



Fall 2012
TTh 11:40-1:00
Mason G444C

Instructor:
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Office hours:
TTh 1:30-2:30 & by appt.
Angell 4204

english 316

disability studies





Course description & objectives

At least a sixth of the people in the United States have some kind of disability. That fact alone suggests that disability is worth considering when we think about literature, culture, politics, history, activism, and identity. Our conversations throughout the academic term will revolve around a collection of stories written by and about disabled people. We'll work to understand and assess the value and effect of different ways of thinking about (or, "models of") disability — social, medical, cultural, human rights — in ways that are nuanced and historically savvy. And, because so much of disability activism and community formation percolates in online spaces, a major component of the course will involve mediated work — both in the form of content analysis and project creation.

Our broad goal is to develop an understanding of disability as a complex and crucial part of the world and of human experience. More specifically, we will work together to:

- Understand core concepts of disability studies and its emergence as a field.
- Learn key definitions, categories, critiques, and controversies that comprise current research and scholarship in disability studies.
- Become versed in the specifics of (disability) identity and its intersectionality with other identities, from both cultural and individual perspectives.
- Understand the affordances of online technologies for disability communities, as well as recognizing barriers to access.
- **Analyze and enact accessibility in our everyday work.**

Materials

Technology

- [Wordpress.com](#) account (free)
- Headphones that cover your ears (*not* earbuds)
- 2 blank CDs or DVDs
- An external hard drive (**preferable**) or flash drive formatted for Mac OSX (you'll need at least 10GB of available space)

Texts

- Kuusisto, Stephen. *Planet of the Blind*.
- Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*.
- Readings from [CTools](#) (print and bring to class)

Course policies

Final versions of assignments must be turned in on time. Late projects are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each day late. Missing class or encountering technological misfortunes are not acceptable excuses for failing to meet a deadline. Save early and save often, and be sure to back up your work. I recommend that you save your work in two separate locations (e.g., save one copy to your external hard drive, and another copy on your home computer, a flash drive, or CD-ROM).

Copyright and fair use. Working in digital environments poses all sorts of new questions regarding copyright and intellectual property, and we will discuss these issues during our time

together. While it is important to respect others' intellectual property, it is equally important to assert the right to fair use granted you by copyright law.

If you have any questions about copyright, intellectual property issues, or fair use, please don't hesitate to ask.

Netiquette. Blogging and other social media will play an important role in this class. As such, you are expected to demonstrate professionalism and respect as you communicate with others in various online fora. You may certainly disagree with others in your online posts and comments, but, in general, you should treat classmates online as you would like to be treated in class.

Additionally, I expect you to treat your assignments with the level of formality you would use in any class assignment. Please don't write a blog post as you would write a text message.

Academic misconduct. Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. If you are found to have plagiarized, the English Department's usual policy prescribes that you will fail the assignment and potentially the course, your case may be sent to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, and you may be placed on academic probation. Please read the [English Department's web page on plagiarism](#) carefully as well as [LSA's policies on academic misconduct](#). If you have questions about how to



reference material or what constitutes plagiarism, please come see me.

Attendance & tardiness.

Attendance is essential to the success of this class. Therefore, each unexcused absence after two will result in the lowering of your final grade. Excused absences include those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics. Five absences may result in failure for the course.

Whether you are excused or not, if you miss a class, you are expected to make up the work. This means, if you miss on a day that involves an in-class exercise, you must make arrangements to complete the exercise on your own time. Additionally, I will count you as absent if you are more than 15 minutes late to class, sleeping, texting, emailing, and most especially, if you come to class unprepared to discuss the day's assigned readings. I reserve the right to hold pop quizzes to spot check for preparedness.

Class cancellation policy. In the unlikely event of an emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as



soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

Changes to the schedule.

At any point throughout the semester, I reserve the right to make changes to our daily schedule. This generally happens when we fall behind due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Participation. Participation accounts for 5% of your final grade. Good participation includes coming to class on time, active listening, completing in-class activities, being prepared to contribute your views on the assigned reading, commenting on others' blogs, showing a positive attitude, collaborating appropriately, and showing respect to your classmates and to me. If you have any concerns about how you might best participate in this class, please don't hesitate to talk with me.

Accessibility statement

Accessibility and universal design are not simply topics of discussion or abstract concepts from our daily reading. They are as much lived actions as they are conceptual. As a result, with each project, I expect you to consider critically who your audience is and the ways in which your assignments make a statement, however implicitly, about how you enact accessibility and design in your everyday work.

For each assignment, you will be asked to provide **textual descriptions** of all visuals you submit, as well as **captions** for all video and audio content you create. Additionally, in the course of our time together, we will invent, consider, and explore alternative ways of making our projects and in-class activities more accessible, or more universally designed. I certainly don't have all the answers, and neither does any textbook.





A note about technology

You do not need previous experience with video or image editing technologies in order to complete class projects; you will receive necessary instruction and practice during the course of the semester. Please do note, however, that we will only use certain technologies in this course (e.g., Wordpress, iMovie, Audacity, Photoshop). Though you're certainly free to explore and use alternative software, I will not be able to assist you in using other programs—the responsibility for learning and troubleshooting will fall on you.



Assignments

Blog portfolio (6 out of 8 posts, 300-500 words each)

Blogging is going to play an important role in this class. Throughout the semester, I will pose a question or two on [our course blog](#) and ask you to post a response on your own individual blog prior to class. Additionally, I'll expect you to look over and comment on one another's posts as part of your preparation for class. We'll also use our blogs quite frequently for in-class writing and other activities. These posts will enliven our time together and thus be an important part of making this class matter. You do not need any experience with blogging to do well on these

assignments. You might consider these assignments to be somewhat like short response papers, with the added benefit of being able to comment on one another's writing and embed media into your work. You will be provided with more detailed writing prompts as the term progresses.

Artifact offering (500 words + 5 to 7-min presentation)

You will each sign up to bring in one artifact for offering, and you will present your artifact to the class and write a short, critical response on your class blog. Think of the artifact offering as a kind of "contemplative warm up" to

BLOG PORTFOLIO	BLOG CARNIVAL	RHETORICAL ANALYSIS	ARTIFACT OFFERING	WHAT IS DIS STUDIES	CLASS PARTICIPATION
20%	20%	15%	15%	25%	5%

begin class each day. Plan to spend about five to seven minutes sharing this artifact with classmates and talking about some of the questions that brought you to this artifact or that the artifact raises for you.

Your artifacts should come from the world around you and they should, of course, be related to disability in some way – to our work or conversations this semester. Some ideas: a text that you ran into recently, some choice quotation, an advertisement, song lyrics, TV show, film, media character, newspaper story on a real person or event, a toy, a moment in your own reality . . . the possibilities are endless. You might also think of offering an artifact that might in some way connect to your major field of study or to your own experience of/with disability. 5% is for the in-class presentation; 10% for the critical response posted on your class blog.

Blog carnival (750-1,000 words + map)

In addition to maintaining our own blogs, we'll spend some of our time reading and reviewing and engaging disability blogs. For this assignment, you will need to choose a theme related to disability – perhaps access, or media, or learning disabilities, or education, or parenting, etc. Once you've chosen a theme, you'll need to find 8 to 12 blog entries that somehow relate.

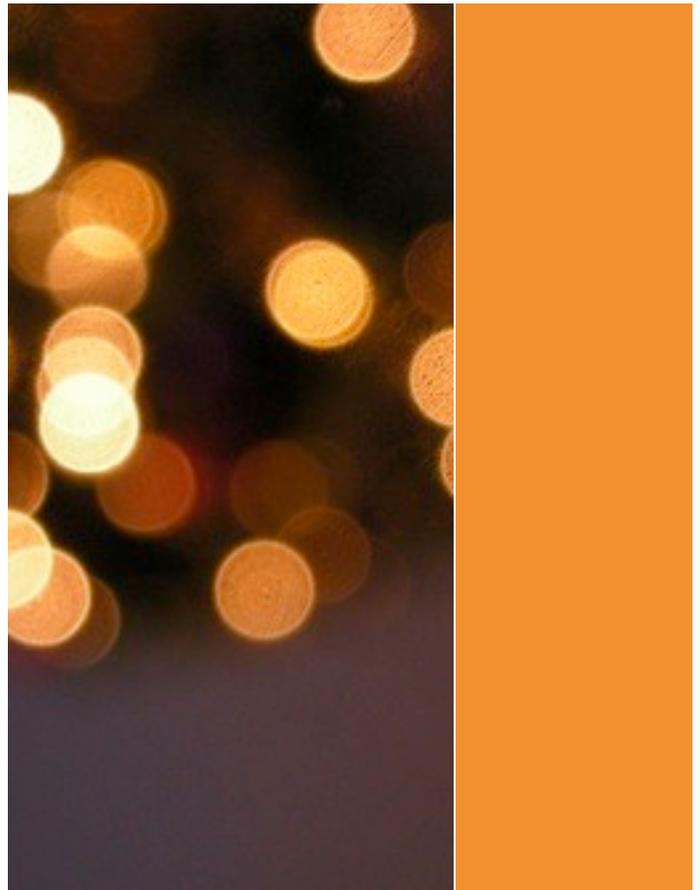
Your task will be to summarize each entry very briefly and then show us how it relates to your theme. We'll spend nearly two class periods, in groups, discussing your findings as well as blog-related issues. You'll hand in your final blog carnival write-up via your own blog, and you'll also include one more piece: either a visual (e.g., a diagram, a photo) or aural (e.g., a brief audio description, a song) element that represents what you've learned about this topic, as well as a brief description/transcription of your representation.

Rhetorical analysis (3-4 pages) + discussion

A paper that analyzes the rhetorical choices of *Murderball*. In this assignment, you'll consider the ways in which this film imparts a message to its audience(s). Your paper should focus on the discussions we've had about disability and rhetoric and reference one or more of the readings we've done so far.

Final project: What is Disability Studies?

In small groups, you will collaborate on a multimedia project that explores the following question: **What is disability studies?** This project offers you an opportunity to draw upon the texts we've encountered this term and to position yourself within the field. What



are the important conversations and controversies? What (or who) should we be paying attention to? How would you have others approach the field, understand its goals, use its theories? In what way do (or should) first-person narratives about disability shape how we study and discuss disability?

We'll go into more detail about your options for this project later. But here is a sampling of ideas you might choose from:

- A public service announcement that explores or explains disability studies to a specific audience (e.g., college students, parents, service providers, medical professionals, etc.)
- A short video documentary on disability culture
- A collaborative blog (which can include images, audio, and/or video clips)

Everyone will additionally be required to 1) submit a **proposal memo** in which you describe your plans for the final project (this will account for 5% of your grade), and 2) write both a **precis** of others' projects and a **reflection** of your own project, which will account for blog post #8.

Resources for navigating ENG 316

LSA Instructional Support Services

[LSA Instructional Support Services](#) provides equipment and technical support to students enrolled in LSA classes. ISS operates three centers where students may check out AV equipment for short-term loans:

Mason, G340 Mason Hall
Hours: 8am-10pm, M-Th; 8am-5pm, F

Dennison, 267 Dennison Hall
Hours: 8am-6pm, M-Th; 8am-5pm F

Media Center, 2001 Modern Languages Building
Hours: 8am-10pm, M-Th;
8am-5pm, F; 12-8pm, Sat & Sun

To check out equipment, you must provide a U-M ID, along with a course title and number to support your student status. You can contact ISS at (734) 615-0100 or email them at lsa-iss-reservations@umich.edu.

Knowledge Navigation Center

[The KNC](#) is your center for learning how to use technology in your coursework, and is free of charge and open to anyone. Located on the second floor of the

Hatcher Graduate Library, behind the information desk and next to the Faculty Exploratory. You can contact them at knc-info@umich.edu.

Accessibility & accommodations

[Services for Students with Disabilities](#), located in G-664 Haven Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. With or without documentation, it is my intent to make our learning experience as accessible as possible. With documentation, I am especially interested in providing any accommodations that have probably been best determined by the student and an SSD counselor in advance. Regardless of whether or not you are registered with SSD, please let me know what we can do to maximize your learning potential, participation, and general access in this course. You can contact SSD at (734) 763-3000 or <http://ssd.umich.edu/>.

Writing Center

The Sweetland Center for Writing is available to provide free writing tutoring and consultation during any stage of the writing process. Services include face-to-face tutorials in 1310 North Quad and online tutorials. You can contact Sweetland at (734) 764-0429 or <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>.

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WE DONT
NEED A
CURE
WE NEED
ACCEPTAN
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SCHEDULE

	Topics/Activities	Reading Due	Assignments Due
Week 1: Welcome!			
T 9/4	Introductions Language & ideology	NYLN, "Popular Education" View "The Best Fake Charity Collection Buckets"	
Th 9/6	Models of disability Blog setup	Davis, "Constructing Normalcy" Linton, "Reclamation," p. 1-7	
Week 2: DS & (inter)disciplinary perspectives			
T 9/11	What is/are disability studies?	Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability" Linton, "Reassigning Meaning," p. 8-32 Barbie doll models of disability	Blog post #1 due
Th 9/13	Rhetoric & Representation UD exercise	Garland-Thomson, "The Politics of Staring" Siebers, "What Can Disability Studies Learn from the Culture Wars?"	
Week 3: Disability aesthetics			
T 9/18	Passing Coming out / disclosure	Brueggemann, "On (Almost Passing)" Montgomery, "A Hard Look"	Blog post #2 due
Th 9/20	Visibility and the virtual Interaction badge exercise	Bascom, "Quiet Hands" Weise, "Cloning Disabled Subjects" Howe, "The Star Market" Glück, "The Cripple in the Subway"	

Week 4: In/visibility, ableism, and identity			
T 9/25	Defining culture, re/defining disability Introduce rhetorical analysis assignment	Read Zdenek, "Which Sounds Are Significant?" View two of the following (captioned) videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brueggemann, "Why I Mind" • DMAC, "Sh*t Academics Say About Access" • Olimpias, <i>Cripple Poetics</i> 	Blog post #3 due
Th 9/27	Coming to disabled identity Ableism and the design of virtual spaces	Linton, "Disability Studies/Not Disability Studies," p. 132-157 Cherney, "The Rhetoric of Ableism"	
Week 5: Rehabilitative narratives			
T 10/2	Watch <i>Murderball</i>	Couser, "Conflicting Paradigms"	
Th 10/4	Discuss <i>Murderball</i> Media & Mediation	Hershey, "From Poster Child to Protester" Palmeri, "Disability Studies, Cultural Analysis, and the Critical Practice of Tech-Comm Pedagogy"	
Week 6: Disability and multimodality			
T 10/9	Disability & (multimodal) narratives Introduce blog carnival assignment	Street Roots & Elesia Ashkenazy, "Pretending to be Normal" Howes, web comic selections from <i>Oh Shit, I'm in Grad School</i>	Rhetorical analysis due
Th 10/11	The blog carnival begins! Peer review, in class	Read 5-6 blog entries of your own choosing	Bring summaries of each blog entry to class
Week 7: Blog carnivaling			
T 10/16	NO CLASS		

Th 10/18	Continuing the carnival Studio time	Read 5-6 blog entries of your own choosing	Bring summaries of each entry to class
Week 8: Planet of the Blind			
T 10/23	Life writing & representation	Kuusisto, chs. 1-8	
Th 10/25	Discussion	Kuusisto, chs. 9-end	Final blog carnival response due, posted to your blog
Week 9: Mental disability			
T 10/30	Ethos & rhetoricity	Price, selections from <i>Mad at School</i> Prendergast, "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability"	Blog post #4 due
Th 11/1	Can a crazy rhetor even <i>be</i> ?	Gere & Gere, "Living with FAS/FAE" NYLN/KASA, "Accessibility Checklist" selections from CDICC's <i>Composing Access</i>	
Week 10: Discourses of difference			
T 11/6	Disability and/as diversity Introduce final project	Davis, "Why Is Disability Missing from the Discourse on Diversity?" Ne'eman, "Making Disability Studies Accessible"	Blog post #5 due
Th 11/8	View selections from <i>Vital Signs</i>	Mitchell & Synder, "Talking About Talking Back"	
Week 11: Intersectionality			
T 11/13	Disability & sexuality	Jack, "Gender Copia" Crip Confessions, "What I Would Tell My Teenage Self" Selected Eli Clare poems	Blog post #6 due

Th 11/15	Intersecting identities Studio time	Finger, "Crippling Gender," pp. 168-186 Selections from Ferri, "A Dialogue We've Yet to Have: Race and DS"	
Week 12: Accessing design			
T 11/20	Participatory design	Yergeau et al., "Multimodality in Motion"	Proposals due
Th 11/22	NO CLASS		
Week 13: UD, usability, & accessibility			
T 11/27	Digital rhetorics + disability rhetorics = ?	Porter, "Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric" selections from NCSU's Center for Universal Design website	Blog post #7 due
Th 11/29	Studio time		
Week 15: Projects, projects, projects			
T 12/4	Studio time		
Th 12/6	Presentations		Final projects due
Week 16: Where do we go from here?			
T 12/11	Discussion: Best practices	Review classmates' projects (Blogs + CTools)	Precis due
Finals week			Blog post #8 due