

WS 399
GENDER & DISABILITIES
Fall Term 2009

Portland State University
Women's Studies Department
WS 399-008, CRN 14037
Mon/Wed 12:00-1:50

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Office hours by appt.

Course Description

This course focuses on the exploration of concepts, experiences, history, theory and social construction of disability issues through a feminist lens. We will examine how disability intersects with gender, class, race, and sexuality. It is designed to be a critical analysis of the culture of disability, looking at the political and social forces that are deep-rooted in representations of women with disabilities—both visible and invisible. The class engages such topics as sexuality, relationships, reproductive and parenting rights, employment issues, risks of abuse, body image, stereotypes, media portrayal, law, self-determination and advocacy. We explore opportunities for activism and expand our agency for social change.

Classroom Approach

Each week we will focus on a specific topic relating to feminism and disability. The class is very interactive. Rather than strictly lectures, it will be composed of discussions, speakers, panels, films and readings. Therefore, attendance and participation are crucial to the success of the class. It is expected that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings for that day. In addition to discussions, we will be learning through guest speakers, films, creative projects, and involvement with current events. This class is intended for anyone interested in studying disability, so there will be some students with disabilities and others who do not identify as having a disability. Because there may be discussions of a sensitive nature, it is important to keep the classroom as safe-feeling as possible, showing respect toward one another by being active listeners and honoring confidentiality.

The goals of this class are:

- to gain knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding gender and disability;
- to refine your written and communication skills;
- to recognize barriers and discrimination people with all kinds of disabilities encounter;
- to increase your awareness of disability advocacy and activism.

This syllabus is a guide for the term and may be changed as needed.

Classroom Etiquette

It is important to be respectful of each other, which includes listening when others are talking, being polite when giving responses or feedback, respecting others' opinions, not monopolizing the discussions, and being open to negotiation when opinions differ. Electronic devices should be silenced. No calls or texting during class time. Laptops are for note taking only.

Course Requirements

Two texts are required, available at PSU Bookstore:

**Gendering Disability*, edited by Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchison

**The Rejected Body*, by Susan Wendall

Other readings available on Blackboard, will also be assigned

It is essential that you read the assigned material before class, and come prepared to discuss the readings. In addition to the readings and class participation, you will be required to do a short writing assignment three times during the term. This will be a self-reflection paper based on the information discussed in class. Once during the term you will be required to explore an outside event (play, tv program, movie, book, magazine, etc) that interests you and complete a research paper on the topic. The media choice must depict a main character having a disability or pertain to an issue involving disability. At the end of the term, each student will be required to display a final creative project involving some aspect of disability that interests you. This is intended to be not only be an imaginative and original project, but to be fun for you! These will be shared during our last scheduled class before finals week for all to enjoy. Specific instructions for the papers and presentations will be given in class. No late papers will be accepted.

The class will be using a PSU software program called Blackboard for reading assignments, submitting written work, viewing my comments on your work, sharing updates on the class, posting and viewing grades, and communicating through email. We will be reviewing Blackboard in class. You will need to register for an ODIN account through Informational Services in order to obtain Blackboard access. You will need to check Blackboard frequently each week for announcements, notes, handouts or email messages..

As mentioned above, attendance is mandatory, and a large part of your grade. Understandably, sometimes life events arise. If you need to miss a class, please notify me before class time, either by telephone or through Blackboard.

Plagiarism in writing is NOT tolerated, and will be addressed according to university policy. Your work must be your own, and any writing or ideas of others that you use in your papers must be properly cited. Honesty and integrity are vital.

Grading

Attendance & participation, including final	200 points
Reflection/analysis papers—three	300 points
Outside event	50 points
Final creative project/research & analysis	250 points

If you have special learning needs in order to complete your work, please let me know at the beginning of the term. Or you may contact the Disability Resource Center @ 503-725-4005 on the 1st floor of the Smith Center.

Tentative Class Schedule*RB=The Rejected Body; GD=Gendering Disability; BB=Blackboard***Week 1 Introduction of class, Women's Studies, and Disability Studies**

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
9/28	Introductions-each other & the class Intersection of gender & disability Syllabus & class organization		
9/30	Definitions of disability—visible & invisible Stereotypes of disability, upsurge of disability studies	<i>RB</i> : chap 2	

Week 2: Social Construction of Disability

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
10/5	What is "normal" versus "abnormal"—who determines it? Hierarchy of Disability, patriarchy & oppression/exclusion	<i>RB</i> : chap 1 <i>BB</i> : Beyond Pedestals (29 pp)	
10/7	Experiential exercise		

Week 3: History of Disability Movement/Policies & Laws

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
10/12	Disability movement history, intersection with feminist movement	<i>GD</i> : The Sexist Inheritance of the Disability Movement, pgs 294-300 <i>BB</i> : Struggle for Change 71-87	
10/14	Film on Disability Movement Guest Speaker		Analysis Paper 1

Week 4: Matrix of Oppression/Gender Roles

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
10/19	Is there a double discrimination for women with disabilities? Characterization of genders and disability Identity issues	<i>GD</i> : Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory, pgs 73-106 <i>GD</i> : Disabled Masculinity, pgs 166-187 <i>BB</i> : Obstacles to Equality, 17 pp	Meet with me regarding your creative project—have your idea in mind
10/21	Guest Speaker-		

Week 5: Body Image/Self Esteem/Relationships

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
10/26	How do women with disabilities come to terms with bodies that depart from cultural norms of acceptance? Relationships/community/cultural constructs/	<i>GD</i> : Inseparable..., pgs 107-118 <i>GD</i> : Bodies in Trouble, pgs 145-165 <i>GD</i> : Feeling Her Way, pgs 192-215	
10/28	Experiential Exercise & film		Analysis Paper 2

Week 6: Sexuality/Reproductive & Parenting Rights/Myths

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
11/2	The myth of asexuality & disability Intersex & Disability Debate on reproduction & parenting rights/myth of control	<i>GD</i> : Why the Intersexed Shouldn't be Fixed, pgs 45-60 <i>GD</i> : Helen Keller's Love Life, pgs 181-191 <i>RB</i> : Chapter 4 <i>BB</i> : Body Beautiful/Body Perfect	
11/4	Guest Speaker Film		Outside event

Week 7: Health/Violence/Abuse & Self Determination/Independent Living

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
11/9	What does the health system take care of women with disabilities? Who advocates for services? Violence and abuse of women with disabilities	<i>BB</i> : Understanding the Experiences of & Advocating for the Service and Resources <i>BB</i> : Breaking Free <i>BB</i> : Understanding Violence Against Women with Disabilities	
11/11	Veteran's Day—No class		

Week 8: Creative Presentations

11/16	Presentation to class (10 min each)		
11/18	Presentation to class (10 min each)		All research papers due

Week 9: Disability in Media, Literature, Culture

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
11/23	Discussion—the beauty queen & the poster child	<i>GD</i> : Women and Emerging Disabilities, pgs 286-293, <i>RB</i> , chap 7 <i>GD</i> : Disability, Gender and National Identity in the Painting Of Frida Kahlo, pgs 216-232	
11/25	Film & Guest Speaker		

Week 10: Educational & Employment Issues

Date	Class Content	Readings	Due
11/30	Economic, social & political disparities experienced by women with disabilities	<i>GD</i> : Interpreting Women, pgs 61-72 <i>GD</i> : Is There Still a "Double Handicap? Pgs 253-271	
12/2	Film		Analysis Paper 3

Week 11: 12/ 2 Final—Attendance required, wrap-up, evals