Disability Studies

Ashby, C. The trouble with normal: the struggle for meaningful access for middle school students with developmental disability labels. Disability & Society, 25 (3), 345-358.
"This paper illuminates the ways that ableism pervades middle school settings and then outlines a typology of particular ways of being and performing that are privileged and an illusion of normalcy maintained".

Blatt, B., & Kaplan, F. (1974). Christmas in purgatory: A photographic essay on mental retardation. Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press.
This is a reprinted edition of Blatt and Kaplan's 1966 photographic expose of conditions in America's institutions. Shot with a hidden camera, Christmas in Purgatory depicts overcrowded and dehumanizing conditions found at eight institutions in the Northeast. Blatt was one of the few professionals to speak out against institutional warehousing in the 1960s. Kaplan's photos and Blatt's eloquent writing spark the deinstitutionalization and community inclusion movements.

Bogdan, R. (1988). Freak show: Presenting human oddities for amusement and profit. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
A social history of the depiction of "human oddities," including people with disabilities, for amusement and profit. Freak Show is a classic study of depictions of disability in popular culture.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, D. (1977). Handicapism. Social Policy, March/April, 14-19.
Written over 25 years ago, this article details the discrimination against people with disabilities that is now called ableism. The authors introduce the concept of handicapism as a way to understand disability as a social construct. They define it as a "set of assumptions and practices that promote the differential and unequal treatment of people because of apparent or assumed physical, mental, or behavioral differences."

Danforth, S., & Gabel, S. (Eds.). (2007). Vital questions facing disability studies in education. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
"This book brings together the best disability studies in education scholars to address the pressing questions facing the field. It provides an introduction to the field for the newcomer, a sharp challenge to the status quo in special and general education, and a map to understanding the serious disability issues confronting education today." (www.amazon.com)

Gabel. S. (Ed.). (2005). Disability studies in education: Reading and theory and method. New York: Peter Lang.
Includes scholarship on disability studies in education related to curriculum theory, critical policy analysis, personal narrative, and much more.

Goode, D. (1994). A world without words: The social construction of children born deaf and blind. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Based on his study of two girls who were born with rubella and are deaf-blind and classified as mentally retarded, Goode argues that despite a use of formal language, human beings can communicate and be understood through other means. He shows how the children created their own set of symbols to construct their reality using senses other than sight and sound.

Hayman, R. L., Jr. (1998). The smart culture: Society, intelligence, and law. New York: New York University Press.
Hayman explores societal notions of intelligence, combining personal stories with history and case law. He argues that smartness is socially constructed. He weaves together a complex web of ideologies, uncovering the discrimination inherent in perpetuating a social hierarchy based on cultural notions of natural superiority.

Linton, S. (1998). Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity. New York: New York University Press.
In this book, Simi Linton studies disability in relation to identity. She argues that Disability Studies must understand the meanings people make of variations in human behavior, appearance, and functioning, not simply acknowledge that these variations "exist." Linton explores the divisions society constructs between those labeled disabled and those who are not. She avoids a medicalized discussion of disability and promotes the notion that people with disabilities need to claim their identities as disabled and as contributing members to the understanding of disability as a socio-political experience.

Michalko, R. (2001). Blindness enters the classroom. Disability & Society, 16, 349-359.
The author shares some of his experiences as a blind professor in order to stress the social construction of blindness and sightedness, the importance of context, and the assumptions of competence implicit in these constructions.

Omansky Gordon, B., & Rosenblum, K. E. (2001). Bringing disability into the sociological frame: A comparison of disability with race, sex, and sexual orientation statuses. Disability & Society, 16, 5-19.
Applying a social constructionist perspective, this article explores the shared characteristics of American constructions of race, sex, sexual orientation, and disability. The discussion considers how each of these statuses is constructed through social processes in which categories of people are (1) named, (2) aggregated and disaggregated, (3) dichotomized and stigmatized, and (4) denied the attributes valued in the culture.

Shapiro, J. P. (1993). No pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement. New York: Times Books.
This selective history explores the disability rights movement and offers a foundation for disability studies. It details many key moments in the struggle for school and community inclusion including the 1988 protest at Gallaudet University and the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Thomson, R. G. (1997). Extraordinary bodies. Figuring physical disability in American culture and literature. New York: Columbia University Press.

The author identifies and challenges the assumed natural hierarchy of normal and abnormal in this book. She explores representations of disability in American culture, describing and resisting ableist notions that continue to hinder school and community inclusion. In a brief conclusion, the author summarizes her intent in this writing "to critique the politics of appearance that governs our interpretations of physical difference, to suggest that disability requires accommodation rather than compensation, and to shift our conception of disability from pathology to identity."