

AMST 390: Disability and American Culture

Fall 2015
MW 1:00-2:15pm
EC-011



Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane
Office Location: 413 University Hall
Office Hours: MW 10-11am and by appointment
Telephone: 657-278-7359
Email: clane@fullerton.edu

Course Description: Explores changing meaning, history, and experience of disability in American culture through scholarly readings, memoir, film, photography, and other cultural documents. Considers disability in relation to: identity; stigma; discrimination; media representations; intersectionality; gender and sexuality; work; genetic testing; and design.

Course Objective: This interdisciplinary course introduces students to theoretical, cultural, and political models of disability and explores the lived experiences of persons with disabilities (or people who are perceived to have disabilities) in American society. It is intended to sensitize students to issues surrounding disability and the representation thereof, inform them on how cultural constructions of disability differ across time and within different social contexts, and connect disability to broader themes and debates in American culture.

Prerequisite: Completion of G.E. Category D.1.

Student Learning Goals:

- Students will learn that disability is a culturally constructed category that differs across historical eras, cultures, and social contexts.
- Students will come to understand disability and representations thereof from a uniquely interdisciplinary and cultural perspective. They will learn about disability and persons with disabilities from a variety of cultural documents, including memoir, films (documentary and feature), photography, and audio and video recordings.
- Students will analyze how disability and persons with disabilities have been represented in American popular culture in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. In doing so they will gain skills

and perspective that they can later apply to the analysis and critique of US popular cultural representations more broadly.

- Students will use the study of disability as a lens through which to examine broader aspects of American history and culture, including power, discrimination, social stigma, social and political activism, media representations, re-appropriation, gender and sexuality, identity, intersectionality, work, and design.
- Students will present written analyses of a sampling of the above subjects. Essay-based exams will demonstrate students' comprehension of course readings, films, and discussions, as well as their ability to draw connections between course materials in the process of crafting an original, well-evidenced argument.

Required Texts:

- *Disability History of the United States*, Kim Nielsen (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012)
- Additional required readings, audio files, and videos available on Titanium

Requirements: This course entails a combination of lecture and class discussion. I expect you to come to class having completed all assigned reading for that day and prepared with questions and comments for discussion. Bring the readings and your notes to class each week so you can reference them in class discussion. **It is crucial that you stay on top of the reading in order to keep up in class. If you're having trouble with a particular reading or topic, I'll be happy to talk it through with you during class or office hours.** I do not take attendance, but it is essential that you attend class consistently, as you will be accountable for material from readings, lectures, and discussions. You will receive a zero for any assignments missed due to absence. If you miss a class, you should obtain class notes from one or more of your fellow students.

Phone Policy: Please turn phones off and keep them in your bag.

Computer Policy: You are not permitted to take notes on computers or audio record lectures unless specifically authorized to do so by Disability Support Services.

In-Class Conduct & General Advice:

- Get to class on time. I make most important announcements in the first 5 minutes.
- No texting. No sleeping. No doing anything other than paying attention to what your classmates and I have to say about the subject matter at hand.
- I'm happy to answer your questions, but make sure you always check the syllabus and/or assignment sheet before contacting me to make sure the answers are not already there (e.g., When is the final exam? What do we have to read this week?).

Exams, Assignments, & Extensions: For this class you will take a number of in-class **reading quizzes** (you will receive advance notice of most quizzes but some will be unscheduled "pop quizzes"; no make-ups will be offered on quizzes), complete an **independent research project**,

and take an **in-class midterm** and **final exam**. In grading your exams I will pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, organization, and clarity of expression). In evaluating the substance of an essay or presentation, I will examine whether you have demonstrated a critical understanding of course materials **and** presented a coherent thesis or argument. I reserve the right to modify or add assignments throughout the semester.

Email and Web Access: To fully participate in this course and stay apprised of all course-related news and updates **you must have a working email address that you check at least once every weekday. That email address should be the one connected to Titanium** so you receive all updates sent via our course Titanium site. You must also have regular Internet access so you may visit the site as needed to download PDFs, follow web links, check your grades, correspond with classmates, and access other online course material.

Grading Procedures and Standards:

Quizzes	10%	100 points
Midterm	30%	300 points
Research Project	30%	300 points
Final Exam	30%	300 points
	100%	1000 points

Extra Credit: There will be one extra credit opportunity for this course. This essay will be worth up to 4% (40 points) of your final grade.

A+ 100% or higher	B- 80-81	D 62-67%
A 92-99%	C+ 78-79%	D- 60-61%
A- 90-91%	C 72-77%	F 59% or lower
B+ 88-89%	C- 70-71	
B 82-87%	D+ 68-69%	

The +/- grading system will be used. *Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every unexcused day overdue.* Keep all graded assignments so any discrepancies may be easily and fairly straightened out. I reserve the right to add or modify assignments over the course of the semester.

Students with special needs: If you have a disability or special need for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me and contact the Office of Disability Support Services, located in University Hall 101, as early as possible in the term. For more information, the Office of Disability Support Services can be reached by calling (657) 278-3117 or visit their website at www.fullerton.edu/DSS/. Confidentiality will be protected.

Academic Integrity Statement: Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism, and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty. Students are expected to maintain a high standard of academic integrity. Policies

on academic integrity will be strictly enforced; academic dishonesty of any kind will result in a failing grade on that exam or assignment and a referral to Judicial Affairs. Familiarize yourself with the academic dishonesty policy, which can be found in the current student handbook or at <http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf>. Visit the Judicial Affairs website for a collection of useful resources on academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism: <http://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/judicial/Letter%20to%20Students.asp>

Emergency Procedures: See <http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/Default.asp>

Office Hours: I encourage you to attend office hours, or to schedule an individual appointment with me if those hours are not compatible with your schedule. I am always happy to talk with you about the course readings, assignments, and broader questions about American Studies and academic life. It is a true pleasure for me to get to know you and your intellectual interests, so please drop by with any questions or to mull over something you've been thinking about.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

** All required readings, audio clips, and videos should be completed before Monday's class unless otherwise noted on the syllabus. **

Week 1: August 24 & 26

Introduction

Read for Wednesday's class:

Panko-Reis, "Straight Talk about Disability"

Basken, "A Team of Academics Redesigns an Icon"

Lanier, "The R-word"

Week 2: August 31 & September 2

Disability in US History, Part I

Read: Nielsen, Introduction, Ch. 1-2

Week 3: September 9 *[no class on Monday, Sept. 7]*

Disability in US History, Part II

Read: Nielsen, Ch. 3-4

Week 4: September 14 & 16

Disability in US History, Part III

Read: Nielsen, Ch. 5-6

Week 5: September 21 & 23

Disability in US History, Part IV

Read: Nielsen, Ch. 7-8, Epilogue

"Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act"

Mattlin, "An Act that Enabled Acceptance"

Week 6: September 28 & 30

MIDTERM (review on Monday, exam on Wednesday)

Week 7: October 5 & 7

Disability in the US Media

Read: *Nothing! It's a post-midterm gift--just enjoy the movie in class.*

Watch IN CLASS: *Cinemability* (2013)

Week 8: October 12 & 14

Culture and Community

Read: Jones, "Deafness as Culture: A Psychosocial Perspective"

Straus, "Autism as Culture"

Watch: *Sound & Fury* (2000) [on Titanium]

Week 9: October 19 & 21

Disability and Sexuality

Read: Appel, "Sex Rights for the Disabled"

Carlson, "10 Misconceptions about Sex and Disability"

Diament, "Can Disability be Sexy?"; also view photo gallery

Watch: *Murderball* (2005) [on Titanium]

Week 10: October 26 & 28

Disability and Family

Read: Bertelli & Silverman, eds., *My Baby Rides the Short Bus*, selected chapters

Hedlin, "Living as a Mom in a Wheelchair"

Listen: "Wary Home Companions" ("This American Life" radio program)

Week 11: November 2 & 4

Disability and Employment

Read: Hahn, "Advertising the Acceptably Employable Image"

Bender, "Paychecks, Not Pity"

Listen: "The Hostess with the Toastess" ("This American Life" radio program)

Week 12: November 9 [no class November 11]

Due: RESEARCH PROJECT (Monday 11/9 in class & on Titanium)

Project Presentations (no reading this week)

Week 13: November 16 & 18

Project Presentations (no reading this week)

* * * FALL BREAK: NO CLASS * * *

Week 14: November 30 & December 2

Disability and Design

Read: Pullin, "fashion meets discretion" and "provocative meets sensitive" in *Design Meets Disability*

Crippledscholar, "When Celebrating Accessible Technology is Just Reinforcing Ableism"

Cataneo, "Needham's Olin School of Eng. reaches out to the elderly"

Watch: Aimee Mullins, "My 12 Pairs of Legs" (TED lecture 2009)

"Nike FLYEASE Story"

Week 15: December 7 & 9

Conclusion

Listen: "How to Become Batman" ("Invisibilia" radio program)

Due: OPTIONAL: MOVIE REVIEW (Wednesday 12/9 in class and on Titanium)

Week 16: FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 14, 2:30-4:20pm