Disability Issues: Obstacles and Solutions in Today’s World
SW 773-Section 001
Winter 2005, Wednesdays 2-5 PM

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Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way I teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide me as private and confidential.

1. Course Description

This course will examine the topic of disability from various perspectives, including the historical development of civil rights, the legal framework, the medical model, and how disability is viewed by various cultures. It will examine different types of disabilities, how people with disabilities are treated and denied equal access to programs and employment, and what political/legal recourse is available to address these inequities. The course will also review what progress has been made in the United States regarding the integration of people with disabilities by removing attitudinal, as well as architectural, barriers that individuals with disabilities face in daily life. The course will also address how to interact with individuals who have disabilities, the differences between visible and non-visible disabilities, and how disability can affect individuals depending on whether they are children, teenagers or adults.

2. Course Content

This course will examine various perspectives presented by and about people with disabilities. It will focus on the historical influences that have affected the development of a disability rights movement, the impact of medical and technological advances in creating expanded opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and the current state of political and legal power being utilized by the disability community. The course will also address how professionals who work with people who have disabilities can act to change social systems to improve opportunities and to empower individuals with disabilities.
6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

This course will address the ethics of individuals, families, communities and social systems. Students will learn about issues related to privacy, confidentiality, and enabling individuals to confront the barriers that they encounter in society. This course will look at the social worker’s responsibility to ensure equal access to resources, prevent and eliminate discrimination, and advocate for changes in public policy and behavior that impede opportunities for people with disabilities.

Required Texts and Readings


Current articles on various disability issues will be handed out in class.

Recommended Books


Assignment 3-- This paper is due Mar. 16 and is 20% of your grade.

Students will write a 3-4 page paper on one of the following:

1) Survey at least three buildings on campus to assess what physical barriers exist for people with disabilities. Prepare a written summary that identifies these problems (e.g., parking, entrances/exits, restrooms, signage, getting from one floor to another) and potential solutions to these problems. Do building codes need to be strengthened to make sure that facilities are accessible for people with various disabilities? Are there architectural design solutions that would benefit all people, not just those who have physical disabilities?

2) Survey twenty or more people to assess what attitudinal barriers exist for people with disabilities. Try to include both individuals who have and individuals who do not have disabilities. Prepare a written summary that describes what questions you asked and the characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, disability) of the individuals who answered them. Do these individuals view people with disabilities in a positive or negative way? Do their answers reveal certain stereotypes about people with disabilities? If so, suggest ways to educate the public about these stereotypes.

Assignment 4-- This paper is due Apr. 13 and is 40% of your grade.

Students will write a 6-8 page paper on one of the following topics:

1) Select a policy/legal issue and analyze its impact on people with disabilities. What is the historical development of this policy or law? Is it beneficial or harmful to people with disabilities? Explain the reasons for your answer, and provide data and other sources to support your conclusion. Provide a policy recommendation regarding the issue you are analyzing.

2) Identify the three most significant barriers in U.S. society that prevent the full inclusion of people with disabilities. Justify your selection of these barriers by providing data and examples. What strategies would you employ to remove these barriers? Which organizations, if any, might assist in the implementation of your strategies? How would you measure your progress in eliminating these barriers?

Course Outline

Week 1: Jan 5

Introduction; Disability as Part of Diversity

Week 2: Jan 12

Defining Disability

Readings:

1) Smart, Chapters 1 & 2
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Introduction: Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream” (pp. 1-29)
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900” by John Williams-Searle (pp. 157-186)

Week 11: Mar 23
Legal and Policy Issues
Readings:
1) Longmore and Umansky, “Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare: The Politics of Disability Compensation for American Veterans of World War I” by K. Walter Hickel (pp. 236-267)
2) Longmore and Umansky, “American Disability Policy in the Twentieth Century” by Richard K. Scotch (pp. 375-392)

Weeks 12 & 13: Mar 30 & Apr 6
Social Work and Disability
Readings: Smart, Chapters 7-9

Week 14: Apr 13
Final Class--Final Paper Due
Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with people with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Outlined below are tips to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities.

**General Tips for Communicating with People with Disabilities**

- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

**Tips for Communicating with Individuals Who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

- Speak to the individual when you approach him or her.
- State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- When conversing in a group, remember to identify yourself and the person to whom you are speaking.
- Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- Tell the individual when you are leaving.
- Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking; allow the person to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- Be descriptive when giving directions; verbally give the person information that is visually obvious to individuals who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps.
- If you are offering a seat, gently place the individual's hand on the back or arm of the chair so that the person can locate the seat.

**Tips for Communicating with Individuals Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation (i.e., tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use short, simple sentences. Avoid smoking or chewing gum.
- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- If you telephone an individual who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
- If you do not have a Text Telephone (TTY), dial 711 to reach the national telecommunications relay service, which facilitates the call between you and an individual who uses a TTY.

**Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Mobility Impairments**

- If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level.
- Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
- Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed — ask first.
- Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.
- If you telephone the individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.