Geographies of Disability

Course Overview

This course provides students with the opportunity to engage with key contributions to the geographic literature concerned with disability issues and disabled people’s experiences of society and space. The course is organized as a senior seminar. Five classes are devoted to in-depth discussion of two chapters from course texts. In addition, we will view and discuss three documentary films concerned with disability. The course concludes with student presentations on what a particular geographer has contributed to our understanding of disability issues and disabled people’s lives.

Course Texts


Expectations

This is a senior seminar course with considerable weight placed on student-led discussion of the readings. I want to be clear with you that the course will not work if students don’t complete the readings, think about the content of the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the material. As this is a relatively small class, it will be very clear if you have not read and prepared for discussion.

As indicated below, 40% of your final grade will come from active participation in the class. Each week I will monitor the quality of students’ participation (e.g. insightfulness of questions and comments, demonstrated comprehension of key themes within the readings and documentary films). Participation grades will be based on these evaluations. This does not mean that you have to say as much as possible in class –keep in mind that quantity and quality are not the same thing. But I do expect each of you to contribute something to discussion each week.

Assessment

Assessment for this course is based on participation in class, as well as completion of
an annotated bibliography and a presentation on a particular geographer’s contributions to our understanding of disability issues and disabled people’s lives. The distribution of grades is as follows:

1. Attendance 10%
2. Active participation in class: 40% (20% leading discussion and 20% general contributions to class discussion—the latter includes 5% for the evaluation of discussion preparation notes.)
3. Annotated bibliography: 25%
4. Presentation: 25%
Total 100%

Readings and Participation

Five classes are devoted to in-depth discussion of two chapters from the course texts. To prepare for these classes you MUST complete the readings prior to class and prepare notes to help you participate in the discussion. The following tasks, adapted from Fawcett Hill’s (1977) Learning Through Discussion, can be used to structure your discussion preparation:

1. Definition of terms and concepts
   □ List terms or concepts of which you are unsure.
   □ Where possible, suggest what you think the term/concept means or give an example to clarify the meaning.

2. Statement of author’s message
   □ Write down your version of a brief, general statement of the author’s message

3. Identification of major themes
   □ Identify major themes in the reading
   □ For each theme, formulate a question to initiate discussion

4. Integration of material with other knowledge
   □ How does this reading relate to material covered in this or other classes (does it substantiate, contradict or amplify previous material)?
   □ How might this material relate to examples beyond class (media content, personal experiences, etc)?

5. Evaluation of author’s presentation
   □ What was your overall reaction to the reading?
   □ Formulate a question to elicit others’ reactions.
   □ Explain why you would support/question the validity of the author’s arguments. Explain why/how you think the material is or is not useful.

For each class in which we discuss readings from the course texts you should come to class with a copy of the readings and your notes for discussion. Two or
three students will be assigned to lead the discussion, and I expect all other students to participate in the discussion. At the end of each session I will ask a few students to hand in their notes for evaluation. These will be assessed based on substantive content and evidence of critical thinking in relation to the reading. The notes do not need to be typed up.

**Course Policies**

1. Contact with me: I am available to meet with you by appointment (please arrange a meeting via email: chouinar@mcmaster.ca). I will try to respond to email queries within 1-2 working days, however you should not expect an immediate response to email queries. What this means is that you cannot rely on last minute help to complete assignments. *Please plan accordingly.*

2. If you require academic accommodation for any aspect of this course please let me know this as soon as possible.

3. **Late assignments and absence from class:** A penalty of 10% will be assigned for each day an assignment is late. If the assignment is more than three days late it will not be graded. Absence from class will result in a diminished participation grade. Exceptions to these policies will be made if there is evidence of a medical or family emergency. All documentation of such emergencies should be submitted to the office of the Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences.

4. **Academic Dishonesty:**

   Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. You are urged to treat this matter with the utmost seriousness.

   It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/policy/AcademicIntegrity.pdf](http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/policy/AcademicIntegrity.pdf)

   The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

   1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
   2. Improper collaboration in group work.
   3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

   In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal
plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Students are asked to enroll themselves in this class using the class ID () and Turnitin password provided in class.

5. Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Please note: The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.
Course Schedule & Topics

Monday January 11                                      Introduction
(8:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.)

Monday January 18                                      Seminar Discussion: B. Gleeson
                                                        (1999) Geographies of Disability,
                                                        chapters 5 and 6.

Monday January 25                                      Seminar Discussion: Gleeson,
                                                        chapters 7 and 8.

Monday February 1                                      Seminar Discussion: Gleeson
                                                        chapters 9 and 10.

Monday February 8                                      Film (Lives Worth Living)

Monday February 15                                     No class (mid-term recess).

Monday February 22                                     No class. Work on presentation.

Monday February 29                                     Film (See What I’m Saying)

Monday March 7*                                        Seminar Discussion: V. Chouinard, E.
                                                        Hall and R. Wilton eds. (2010) Towards
                                                        Enabling Geographies: ‘Disabled’ Bodies
                                                        and Minds in Society and Space chapters
                                                        1 and 4.

*Annotated Bibliography due (in class)

Monday March 14                                        Seminar Discussion: Towards Enabling
                                                        Geographies. Chapters 8 and 11.

Monday March 21                                        Student Presentations

Monday March 28                                        Student Presentations.

Monday April 4                                         Film (Fixed) and Concluding Thoughts