professor Douglas Kruse, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University

Discussion forum: How to reduce barriers to employment for people with disabilities?

Readings:

Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, *People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed?* Ch. 2 pp. 27-49 (“Economic Inclusion”)  
Ch. 3 excerpt pp. 64-75 (“A Closer Look at Employment”)

Video:
“Why is job opportunity still lagging for people with disabilities?” *PBS NewsHour*, *Mar 16, 2017*
Week 6 (Class on February 27): Management and Social Psychology

Guest lecturer: Professor Mason Ameri, Rutgers Business School

Readings:

Magdalena Zawisza, “The terrifying power of stereotypes – and how to deal with them,” The Conversation, August 28, 2018.


Optional:


Week 7 (Class on March 6): Disability Law: The Rehab Act and the ADA

Readings:
Definition of disability
Twomey pp. 553-564, 567-570, 783-787, 789-792
Cook v. State of Rhode Island (obesity)
Horgan v. Simmons (HIV positive)
Ellison v. Software Spectrum (cancer)
EEOC, “Notice Concerning The ADA Amendments Act of 2008”
Barlow v. Walgreen’s (back pain)
“Otherwise-qualified” for employment position
Treadwell v. Alexander (otherwise-qualified)
Palmer v. Circuit Court (direct threat defense)

Reasonable accommodations
Twomey pp. 564-567, 571-574
Huber v. Wal-Mart (reasonable accommodation)

In Class Mock Trial Exercise

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 13

Week 8 (Class on March 20): Political Inclusion and Disability Activism

Guest lecturers:
Professor Cynthia Simon, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University
Jim Dickson, National Council on Independent Living
Michelle Bishop, National Disability Rights Network

Readings:
Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed?
Ch. 4, pp. 86-116 (“Political Inclusion”)


Video:
Sarah Barton, “Defiant Lives”

Optional:

Review for first exam
C. SOCIAL INCLUSION

Week 9 (Class on March 27): Social Inclusion, Computer and Online Access, Violence and Incarceration
Guest lecturer: Professor Mason Ameri, Rutgers Business School

Readings:
Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed? Ch. 5, pp. 117-118, 121-133, 137-142 (“Social Inclusion”)


Alison Frankel, “11th Circuit’s Winn-Dixie ruling deepens confusion on ADA and digital access,” Reuters, April 8, 2021.


Videos:
Mason Ameri, “Fear of the Unknown: The Risky Side of First Impressions,” TEDxRutgers, April 24, 2019.

“Sex abuse against people with disabilities is widespread -- and hard to uncover,” PBS NewsHour, January 17, 2018.

First Exam

Week 10 (Class on April 3): Access to the Built Environment and Universal Design

Guest lecturers:
Dr. Jennifer Senick, Rutgers Center for Green Building, Bloustein School
Karen Alexander, Director, New Jersey Travel Independence Program, Bloustein School

Assignment: Either
(a) use the “ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal” to assess a public building at Rutgers or elsewhere, or
(b) do a walkability audit

Readings:
Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, *People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed?* Chapter 5 pp. 142-146 (“Accessibility and Universal Design”)

“Chapter One: The Psychopathology of Everyday Things” pp. 1-19
“Chapter Six: Design Thinking, Designing for Special People”, pp. 243-247

National Council on Disability, “Transportation Update: Where We've Gone and What We've Learned”


Full report (link to be updated): Transportation Update: Where We've Gone and What We've Learned | NCD.gov


“Introduction,” pp. 1-4
“Understanding the Spectrum of Human Abilities,” pp. 16-30

Optional:
one or more case studies presented in Chapter 4 at http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/pubs_p/pudfiletoc.htm.

**Week 11 (Class on April 10): Education**

Guest lecturers:
Robin Roscigno, Doctoral candidate, Rutgers Graduate School of Education
Kathy Loder-Murphy, Assistant Director, Rutgers Office of Disability Services
Lorren Whitaker, Coordinator, Rutgers Office of Disability Services

Discussion forum: Inclusive and Exclusive Practices at Rutgers

Readings:

Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, *People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed?* Chapter 5 pp. 146-155 (“Education”)


Videos (choose two):

- Struggling in College? 3 Steps to Student Accommodations
- Learning Disability in Higher Education... Lexie Garrity, TEDxVanderbiltUniversity
- Transitioning To College with a Disability
- Overcoming Ableism: What You Don't Know As An Able Bodied Person | Naty Rico | TEDxUCIrvine

**D. SPORTS, RECREATION and CREATIVE ARTS:**

**Week 12 (Class on April 17): Sports and Recreation**

**Guest lecturer:**
Professor Javier Robles, Kinesiology and Health Department

**Readings:**


**Videos:**
Real Champions: Charles - YouTube

Week 13 (Class on April 24): Creative Arts and Expression

Guest lecturers:
Professor Jeff Friedman, Dance Department, Mason Gross School of the Arts
Ellen Williams, Department of 4-H Youth Development, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Poetry:

Autobiography:
Lehrer, Riva. “Prologue” (audio excerpt) and “Chapters 1-10,” pp. 5-72. In Golem Girl: A Memoir (New York City: One World Press, 2020) (For access to 4’49” prologue audio excerpt and print excerpt, go to: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/605368/golem-girl-by-riva-lehrer/

Please read or watch at least three of the following six readings and videos.

Music:

Performance Art:

Mixed-ability Performance:

Theater:
Dance:


**Week 14 (Class on May 1): Media Representations**

Discussion forum: Find and post at least one image of a person with a disability from a movie, ad, commercial, or video, and explain how it fits into discussions we’ve had

Readings:
Ace Metrix, “Disabilities in Advertising: Representation is on the Rise.”


Videos:

“Total Permission: Push Me Collection, London 2012”
“I Have 99 Problems and Disability is Only One”
Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon

Review for second exam

**Week 15 (Exam period, no class)**

Second exam
Paper due