

History 3896G
Disability History: An Introduction
Winter 2024

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This is a **draft** syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

Course Description

Representing 15 percent of the global population, people with disabilities comprise the world's largest minority. But being more than just statistics, they have been part of history and have shaped it in significant ways.

Disability History will explore the world history of people with disabilities. We will discuss how ideas of being “normal” and “disabled” have changed over time and how they have deeply marked subjects as diverse as religion, citizenship, and politics. We will also see how ideas around disability and normality are tied to broader historical patterns of immigration, colonialism, medicine, capitalism, and war. Looking at these subjects through the lens of disability will produce new insight into who we consider historically significant, why we study history, and may make us ask new questions about the broader changes in our societies. Fundamentally, this course raises new questions about what it means to be human.

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above.

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to:

1. Identify how disability and ability have fundamentally shaped historical events and transitions.
2. Identify and compare the social model of disability to the medical model of disability.
3. Analyze primary sources through the lens of disability.
4. Analyze secondary sources, including their argument, methods, strengths, limitations, and significance for the field and/or implications for broader public discourse.

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks. All available readings will be on OWL.

Methods of Evaluation

All assignments will be discussed further in class. Essays are to be submitted through the OWL site. There is no need to submit a paper copy. Your grade will be broken down as seen below:

Participation: 20%

Primary Source Analysis: 20%

Presentation: 10%

Research Essay: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation-20%: This class is centered around our engagement with the weekly readings. Engagement will be graded based on your completion of the assigned readings, reflection of the material, and your active engagement in our weekly discussions. Students will receive an email informing of their current participation grade after week six and they will receive their final participation grade after week twelve.

Primary Source Analysis-due February 13th-20%: Students must write a 1,200-word analysis of an image relating to disability. Students must identify the disability being portrayed, the people in the image, who produced the image and why they produced it. They then must contextualize the image and explain what it reveals about disability history in that period of time. In addition, they must also explain how one could ethically use the image.

Presentation- due March 5th- 10%: Students will give a 5-minute presentation that introduces their research essay in progress. They will identify their topic, the time period, and the historical question that they are trying to answer. Students will bring up issues that they are facing with or issues that they anticipate. There will then be an open discussion to discuss improving the project. To accompany the presentation, students will provide their classmates and instructor with a single-page, double-spaced, one-sided handout.

Research Essay- due March 29th- 25%: Students must write a twelve-to-fifteen-page research paper on a topic in disability history. They will be expected to use between twelve and fifteen sources, two thirds of which will be secondary sources (articles and books authored by scholars) and one third will consist of primary sources (items produced in the time that they are studying: newspapers, diaries, medical records, and so on).

Final Exam-25%: The final exam will consist of four essay style questions. Students will choose one question to answer. The exam will be cumulative of the entire semester and students will be encouraged to answer with examples directly from our weekly readings and our weekly discussions.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week One- Why Study Disability History?

Cathrine Kudlick: "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other,'" *American History Review*, vol. 108, no.3 (2003): 763-93.

Geoffrey Reaume, "Disability History in Canada: Present Work in the Field and Future Prospects," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, vol. 1. no.1 (2012): 35-81.

Jessica Secmezsoy- Urquhart, "Why I do Disability History: A Disabled Historian's Perspective," allofusdha.org/reflections/why-i-do-disability-history-a-disabled-historians-perspective, July 6, 2020 [Why I Do Disability History: A Disabled Historian's Perspective](#)

Week Two- Writing Disability History

Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing disability history: problems, perspectives and sources', *Disability & Society*, vol.14 no.2 (1999): 189–201

C.F. Goodey, "Introduction" in *A History of Intelligence: and "Intellectual Disability": The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe* (London, U.K.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016): 1-12

Fedwa Malti-Douglas, "Mentalités and Marginality: Blindness and the Mamlūk Civilization," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, eds. Clifford Edmind Bosworth et al. (Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1989), 211-38.

Week Three: Indigenous Histories and Disability

Susan Burch, "Dislocated Histories: The Canton Asylum for Insane Indians," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* Vol 2. No. 2 (2014): 141-62.

Robert Menzies and Ted Palys, "Turbulent Spirits: Aboriginal Patients in the British Columbia Psychiatric System, 1879-1950" in *Mental Health and Canadian Society: Historical Perspectives*, edited by James Moran and David Wright (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006): 149–175.

Esmé Cleall, "Jane Groom and the Deaf Colonists: Empire, Emigration and the Agency of Disabled People in the late Nineteenth-Century British Empire," *History Workshop Journal*, No. 81 (2016): 39-61.

Week Four: Slavery and Disability

Jenifer L. Barclay, "Mothering the 'Useless': Black Motherhood, Disability, and Slavery," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* Vol.2 No.2 (2014): 115-140.

Dea H. Boster, "'Unfit for Ordinary Purposes': Disability, Slaves, and Decision Making in the Antebellum American South," in *Disability Histories* 201-217.

Stefanie Kennedy and Melanie J. Newton, "The Hauntings of Slavery: Colonialism and the Disabled Body in the Caribbean," in *Disability in the Global South: The Critical Handbook*, eds. Shaun Grech and Karen Soldatic, (New York: Springer, 2016), 379-92.

Week Five: The Freak Show and the Ethics of Representation

Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "The Cultural Work of American Freak Shows, 1835-1940," in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 55-80.

Holly E. Martin, "Cheng and Eng Bunker, 'The Original Siamese Twins': Living, Dying, and Continuing under the Spectator's Gaze," *The Journal of American Culture* Vol. 34, No.4 (2011): 372-88.

Jane Nichoas, “A Debt to the Dead? Ethics, Photography, History, and the Study of Freakery,” *Historie sociale/Social History*, Vol.47, No. 93 (2014): 139-155.

Week Six: Eugenics and Disability

Douglas Baynton, “‘The Undesirability of Admitting Deaf Mutes’: American Immigration Policy and Deaf Immigrants, 1882-1924,” *Sign Language Studies* Vol.6 No.4 (2006): 391-415.

Andrew A. Gentes, “‘Completely Useless’: Exiling the Disabled to Tsarist Siberia,” *Sibirica: Interdisciplinary Journal of Siberian Studies* 10.2 (2011): 26-49.

Edward Hon-Sing Wong, “‘The brains of a nation’: The Eugenist Roots of Canada’s Mental Health Field and the Building of a White Non-disabled Nation,” *Canadian Review of Social Policy* Vol. 75 (2016): 1–29.

Week Seven: War and Disability

Aparna Nair, “‘These Curly-Bearded, Olive-Skinned Warriors’: Medicine, Prosthetics, Rehabilitation and the Disabled Sepoy in the First World War, 1914-1920,” *Social History of Medicine* 33.3 (2020): 798-818.

Mark Ross Bookman, *Politics and Prosthetics: 150 Years of Disability in Japan* (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2021), 39-72.

Week Eight: Gender, Labour and Disability

Nancy Forestell, “‘And I Feel Like I’m Dying from Mining for Gold’: Disability, Gender, and the Mining Community, 1920-1950,” *Labour: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 3, No. 3 (2006): 77–93.

Sarah F. Rose, “‘We do not prefer cripples, but they can earn full wages’: Mechanization, Efficiency, and the Quest for Interchangeable Workers, 1880s-1920s,” in *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Jaipreet Virdi, ‘Material traces of disability: Andrew Gawley’s steel hands’, *Nuncius*, Vol.35, No.3 (2020): 606–31.

Week Nine: Medicine and Disability

Bonnie Evans, “The Autism Paradox: How an autism diagnosis became both a clinical label and an identity; a stigma to be challenged and a status to be embraced,” *Aeon Essays*, <https://aeon.co/essays/the-intriguing-history-of-the-autism-diagnosis>

Claire Edington, “Going in and Getting out of the Colonial Asylum: Families and Psychiatric Care in French Indochina,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 55. No.3 (2013): 725-755.

Week Ten: Space and Disability

Aimi Hamraie, “Sloped Technoscience: Curb Cuts, Critical Frictions, and Disability (Maker) Cultures,” in *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2017), 95-130.

Bill McCoy, “Leprosy, Piety, and Identity: The Mbuluzi Leprosy Hospital as Informal Pilgrimage Site, 1948-92,” *Studies in World Christianity* 20.1 (2014): 54-69.

Cassandra Hartblay, “Good Ramps, Bad Ramps: Centralized Design Standards and Disability Access in Urban Russian Infrastructure,” *American Ethnologist* 44.1 (2017): 9-22.

Week Eleven: Activism

Fikru Negash Gebrekidan, "Disability Rights Activism in Kenya, 1959-1964: History from Below," *African Studies Review* Vol. 55 No.3 (December 2012): 103-22

Jennifer L. Erkulwater, "How the Nation's Largest Minority Became White: Race Politics and the Disability Rights Movement, 1970-1980," *Journal of Policy History* Vol. 30. No.3 (July 2018): 367-99.

Week Twelve: A Look Ahead

Emma Calrigo, "Climate Disaster Risk, Disability, and Resilience," *Current History*, vol. 120, No.829, (2021): 320-325.

Absences and Late Assignments

Students must attend 75% (9 out of 12) of classes this semester in order to pass the course. Students must submit all course assignments in order to pass the course.

Additional Statements

The best way to contact me is to send me an email (kreill22@uwo.ca). I will try my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

Use of generative AI tools:

Students must obtain permission from me before using generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course. Using these tools without my permission puts your academic integrity at risk.