

Feminism and Social Change

Disability Justice

Spring 2022

Dr. Sarah Brown

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Kresge 2339

Mondays & Wednesdays

3:30 — 4:50, 80 minutes

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:00 or by appointment

2000 Sheridan Road, room 105

Description

Why should we consider disability justice as a central principle of contemporary feminist thought? As disability studies increasingly ground feminist work, new depths of understanding around embodiment, freedom, and human dignity develop from and return to social justice action globally, nationally, and here in the Chicago region. Students in this course will study disability justice as feminist practice in conversation with Chicago-based thinkers and organizers.

Schedule

*All texts are available on Canvas, except the film *the Girl with All the Gifts*, which will have a few streaming options.*

*All assignments should be **completed** by the date they are listed under.*

March 29: Introduction to the course and one another

March 30: Review access needs and agreements, watch half of *Crip Camp*

Establishing a Common Base: Bodies, Spaces, Feminisms

Monday, April 4

Nash, Jennifer. "Introduction: feeling black feminism," *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. 2018 (17 pages)

Bailey, Moya, and Izzeta Autumn Mobley. 2018. "Work in the Intersections: A Black Feminist Disability Framework." *Gender & Society* 33(1):19–40

Wednesday April 6

Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Body, Personal Relations, and Spatial Values," *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. 1977 (16 pages)

Taylor, Sonya Renee. "A New Way Ordered by Love," *The Body is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self Love*. 2018 (12 pages)

Representation & Metaphor

Monday April 11

Sontag, Susan. *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (excerpt). 1989 (7 pages)

Schalk, Sami. "Metaphorically Speaking: Ableist Metaphors in Feminist Writing." *Disability Studies Quarterly* Vol. 33 No. 4 (2013): Special Issue: Improving Feminist Philosophy and Theory By Taking Account of Disability (24 pages)

Wednesday April 13

Wang, Esmé Weijun. "The Pathology of the Possessed," *The Collected Schizophrenias*. 2019. (15 pages)

Mingus, Mia. "Moving Toward the Ugly: A Politic Beyond Desirability," 2011. (6 pages)

Kunzel, Regina. "Queer History, Mad History, and the Politics of Health." *American Quarterly*. 2017 (5 pages)

Care & Confinement

Monday April 18

Ben-Moshe, Liat, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey, "Reconsidering Confinement: Interlocking Legacies and Logics of Incarceration," *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*. 2014 (16 pages)

Burch, Susan. "Erase and Replace," *Committed: Remembering Native Kinship in and Beyond Institutions*. 2021 (13 pages)

Wednesday April 20

Malatino, Hil. "Trans Care within and Against the Medical-Industrial Complex" *Trans Care*. 2020. (12 pages)

Possibilities: Self Representation & Justice

Monday April 25

Kafai, Shayda. "Storytelling as Activism, as Crip-Centric Strategy" and Artmaking as Evidence," *Crip Kinship: The Disability Justice and Art Activism of Sins Invalid*. 2021 (33 pages)

In class: 33-minute film: *Sins Invalid: An Unashamed claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility* by Sins Invalid and the filmmaker Patty Berne

Wednesday April 27

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. "Crippling TJ," *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*. 2020 (14 pages)

Project Planning

Monday May 2

"LVEJO Research Policy"

Debility / Medical and Environmental Racism and Sexism

Wednesday May 4

Watch *Night's End*

Monday May 9

Roberts, Dorothy. "The Social Immorality of Health in the Gene Age: Race, Disability, and Inequality." *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, edited by Jonathan M. Metzger and Anna Kirkland, 2010. (10 pages)

Guest Instructor: Dr. Means Coleman on Horror Noire

Possibilities: Alternate Realities

Wednesday May 11

Schalk, Sami, "Introduction" *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)Ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. 2018 (pages)

Please attend Schalk's virtual talk at 1pm on Friday
<https://planitpurple.northwestern.edu/event/584228>

Friday May 13

1:00pm – 2:00 pm virtual talk with Sami Schalk: Black Disability Politics of the National Black Women’s Health Project. Co-hosted by Njoki Kamau. Cosponsored by African American Studies and the English Department.

Eugenics and Cure

Monday May 16

Strings, Sabrina. “Good Health to Uplift the Race,” *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. 2019 (17 pages)

McBryde Johnson, Harriet, “Unspeakable Conversations,” *Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Alice Wong. 2020 (24 pages)

In class: Discussion / Quiz #2

Wednesday May 18

Group project day at the Women’s Center

Possibilities: Pleasure and Interdependence

Monday May 23

10 Principles of Disability Justice, Patty Berne

Kafer, Alison. “Accessible Futures, Future Coalitions” *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. 2013 (22 pages)

Reading Week: Your discretion, but it feels like a good week to conduct your interviews and or meet with your group.

Access

We will discuss this in some detail on the first day and you should feel encouraged to come by the Women’s Center if you wish to talk more in private or if your situation changes. The general idea is this: your accessibility accommodations are available to you in this course as they would be for any other. You should go through Accessible NU to make appropriate arrangements and I will honor them.

If your access needs are denied or are simply not typically covered by such accommodations, I encourage you to make these known to me. You will have an opportunity to do so anonymously. My hope is that if I collect the needs of all our people and share those out, we can all agree to work to create the best possible learning environment for everyone.

This course does entail some rigidity around deadlines because of the group work. I am excited to see how we can make it an affirming experience in ways that may include but are not just about time.

Content Warning

This is covered in your modules in greater depth. In this course we will read about and discuss multiple forms of violence and oppression. This includes medical violence, state violence, sexual assault, eugenics, child abuse. We will also witness several first-person accounts of pain and grief. I may not always say it is coming because it is more or less the nature of the course.

None of the following will keep these things from affecting you, but I am hopeful that if we build an environment of empathy and resilience in the classroom, you will carry that through in your independent study as well. To that end,

- we will take a five-minute break each day. We may do some grounding exercises in this space or just listen to something or share out something that brings us joy. This is not in place of getting up to get a drink or use the restroom which you should do at any time.
- The curriculum also takes some breaks, called “Possibilities,” days or weeks in which we connect with texts about building the (dis)abled future of our dreams
- I have some advice about all of this. If it isn’t a match for you, perhaps it will prompt you to think on your own best practices.
 - Have a plan for what you will do after you sit down with difficult material: go on a walk, meet a friend, call someone, craft, etc.
 - Don’t engage with difficult material when you first wake up or just before you go to sleep.
 - Don’t try to squeeze the reading in the dining hall in the 15 minutes before class; not only will this not help your comprehension or retention, it can wear on you to read stressful things in stressful situations.
 - I know you’re extraordinarily busy, but if you can find a place that feels like home on this campus to do your work, you deserve the time it takes to get there and really settle in.
 - Self-care is a bajillion dollar business it’s true, but *intentional self-care* is lifesaving. Look for it.

Help

Asking for help is awesome.

In Class Expectations

- Be on time, and don’t pack up before we finish. I will respect your time too.

- Adhere to our group agreements
- A typical day will look like this. Except when it doesn't.
 - 5 minutes of thought collection
 - 35 minutes of discussion
 - 5 minutes grounding break
 - 35 minutes of lecture, watching something, project work, or more discussion

Assignments

Interview Project

The biggest piece of work we produce will be an interview series with local activist, educators, artists, etc. (you will decide whom) who are fighting for disability justice in or around Chicago. We will create a list of potential interviewees, narrow that list, rank our choices to form groups and then you and your group (probably three people in total) will contact your subject, write your questions, conduct the interview—basically all the steps. This course is (modestly) grant funded, so interview subjects or their organizations will be compensated \$500 for a 30 minute live-streamed interview which we will play on the women's center website.

The aims of this project are to investigate how the theory we read and discuss shapes or is shaped by on the ground organizing, to educate the northwestern community about disability justice efforts in their area, and to create a publicly accessible archive.

We keep the interviews short and we will discuss best practices for involving your subjects in the preparation so that this is genuinely a nice boost and a light lift for them. The pieces of the project are:

- Suggesting interview subjects
- Ranking your choices
- Reaching out and discussing with potential subjects
- Working with women's center staff to initiate payment
- Setting up your livestream (you will have assistance)
- Scheduling your interview
- Writing more interview questions than you will use (and sharing them in advance)
- Conducting the interview
- Thanking your subjects
- Writing your final paper (more below)

Final Paper

For your final paper, I would like you to employ minimum of two sources we read in this class and one you researched independently in your analysis of the interview your group conducted. How can you conduct an accessible (in every sense) interview and return to often dense theory to make meaning? What differed or expanded in practice? Are there areas of tension? We will discuss this process more in class and I encourage you to come and speak with me about your paper options as the quarter progresses.

Discussion Questions, 20 points total

On the first day I will share the sign up for our discussion question assignments. You will rank choices for texts. When you're assigned text comes up, leave two distinct questions in Canvas by 9pm the day before the class in which we discuss that text. You'll be doing two questions for your text and two texts at different times in the quarter, 5 points per question, 4 questions total for the course.

There is no real trick to a good question. Ask the thing you would actually like us to discuss.

Quizzes, 20 points total

We have two quizzes, each worth ten points. They will ask you to identify texts and answer a couple of analytical questions from the reading and lectures up to and including that day's assignment. For folks with extra time, let's talk about whether it works better for your schedule to come early, stay after, take it another time... we will figure it out.

Grades

I use a straightforward grading system. Your points add up to one hundred like so:

Participation: 10 points

Quiz #1: 10 points

Quiz #2: 10 points

Discussion Questions text #1: 10 points

Discussion Questions text #2: 10 points

Interviewee Suggestions: 5 points

Interview Questions: 10 points

Interview: 10 points

Final Paper: 25 points