

2007

## Disability: Past and Present (Honors 232—Interdisciplinary Seminar)

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# Disability: Past and Present

## Honors 232—Interdisciplinary Seminar

### 4 Hours Credit

CAROLYN STUART (EDUCATION) AND MARY JO FESTLE (HISTORY)

ELON UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

MARY JO FESTLE, DIRECTOR

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to be “disabled”? How has this meaning changed over time in the U.S.? What factors affect a person’s experience of disability? Why should people—either disabled or not—learn about these matters?

This course explores the complexity of people’s experiences with disability in the past and present. Disability can be viewed from a number of lenses, including various academic disciplines, medical or social constructions, and minority-group perspectives. In this course, students analyze actions, ideas, and portrayals by cultural authorities and by the disabled themselves. Students complete a significant research project reflecting their major and interests. The instructors hope to engage students’ brains and hearts by deepening their thinking about disability, improving their academic skills, and stimulating their thinking about the art of being human.

Seminar for 20 students.

### TEXTS

We will read all or substantial portions of the following:

Paul Longmore, Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability (Temple University Press, 2003)

Joseph Shapiro, No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement (Three Rivers Press, 1994)

Mark Haddon, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time (Knopf, 2004)

Kay Redfield Jamison, An Unquiet Mind (Knopf, 1995)

Reynolds Price, A Whole New Life (Scribner, 2003)

Additional readings, including scholarly articles and chapters from books and occasional websites, are assigned.

## SYLLABUS

### Date

### Topic & Readings

### Class Preparation

Aug 30

Introduction—what do we know, think, and why?

Sept 4

Deafness and Deaf Culture; Social Construction of Disability; Identity Issues

Dolnick, E. (1993) Deafness as culture. *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept., 37–51; Wolkomir, R., Johnson, L. (1992). American Sign Language: “It’s not mouth stuff...it’s brain stuff.” *Smithsonian*, 23 (4),30–41; [www.gallaudet.edu](http://www.gallaudet.edu)

Sept 6

Deaf Culture: Gallaudet Uprising; the “Medical Model” and alternative models

*The Deaf Celebration of Separate Culture*, Ch. 3 in *No Pity* by Joseph Shapiro

Sept 11

Deafness and the Cochlear Implant Debate

Position Statement, National Association of the Deaf (NAD): <http://www.nad.org/site/pp.asp?c=foINKQMBF&b=138140>; Levy, N. (2002). Reconsidering cochlear implants: The lessons of Martha’s Vineyard. *Bioethics*, 16 (2), 134–153; [Sound and Fury \(video\)](#).

### **Cochlear Implant Paper Due; In-Class debate**

Sept 13

Disability and War: Disability in History; Experiences and Changing Treatment of Veterans

Rosenburg, R.B, “ ‘Empty Sleeves and Wooden Pegs’: Disabled Confederate Veterans in image and Reality,” in David A. Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History*, pp. 204–223; Gerber, G., “Blind and Enlightened,” in P. Longmore and L. Umansky, *The New Disability History*, Ch. 12; Kovic, R. *Born on the Fourth of July*, pp.14–44.

Sept 18

Physical Disabilities: Early Activism and the “Poster Child” Phenomenon  
Longmore, Ch. 4, “The League of the Physically Handicapped and the Great Depression,” pp. 53–87+ in [Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability](#); Shapiro, Ch. 1, “Tiny Tims, Supercrrips, and the End of Pity,” pp. 12–40, in *No Pity*.

Sept 20

Cultural Portrayal of People with Physical Disabilities: Freak Shows, Films, Stereotypes and the purposes they serve

Longmore, Ch. 6, “Film Reviews,” pp. 119–130, and Ch. 7, “Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion

Pictures," pp. 102–115; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "The Cultural Work of American Freak Shows, 1835–1940," pp. 55–66 and 78–80, in Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature; [http://www.ncdj.org/newsletters/win\\_03.html#4](http://www.ncdj.org/newsletters/win_03.html#4)

Sept 25

Disability Rights and People with Physical Disabilities: Independent Living Movement

Shapiro, Ch. 2, "From Charity to Independent Living," pp 41–73, from No Pity

**Short Paper #2 is due today (accessibility evaluation of two public sites or review of two films).**

Sept 27

Psychological Coping to a Physical Disability Acquired in Adulthood

Reynolds Price, A Whole New Life: An Illness and a Healing, pp. 100–114 and Ch. 6 & 7, pages 147–193.

Oct 2

Manic Depression (Bipolar Disorder) and Insanity

Kay Redfield Jamison, An Unquiet Mind

Oct 4

Mental Retardation, Sexuality, Sterilization

Noll, S. (1995). Feeble-Minded in our Midst. Ch. 4, The Promise of Sterilization (pp. 65–80). Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press; The Arc's policy statement on sexuality, <http://www.thearc.org/posits/sexualitypos.doc>; Shapiro, Ch. 10, Crossing the Luck Line, pp. 289–321, in No Pity.

Oct 9

The Eugenics Movement

Brockley, "Martyred Mothers and Merciful Fathers," Ch. 11 in Longmore and Umansky, The New Disability History: American Perspectives.

Oct 11

Discussion of research project (topics, expectations, stages, etc.)

**The take-home midterm examination on the factors that affected a person's experience with disability is due today.**

Oct 18

Autism

Mark Haddon, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime

Oct 23

Disability Rights—Guest Speaker: Dr. Joy Weeber

Shapiro, Ch. 8, "Up from the Nursing Home," pp. 237–257, in No Pity  
**Research questions are due in class today.**

Oct 25

Developing a good Research Strategy

Meet in library today

## DISABILITY: PAST AND PRESENT

Oct 30

Disability Rights: How much has changed? Americans with Disabilities Act  
Shapiro, "Epilogue: How the Disability Rights Movement is Changing  
America," pp. 322–332 in No Pity; Longmore, Ch. 1, "Disability  
Watch," pp. 19–31 in Why I Burned my Book and Other Essays on  
Disability.

Nov 1

Expectations for a thesis statement and outline

**The bibliography/research strategy assignment is due today.**

Nov 6

The *Culture of Disability*; Rethinking American values

Doris Zames Fleisher & Frieda Zames, Ch. 12, "Identity and Culture,"  
pp. 200–215 in The Disability Rights Movement; Longmore, Chapter  
11: "The Second Phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture,"  
pp. 215–224; Ch. 12: "Princeton & Peter Singer," 225–229

Nov 8

Physician-Assisted Suicide; a Disability Issue?

Read EITHER Longmore, Ch. 9, "The Resistance: The Disability Rights  
Movement and Assisted Suicide" in Why I Burned my Book OR  
Shapiro, Ch. 9, "No Less Worthy a Life" in No Pity; read a few web-  
sites with positions on assisted suicide. **In-class debate.**

Nov 13

Individual conferences with students on their thesis/outline

**Thesis statement and outlines are due by 5:00 pm before class meets**

Nov 15

Technology: what are the assistive devices that give hope? What are the  
drawbacks? What is "universal design"?

Shapiro, Ch. 7, *The Screaming Neon Wheelchair*, pp. 211–236 in No  
Pity; Visit the website CAST at <http://www.cast.org>

Nov 20

Peer editing of first drafts

**Two copies of the first draft of the research paper are due in  
class today.**

Nov. 27

Popular Culture: Artistry and Communication

There is no class preparation. We will meet in the computer lab and  
review some online art, magazines, websites, and blogs and discuss  
the way disabled people portray themselves in popular culture.

Nov 29

Field trip to Gateway Education Center in Greensboro

Visit website at: [http://schools.gcsnc.com/spages/gateway/gateway\\_education\\_center\\_main.htm](http://schools.gcsnc.com/spages/gateway/gateway_education_center_main.htm)

CAROLYN STUART AND MARY JO FESTLE

Dec 4

Educational Settings: Is inclusion the best strategy for students with disabilities? What does the law say? Can separate be equal?

We will analyze a documentary, Educating Peter, about the experience of a third-grade student with Down's Syndrome who is fully included into a regular elementary education classroom.

**Research papers are due in class today.**

Dec 6

Final Reflections—What are we taking from this class? How are we different?

No readings assigned

Dec 11

Final Exam: Poster Session

Each student will prepare a poster that summarizes his/her research. See handout for expectations.

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