

FRESHMAN SEMINAR: DISABILITY & SOCIETY

230.108

Fall 2009

Tuesdays & Thursdays 3pm-4:15pm
Instructor: Christian Villenas
Office Hours: Thursdays-2pm or by appointment

Hodson 216
McCauley
E-mail: cvillenas@jhu.edu

Course Objectives: Over the last several decades disability has not only emerged as an important medical concern, but also as a social, political, economic, and cultural issue with its own unique biography. Disability has evolved from an issue of compassion toward the sick and disabled to a civil rights campaign supporting the fair and equal treatment of people with disabilities under the law. Embedded within this transition has been a shift in societal perceptions on disability and the people who experience them. Historically though, society, and consequently, scholars on disability have considered disability an experience deviant to the standard ways of life. Attitudes and behaviors toward disability have, thus, been dictated the perception that disability is a medical condition that must be treated or abolished. Only recently has research on disability made possible a shift in ideology, whereby disability is treated as social phenomenon instead of a medical or individual deficit.

This seminar is designed to introduce students to, and examine the medical and human state of disability. It is structured to give students basic insight into how disability is defined, experienced, and understood in modern society, and to provide an introduction to the study of disability. Specifically, the course examines this phenomenon by considering:

- Definitions and categorizations of disability.
- Demographic trends of disability.
- Key traditional and contemporary theories relevant to the sociological study of disability.
- The experiences of disability throughout the life course and in various social institutions.
- The relative experiences and depictions of persons with different types of disabilities.
- The benefits and detriments of government policies and programs used to enhance the quality of live or offer legal protection to persons with disabilities.
- The formation and implications of the disability rights movement.

To address these issues, much of the course will be guided by the following questions:

- What is disability? Who is disabled? Where is disability most prevalent?
- Which disability groups are included (or excluded) in the present discourse on disability?
- How has medicine and social science addressed disability in the past? How does current scholarship on disability challenge these conventions?
- What does disability require of society?
- What does disability require of traditional and contemporary sociological theories?
- How are societal institutions (i.e. schools, work, etc.) involved in the construction and maintenance of disability?
- What is the connection between scholarly conceptions of disability and the conceptions of activists and policymakers?
- What does disability require of policymakers and policy initiatives?

Course Format: This course will be in lecture and seminar format, as well as have an online component. Your major contributions to the class will be student-led discussions regarding the assigned readings, as well as a mid-term project, and online discussions. You are expected to come to class having read ALL the readings assigned the previous week.

Ethics Policy: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of students and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>) for more information.

Course Requirements: In addition to adhering to the ethics policy above, the following is required of each student:

Requirements	Grade Distribution
Weekly Discussion Questions/Comments (3 weekly)	10%
Class Participation	15%
Response Papers (2 papers, 2 pgs single-spaced)	20%
Poster Presentation/Executive Summary	25%
Final Paper (10-15pgs)	30%
Total	100%

Assignments:

WEEKLY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/COMMENTS (10%). Students are required to submit three discussion questions or comments each week based on the preceding week’s readings. Questions/comments must be submitted via WebCT (webct.jhu.edu) at least 48 hours prior to the start of discussion. Please be advised that questions/comments will be graded based on their ability to incite thoughtful class discussion as well as their relevance to the subject matter of the course and the assigned readings. You are provided with one grace week for submitting the discussion questions/comments.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (15%).

Students can add to their participation grade in three ways.

In class (5%). Attendance in class and participation in class discussions is an important component of this course, and is a way for you to demonstrate your understanding of issues raised in the readings. Students are expected to contribute to every class discussion. Thus, you

need to read and think about the required readings so that you will be prepared to critically discuss them in class. Students are also encouraged to show in class that they have read and considered the readings, and are able to critically comment on them.

Discussion Board (5%). Students are also encouraged to engage in discussions outside of class, via our WebCT discussion board, regarding issues of disability. Students may use the discussion board to inform the class about current events, hot topics, or community events surrounding issues in disability. The discussion board may also be used to post questions to the class or reflect back on material presented throughout the course.

Current events (5%). Beginning in Week 3 students should consider bringing to class a recent newspaper/magazine article that touches upon a disability-related topic or issue we have addressed in class. You will be expected to give the class a brief summary of the article as well as your thoughts. You are not required to bring in an article every week, but throughout the semester, you should have had presented at least twice.

RESPONSE PAPERS (20%). Students are required to write 2 response papers (2 single-spaced pgs ea.) each to critically comment on required readings for one week. Students may comment on any week's readings. In all cases, papers will be due at the beginning of class during the week which we discuss the readings. Papers should identify how the readings relate to each other, and how they support or contradict each other. More importantly, papers should evaluate the usefulness of each reading for adding to an understanding of the subject of disability and justify your evaluation with specific examples. During this reflective paper, I encourage you to first summarize what the central issues are, then elaborate on how your own experiences and critical readings respond to these issues. You are expected to demonstrate your understanding of the issues discussed and use the conceptual tools offered in class to critically analyze the social realities that frame the lives of persons with disabilities.

PRESENTATION /POSTER SESSION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (25%). At the end of the 2nd week of the course, students will receive an assignment to assess the physical and programmatic accessibility and ADA compliance of a particular building on the Homewood campus. Students will be grouped into teams of 4-5 members and assigned a building or physical space on campus. The purpose of this exercise is to acquaint each of you with the ways that the built environment create and reinforce notions of disability. After the team has completed their assessment, the team will put together a poster/presentation to be presented during the 9th week of class showing your findings. A 2-pg single-spaced executive summary detailing the findings of the assessment is due from each team on Week 10. The purpose of this assignment is to show that you can convey these findings in the form of a short memo, perhaps to a policymaker.

FINAL PAPER (30%). Each student is required to submit a final paper on a topic of their choice, but related to the sociology of disability. All paper topics must be approved by the instructor no later than the 11th week of class. Papers are to be titled and between 10-15 pgs in length and cite a minimum of 8 academic sources (i.e. journal articles, books, etc.). Students are also encouraged to use the required reading for this class as a basis for your paper. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- A detailed analysis of the social construction of a particular disability or illness.
- Position paper or historical analysis of one aspect of the disability movement in the U.S.
- An assessment of a social policy or government program affecting people with disabilities.
- A detailed critique of a book on disability.
- An analysis of the experiences of people with disabilities within a particular social institution (i.e. government, education, work, health care, family, etc.)
- A cross-cultural comparison of disability and/or disability issues

Guidelines for Written Assignments

- Work must be typed with margins of 1” on all sides.
- Times New Roman 12.
- Do **NOT** include a cover page. Place your name, course title, and date at the top of the page.
- Number your pages.
- Pay attention to length requirements.
- Staple all work.
- Hand in your work on time! Late assignments will be penalized.

Required Texts

Selected readings from:

- Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008) Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
- Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement

Required books:

- Charlton, J. (1998) Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment
- Hathaway, K. (2000) The Little Locksmith: A Memoir
- Morgan-Thomas, C. (2009) Miracle Run: Watching My Autistic Sons Grow Up? and Take Their First Steps Into Adulthood
- Bradlee, Q. (2009) A Different Life: Growing Up Learning Disabled and Other Adventures

Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

WEEK 1 -INTRODUCTION

09/03/09: Introduction to the course/Course syllabus

Film- *A Certain Kind of Beauty* (2006)-68 min.

WEEK 2 –DEFINING AND MEASURING DISABILITY

09/08/09: Lecture-Definitional history of disability.

09/10/09: Discussion: What is disability?

Readings (56 pgs):

1. Hockenberry, J. (2006), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 1: Walking with the Kurds, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
2. Mairs, N. (1997), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 4: Young and Disabled, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
3. Hull, J. (1992), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 5: Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. Galloway, T. (1987), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 6: I'm Listening as Hard as I Can, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
5. Berube, M. (1998), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 8: Jamie, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
6. Chapter 1: "Wheel-Chair Bound" and "The Poster Child" in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement

WEEK 3-STATISTICS, TRENDS, AND DISABILITY

09/15/09: Lecture: Who is disabled?

09/17/09: Discussion: How should we measure disability? What are some of the more significant trends in disability?

Readings (75 pgs):

1. Zola, I.K. (1993). *Disability statistics, what we count, and what it tells us*. Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 4, 9-38.
2. Smart, J. F., & Smart, D.W. (1997). *The racial/ethnic demography of disability*. Journal of Rehabilitation, 63, 9-15.
3. Lakdawalla, D.N., Bhattacharya, J., & Goldman, D. (2004). *Are the young becoming more disabled?* Health Affairs, 23(1), 168-176.
4. Freedman, Vicki A., Linda G. Martin, and Robert F. Schoeni. (2004). *Disability in America*. Population Bulletin 59(3):1-32.

WEEK 4-THEORIES OF DISABILITY

09/22/09: Lecture: Medical and social theories of disability.

09/24/09: Discussion: Which theories best explain the role that disability plays in society? What are the advantages and limitations of each?

Readings (58 pgs):

1. Longmore, P. (1995), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 15: The Second Phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
2. Sacks, O. (1990), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 16: Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
3. Gill, Carrol. (1995), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 17: A Psychological View of Disability Culture, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. Chapter 2: Seeing by Touch, Hearing by Sign in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement
5. Gordon, B. O. & Rosenblum, K. E. (2001) *Bringing disability into the sociological frame: a comparison of disability with race, sex, and sexual orientation statuses*. Disability and Society. 16, pp. 5–19.

WEEK 5-THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DISABILITY

09/29/09: Discussion: How can we use the social constructionist perspective to explain the life experiences of people with disabilities?

10/01/09: Film: Emmanuel's Gift (2004)-89min

Readings (272 pgs):

1. Hathaway, K. (2000) *The Little Locksmith: A Memoir*

WEEK 6-DISABILITY AND THE FAMILY

10/06/09: Discussion: How does disability impact families? How do families shape the life experiences of people with disabilities?

10/08/09: Film: *Praying with Lior* (2007)-87min

Readings (80pgs):

1. Curry, R. L. (1994), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 3: The Exceptional Family: Walking the Edge of Tragedy and Transformation, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
2. Beck, M. (2000), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 7: Expecting Adam, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
3. Montgomery, C. (1999), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 29: A Defense of Genocide, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. McBryde-Johnson, H. (2003), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 30: A Defense of Genocide, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.

5. Singer, P. (2003), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 31: Shopping at the Genetic Supermarket, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
6. Wasserman, D. (2003), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 32: The Uncertain Rationale for Prenatal Disability Screening, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.

WEEK 7- DISABILITY AND EDUCATION

10/13/09: Film: Misunderstood Minds (2002)-90min

10/15/09: Discussion: How does education for students with disabilities differ from education for the rest of the student population? What are the benefits and detriments of providing a “special” education?

Readings (251 pgs):

1. Bradlee, Q. (2009) A Different Life: Growing Up Learning Disabled and Other Adventures
2. Chapter 11: Education-Integration in the Least Restrictive Environment in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement

WEEK 8-POLITICS, POLICY, AND DISABILITY

10/20/09: Film: *Frontline: My Father My Brother & Me* (2009)-60min.

10/22/09: Discussion: What role does disability play in political participation? How have social policies influenced the lives of people with disabilities?

Readings (76 pgs):

1. Chapter 4: Groundbreaking Disability Rights Legislation-Section 504 in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement
2. Chapter 6: The Americans with Disabilities Act in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement
3. Berube, M. (2003), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 21: Citizenship and Disability, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. Lathrop, D. (2003), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 20: Who Lost the ADA?, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
5. Scotch, R.K. (2000), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 18: Models of Disability and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.

WEEK 9 -DISABILITY AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

10/27/09: **PRESENTATION SESSION ON ACCESSIBILITY!**

10/29/09: **Guest speaker: Peggy Hayslip, JHU Disability Services**

WEEK 10 –EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY

11/03/09: *Film: Half Man, Full Life (2004)-60min.*

11/05/09: Discussion: How do people with disabilities fair in the labor market? What are some of the barriers to employment for people with disabilities?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DUE!

Readings (358 pgs):

1. Chapter 7: Access to Jobs and Health Care in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement
2. Morgan-Thomas, C. (2009) Miracle Run: Watching My Autistic Sons Grow Up? and Take Their First Steps Into Adulthood

WEEK 11 -DISABILITY IN THE MEDIA

11/10/09: *Video: Depictions of disability in film and the small screen.*

11/12/09: *Video: Depictions of disability in film and the small screen (cont'd).*

Readings (pgs 37):

1. Goggin, G. & C. Newell (2004), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 9: Fame and Disability: Christopher Reeve, Super Crips, and Infamous Celebrity, Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
2. Williams, J. (2000), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 11: Christopher Reeve's Super Bowl Ad Scored a Touchdown: But It Has Provoked a Surprisingly Negative Reaction among Disabled Groups. Why? Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
3. Peace, W. J. (2000), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 12: Wishing for Kryptonite: A Response to Christopher Reeve's Pursuit of Cure. Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. Chapter 12: Identity and Culture in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement

PAPER TOPIC DUE!

WEEK 12-DISABILITY, AGING, AND DYING

11/17/09: Video: *Sunset Story (2005)*-85min

11/19/09: Discussion: *In what ways is aging similar to disability? What can aging tell us about disability?*

Readings (49 pgs):

1. Chapter 8: "Not Dead Yet" and Physician-Assisted Suicide in Zames-Fleischer, D. & F. Zames (2000) Disability Rights Movement
2. National Council on Disability. (2005), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 22: National Council on Disability Position Paper on Disability and Physician-Assisted Suicide Issued in 1997 and Reaffirmed in 2005: Executive Summary. Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
3. Corbet, B. (2000), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 25: Physician-Assisted Death: Are We Asking the Right Questions? Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.
4. Toombs, S. K. (2001), in Baird, R. M., Toombs, S. K., Rosenbaum, S. E. (2008), Chapter 33: Living and Dying with Dignity. Disability: The Social, Political, and Ethical Debate.

WEEK 13-THANKSGIVING BREAK!!!

11/24/09

11/26/09

WEEK 14-DISABILITY AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

12/01/09: Film: *Anytown, USA*-93min

12/03/09: Discussion *In what ways is a disability a social movement? What can we learn about society from the experiences of people with disabilities? What is the future of disability?*

Readings (213 pgs):

1. Charlton, J. (1998) Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment

FINAL PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 15TH!!!!