HSCI 5550  Lives Worth Living: Disability and Ableism in History
Course Outline for Spring 2016
Instructor: Aparna Nair, History of Science, PHSC 622

The course explores disability as experience, as identity and as difference in spaces as varied as modern Botswana to ancient Greece and early modern France. In the course of the semester, students will come to an appreciation of the immense import and potential of disability as a category of historical and social analysis. Employing literature from history, anthropology and disability studies, we explore diverse theoretical perspectives on disability from scholars including Foucault, Canguilheím, Garland-Thomson, Stiker and Erevelles. Important themes that transect with disability in the course include labour, war, religion and eugenics.

We also will engage with the criticisms made of disability studies as being a neologism, a framework that emerged in the Anglophone world drawn on largely ‘western’ Judeo-Christian social and cultural norms of corporeal difference. The course will therefore also attempt to decolonise disability by considering the cultural fluidity of such an experience. This course uses documentaries and films to push students towards a more critical understanding of the complex narrative of the histories of the ‘abnormal’ body against the discourse of colonialism, biomedicine, gender, religion, poverty, race and class in the majority world. We trace how various cultures have developed criteria, practices and rituals that identify and regulate the non-normative body. In particular we explore the intersection between disability and poverty and how disability has been subsumed into the discourse of development, and the implications of this.

The questions that this course explores includes the following:

- How do and how have we experienced and responded to corporeal difference and debility in our midst?
- How have the definitions of disability changed across time; who has been excluded and who included?
- What is disability’s impact on mainstream histories?
- How did and does disability intersect with others categories of difference including gender, class, caste, race and sexuality?
- How is disability socially constructed, produced and reproduced?
- What was and is the relationship between science, biomedicine and the disabled or non-normative body?
- How did societies begin to conceptualise the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’ through science and the scientific method; and how did those ideas reinforce power and penalise and stigmatise deviance?
- What kinds of scientific understandings, social responses, political constructions, economic valuations and cultural articulations shaped the experience of disability in locations as diverse as the Ottoman Arab world, to modern Botswana or twentieth century Japan?
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<td>Introduction, Theories and Definitions</td>
<td>Kudlick; Ingstaad and Whyte, Linton, Shakespeare, and Seibers, Davis, Wilkinson and Kleinman; Movie: <em>Khalfan and Zanzibar</em>, 2000 <em>Zanzibar</em></td>
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<td>Disability in the Ancient Worlds</td>
<td>Laes, Goodey and Rose; Rose <em>Mama Wahunzi, Kenya and Uganda</em></td>
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<td>Disability in Medieval Europe: Of Sin and Suffering</td>
<td>Metzler; Eyler <em>La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil, Senegal</em></td>
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<td>Disability in Medieval Islamic Worlds</td>
<td>Scalenghe, Richardson <em>Movie: Rang-e Khoda, The Colour of Paradise, Iran</em></td>
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<td>Disability in Early Modern Europe: Bodily Difference in Industrializing Societies</td>
<td>Goodey, Weygand, Husson Feingold, <em>Silent Sentinels, Coward's War, 1995, Cambodia</em></td>
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<td>Institutional Histories of the Disabled Body</td>
<td>Reiss; Chapter Two in Wright; Chapter II and IV in Bartlett and Wright Bastian, Hill and Skousen, <em>Everything is Incredible, Honduras</em></td>
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<td>Imaginaries of the Disabled Body as the ‘Freak/Monster’</td>
<td>Garland-Thomson, Bondeson, Tromp; Chapter II in Bogdan. Movie: Tod Browning, <em>Freaks, 1932 or TV Series, American Horror Story: Freak Show, 2014</em></td>
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<td>Disability in North America: Slavery and the Civil War.</td>
<td>Boster, Long <em>Kounandi, 2004, Burkina Faso</em></td>
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<td>Disability in 20th c Legal History: Ugly Laws, Immigration</td>
<td>Schweik; Chadha; Menzies, in McLaren, Menzies and Chunn; <em>Sukut; Sokout; Sokhout, Iran</em></td>
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<td>Eugenics and the Disabled Body in Europe and America</td>
<td>Pernick; Burleigh; Lombardo <em>Movie: The Black Stork or Are You Fit to Marry? 1917</em></td>
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<td>Disability and War: ‘The Birth of Rehabilitation Culture</td>
<td>Gerber; Cohen <em>Movie: Body of War, 2012</em></td>
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<td>Disability and Workplace Compensation in the 20th Century</td>
<td>O’Brien, 2001</td>
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<td>The Disability Rights Movements: Nothing About Us Without Us</td>
<td>Charlton; Nielsen, Linton, Longmore</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Devlieger in Hubert; Livingston, <em>Benga Bilili! Congo</em></td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
<td>Antebi, Brimmer and Poniatowska, Iseberg, <em>A Life Without Words, 2011, Nicaragua</em></td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>Kohrman, <em>Planet of Snail, South Korea</em></td>
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Readings

- David M Turner and Kevin Stagg, eds. *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity: Bodies, Images and Experiences*
- Lennard Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*,
• Robert Bogdan *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988
• Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400.* London: Routledge, 2006
• Ruth O’Brien, *Crippled Justice:*
• Sara Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800,* Oxford: OUP, 2014
• Kristina Richardson, *Difference and Disability in the Medieval Islamic World,* 2012.