Disability Issues: Obstacles and Solutions in Today’s World
SW 773-Section 001
Winter 2003, 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 (to the extent permitted by law) treat any information you provide 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.

3. Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the various social, political and legal forces affecting the lives of people with disabilities.
2. Articulate how various definitions and models of disability affect individuals who have disabilities.
3. Describe the progress that people with disabilities have made in gaining acceptance and greater opportunity for achievement in U.S. society.
4. Identify differences in treatment faced by individuals with disabilities depending on whether their conditions are visible or non-visible.
5. Assess how recent legislative and legal actions have helped or hindered people with disabilities.
6. Discuss ways of working with people who have disabilities in a variety of settings that employ social work skills.

4. Course Design

The instructor will require several readings from required and recommended materials, some of which will be the product of individuals with disabilities. A variety of pedagogical methods will be used, including short lecture, participatory discussions, videos/films, and written assignments. Guest speakers with disabilities will be invited to address specific topics. There will be extensive discussion, and the written assignments will be based on research and reflection.

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity*. Students will examine how disabilities are present without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, social class or other forms of social stratification, and how “disability” should be part of any consideration of “diversity”. Emphasis will be placed on issues of privilege and discrimination, including the forces that work to include and to exclude people with disabilities from the mainstream of society.
- *Social Justice and Social Change*. Detailed information will be given on court cases and their effect on people with disabilities. The history of legal rights and social protest movements will be addressed, as well as how legal and social systems can promote or hinder change.
• *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.* The course will give attention to ways in which current policies and practices address these topics, and will cover issues related to whether disability should be viewed from a “treatment” or “rehabilitation” perspective.

• *Behavioral and Social Science Research.* Students will critically analyze how people who do not have disabilities relate to individuals with disabilities, and how people with disabilities view their treatment by society. Relevant research literature will be addressed.

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


- Smart, Julie (2001). *Disability, Society, and the Individual.* Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Recommended Books


**Course Assignments**

There are four written assignments required for this class. Attendance and participation in class are also required. If you have a topic for any of these written assignments that you think better meets your interests and/or needs, please discuss your idea with me.

**Assignment 1-- This paper is due Jan. 29 and is 20% of your grade.**

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

1) Critique the various models for defining disability by summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of each one. State which one you think is best and give the reasons for your choice. If you think there is a better model that should be used, describe that model and state your reasons for recommending it.

2) Discuss whether U.S. society has treated people with disabilities fairly. Provide examples to illustrate your conclusion. Have people with disabilities encountered more or less discrimination than other groups in our society? What evidence supports your answer?

**Assignment 2--This paper is due Feb. 19 and is 20% of your grade.**

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

1) Analyze how the media portrays people with disabilities. Which images are positive and which ones are negative? Do fund-raising telethons help or harm individuals with disabilities? Suggest ways to educate the public about disability issues that affirm the dignity and value of people with disabilities.

2) Discuss how the health care system treats people with disabilities. Does this system do a better job of treating some disabilities than others? If so, why do you think this is the case? Provide examples to illustrate your conclusions.
Assignment 3-- This paper is due Mar. 26 and is 20% of your grade.
Students will write a 3-4 page paper on one of the following:
   1) Select a book written by a person with a disability and prepare a book review.
      Provide examples as you answer these questions. How well does this person
      articulate the issues that are important to her/himself and to other individuals with
      disabilities? Did this book give you a better understanding of what it is like to
      live with a disability in this country? Does this book “help” people with
      disabilities in any way?
   2) Choose one disability and describe the ways in which this condition may affect an
      individual. Are there specific barriers that a person with this disability is likely to
      encounter? What resources are available to assist this person? If you are a social
      worker, are there ways you can help to remove barriers and improve resources?

Assignment 4-- This paper is due Apr. 16 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 8  Introduction; Disability as Part of Diversity

Week 2: Jan 15  Defining Disability
Readings:
1) Smart, Chapters 1 & 2
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Introduction: Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream” (pp. 1-29)

Week 3: Jan 22  Discrimination and Inequality
Readings:
1) Smart, Chapters 3 & 4
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History” by Douglas C. Baynton (pp. 33-57)

Weeks 4 & 5: Jan 29 & Feb 5  Societal Attitudes Toward Disability
Readings:
1) Smart, Chapters 5 & 6

Week 6: Feb 12  Access to Health Care and Housing
Readings:
1) Longmore and Umansky, “A Pupil and a Patient: Hospital-Schools in Progressive America” by Brad Byrom (pp. 133-156)
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Martyred Mothers and Merciful Fathers: Exploring Disability and Motherhood in the Lives of Jerome Greenfield and Raymond Repouille” by Janice A. Brockley (pp. 293-312)

Week 7: Feb 19  Access to Education
Readings:
1) Longmore and Umansky, “Reading between the Signs: Defending Deaf Culture in Early Twentieth-Century America” by Susan Burch (pp. 214-235)

Semester Break: Feb 26
Weeks 8 & 9: Mar 5 & 12  Access to Employment
Readings:
1) Longmore and Umansky, “Trying to Idle: Work and Disability in The Diary of Alice James” by Natalie A. Dykstra (pp. 107-130)
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900” by John Williams-Searle (pp. 157-186)

Week 10: Mar 19  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)

Week 11: Mar 26  The Disability Rights Movement
Readings:
1) Longmore and Umansky, “Helen Keller and the Politics of Civic Fitness” by Kim Nielsen (pp. 268-290)
2) Longmore and Umansky, “Blind and Enlightened: The Contested Origins of the Blinded Veterans Association” by David A. Gerber (pp. 313-334)

Weeks 12 & 13: Apr 2 & 9  Social Work and Disability
Readings: Smart, Chapters 7-9

Week 14: Apr 16  Final Paper Due