

HIS 735 History of Disability
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Safety Zone office

Course Objectives: Students are challenged to study a newer field of history, and to apply diverse analytical methods in their study of American Disability history. Comparative studies and non-traditional historical sources play a central role in this course, and students will apply their research in disability studies to a reinterpretation of general American history.

Course Description: This course will address the meaning of disability in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is a cultural study of disability, and will confront the social construction of disability, its representation and changing meaning in society. By challenging common social assumptions, and expanding social historical studies of marginalized groups, this course also refocuses the study of such major themes in history as nativism, the role of media, community histories, eugenics, gender roles, the idea of progress, and the perception of normalcy.

Course Requirements:

Film and readings review project	20%
Homework	20%
Participation	20%
FDR review	20%
Thought paper	20%

This is a seminar course. Students are expected to complete a one-page précis for each of their daily reading/viewing assignments, and present their findings to the class. You are expected to attend every class. Failure to do so will have a negative impact on your final grade.

Required texts

Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History (NDH)*
Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book (WBMB)*

Additional readings will be distributed in class

Recommended readings:

- Bogdan, Robert. *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities For Amusement And Profit.*
- Davis, Lennard. *Enforcing Normalcy.*
- Ferguson Philip M. *Abandoned To Their Fate : Social Policy And Practice Toward Severely Retarded People In America, 1820-1920*
- Gregory, Hugh. *FDR's Splendid Deception.*
- Haller, Mark. *Eugenics.*
- Koestler, Frances. *The Unseen Minority: A Social History of Blindness in the United States.*
- Noll, Steven. *Feeble-Minded In Our Midst: Institutions For The Mentally Retarded In The South, 1900-1940.*
- Norden, Martin. *Cinema of Isolation.*
- Pernick, Martin. *Black Stork: Eugenics And The Death Of "Defective" Babies In American Medicine And Motion Pictures Since 1915.*
- Reilly, Philip. *Surgical Solution*
- Shapiro, Joseph. *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement.*
- Stiker, Henri-Jacques. *A History of Disability*
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland, *Freakery*
- Trent, Robert. *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States.*
- Winzer, Margaret. *From Margin to Mainstream: A History of Special Education*

Schedule

Week 1: **Defining Disability, meanings of disability; medical versus cultural interpretations** (NDH) [watch "King Gimp"]

Due

5/28: Baynton, Chap. 1 in NDH; Stiker, handout

5/29: Kudlick, Chap. 7 in NDH; Freberg, Laura Bridgman

5/30: Elizabeth Grosz, "Intolerable Ambiguity: Freak as/at the Limit," In RGT, *Freakery*, 69-81; Nielsen, Chap. 10 in NDH

5/31 or 6/1: Nora Groce, "'The Town Fool': An Oral History of a Mentally retarded Individual in Small Town Society," in Philip Ferguson et al, *Interpreting Disability* (New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1992); Craig MacAndrew and Robert Edgerton, " The

Everyday Life of Institutionalized 'Idiot'," *Human Organization* 23, no. 4 (Winter 1964): 312-318.

Week 2: Science and pseudo science; representations

Due

6/2: Brockley, Chap. 11 in *NDH*; Williams-Searle, Chap. 6 in *NDH*

6/3: Kraut, "'Proper Precautions': Searching for Illness on Ellis Island"; Winzer, Feebleminded OR Pernick/Reilly sections.

6/4: Individual readings on Prosthetics:

everyone reads: Katherine Ott, "The Sum of Its Parts: An Introduction to Modern Histories of Prosthetics," *Artificial Parts*, 1-44.

- 1) Kirsten E. Gardner, "From Cotton to Silicone: Breast Prosthetics before 1950," Ott et al, 102-146.
- 2) Katherine Ott, "Hard Wear and Soft Tissue: Craft and Commerce in Artificial Eyes," Ott et al, 147-170.
- 3) David Serlin, "Engineering Masculinity: Veterans And Prosthetics After World War Two," Ott et al, 45-74.
- 4) Elspeth Brown, "The Prosthetics Of Management: Motion Study, Photography, And The Industrialized Body In World War I America," Ott et al, 249-81.
- 5) Raman Srinivasan, "Technology Sits Cross-Legged: Developing the Jaipur Foot Prosthesis," Ott et al, 327-348.
- 6) Stephen Mihm, "'A Limb Which Shall be Presentable in Polite Society,'" Ott et al 82-99
- 7) Jennifer Davis-McDaid, "'How a One-Legged Rebel Lives,'" Ott et al, 119-143.
- 8) Henri Stiker, *A History Of Disability*, chap. 6: Birth of Rehabilitation.

6/5 Representation: Robert Bogdan, "The Social Construction of Freaks," In RGT, *Freakery*, 23-37; David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization," In RGT, *Freakery*, 38-54.

6/6 *WBMB*, Chap. 6,7

Week 3: Representation cntd. and activism

Due

6/9 **FDR paper DUE;** (in class) watch Best Years

6/10: David A. Gerber, "Heroes And Misfits: The Troubled Social Reintegration Of Disable Veterans In The Best Years Of Our Lives," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1994): 545-74; Gerber, Chap. 12 in *NDH*.

6/11 Beth Haller, "The Misfit and Muscular Dystrophy," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21, no. 4 (1994): 142-149, Longmore, "Conspicuous Contributions and American Cultural Dilemmas: Telethon Rituals...", (from Mitchell and Snyder, *The Body and Physical Difference*)

6/12 Activism: *WBMB*, Chap. 4 and 5; Shaprio, ILM chapter (from *No Pity*)

6/13 Policy and Personal: Scotch, Chap. 14 in *NDH*; *WBMB*, Chap. 13; wrap up

Final project due Friday June 20 by 4:00