

Philosophy 409 – Philosophy and Disability (Tu/Th 1:30-3:20 p.m., Loew 102)

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Brief description: Disability has attracted significant attention in philosophy and bioethics, but historically in a very negative light (e.g., it is raised in regard to how disabled a newborn must be in order to justify non-treatment, or why assisted suicide/euthanasia might be justified when some lives are so disabled as to make death preferable to continued existence). This treatment of disability rests on longstanding misconceptions and stereotypes about the disadvantages of impairment. Recent philosophical work from a wide variety of perspectives (e.g., feminist, liberal, communitarian) suggests that philosophers would benefit from rethinking the nature of our moral and political obligations through attention to the concept and experience of disability. Are impairment and dependence at the core of what it is to be human (much more than traditional liberal social contract theories have admitted)? What are society's obligations to people with non-standard functioning in regard to inclusion in the dominant cooperative framework? Attention to the concept and experience of impairment and disability allows us to rethink some of the fundamental philosophical assumptions about personhood, dependence, autonomy, opportunity, and justice.

Learning objectives: Students will learn to identify philosophical issues regarding disability and impairment, articulate the medical and social/civil rights models of disability, relate these models of disability to existing health and social disparities between disabled and non-disabled groups, consider how perceptions of disability have informed philosophical criteria for personhood, formulate arguments about these issues, and critique the arguments of others.

This course is an elective for the UW disability studies minor; it is also a writing course.

Texts:

The Minority Body Elizabeth Barnes Oxford University Press, 2016.

Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy (eds. Eva Kittay and Licia Carlson), Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Other required readings will be posted on our canvas course site.

Requirements:

Reading responses (8 required, out of 16+ opportunities)	15%
Critical paper one (5-7 pp.)	30%
Critical paper two (7-8 pp.)	35%
Related news (two sessions)	10%
Class participation	10%

Students with disabilities may contact Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379/FAX or email uwdss@u.washington.edu for assistance. If you have a disability or any other situation that requires academic accommodation, please discuss this with me early in the quarter, or in a timely manner.

Assessment details

Reading responses (15%): To get full credit, each student will turn in eight reading responses (from about 19 opportunities). For the class sessions you choose, write 1 page that critically engages the material in the assigned readings for the day. When multiple readings are assigned, you can focus on one or consider them together. The reading response should include a *short* summary of the main argument/point of the reading, and your own critical reaction to it (objections, extensions, interesting implications, comparisons with previous readings, etc.). These will be graded pass/fail. A failing grade may be given for reasons such as inaccurate representation or misreading of the main argument/point, lack of a clear link to the reading, or overall incomprehensibility (significant problems with sentence structure, grammar, etc.). The reading responses will be due at the beginning of class, and students must typically be present in the class to get credit for them (documented medical excuses are acceptable). These are intended to keep students reading, and to ensure good discussions in class. Failing reading responses can be dropped if additional passing reading responses are turned in before the end of the term. My recommendation is to get started early!

Critical paper 1 (30%): Each student will write a critical paper of 5-7 pp on an assigned topic or one agreed to by the instructor. This paper will need to include a brief introduction to the topic, a short exegesis of an argument to be analyzed, consideration of at least one strong objection to that argument as well as a possible response to the objection, and an assessment of the overall merits of the argument.

Critical paper 2 (35%): Each student will write a critical paper of 7-8 pp on an assigned topic or one agreed to by the instructor. This paper will take the same general form as the first critical paper, with more emphasis on the student's own argument.

Participation (10%): This will be a discussion-heavy course, and students are expected to be in class to participate. I recognize that students participate in different ways, and will allocate these extra points according to how students engage with the course materials and their peers in class (through participation in discussion, short in-class writing exercises, small groups, etc.).

Related news (10%): The related news assignment requires each student to bring in some article or press release or blog entry (or other forms of media) on a topic related to the course materials (not necessarily for just that day). We'll start each session with a short consideration of those articles. Each student should bring news items to at least two sessions.

Tentative schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy of Disability

Tu Jan. 3 Introduction to the course/what is philosophy of disability; watch *Talk* video.
Th Jan. 5 Social, minority, and difference models of disability (read Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, entry on Disability: Definitions, Models, Experience
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/disability/>; Linton Ch. 2)

Week 2-5: What is Disability?

Tu Jan. 10 Thinking through some examples: Blindness and mobility impairment (listen to NPR show *Invisibilia*, Batman: <http://www.npr.org/podcasts/510307/invisibilia>; read Kent "Somewhere a Mockingbird", Hockenberry "Fear of Bees", and McBryde Johnson "Unspeakable Conversations")

- Th Jan. 12 Questioning the social model (Crow – “Including All Our Lives”, Wendell -- “Unhealthy Disabled”)
- Tu Jan. 17 Rethinking impairment (Tremain – “On the Government of Disability” and Goodley -- “‘Learning Difficulties’, the Social Model of Disability, and Impairment”; recommended, Cole)
- Th Jan. 19 MURDERBALL – film screened (students can write a summary and response to the film to take the place of one reading response).
- Tu Jan. 24 Barnes – chapter 1: Constructing Disability; Garland Thomson -- “Conserving Disability”
Th Jan. 26 Barnes – chapters 2 & 3: Bad-difference and mere-difference; the value-neutral model
paper topics out
- Tu Jan. 31 Barnes – chapter 4: Taking Their Word for It; Goering – “You say you’re happy, but...”
Th Feb.2 Barnes – chapter 5: Causing disability

Weeks 6-8: Extending the Social/Solidarity Models Beyond Physical Disability

- Tu Feb. 7 Loving Lampposts (film) and listen to podcast: Juicervoise
(<http://www.radiolab.org/story/juicervoise/>)
- Th Feb. 9 On the Autism Spectrum – readings from the online *Disability Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 30, 1, 2010): read Savarese & Savarese (intro) and pieces by Ne’eman, and Baggs (go to <http://dsq-sds.org/>) **First papers due**
- Tu Feb. 14 Narratives of autism (Brownlow article “Re-Presenting Autism” and McGeer, in book; recommended, Hacking in book)
- Th Feb. 16 Psychiatric disability (Lewis “A Mad Fight” and Saks,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/opinion/sunday/schizophrenic-not-stupid.html>;
<http://chronicle.com/article/Mental-Illness-in-Academe/49233/>); also listen to podcast: The Problem with the Solution (<http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/483855073/the-problem-with-the-solution>)
- Tu Feb. 21 McMahan and Jaworska (in book)
- Th Feb. 23 Ikaheimo – “Personhood and the Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities” and Kittay – “At the Margins of Moral Personhood”

Weeks 9&10: Disability justice and cognitive disability

- Tu Feb. 28 Nussbaum and Berube (book)
- Th March 2 Stark and Wong (book) **paper topics out**
- Tu March 7 Wolff and Shoemaker (book)
- Th March 9 Francis/Silvers (book) and course wrap-up/evaluations

Final papers are due Monday March 13, by 5 p.m.