DISABILITY IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

HIST 268 Spring 2019
Tuesdays 3:30–6:30
Memorial Hall 107

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Office Hours:
Wednesdays 10-2
or by appointment

Course Description
This course is designed to build a mature understanding of how the life circumstances and prospects of disabled people are shaped by the tenor and content of entrenched attitudes, barriers, and representations of bodies. Since technology is ubiquitous with disability, this course introduces a critical framework for understanding how technologies can reveal individual experiences with disability, notions of citizenship, gender, sexuality, and identity.

Applying a hands-on material and visual cultural approach, we will examine different technologies of disability. We will analyze how medical and prosthetic technologies enrich, marginalize, or stigmatize disabled people. We will also historicize concepts such as "impairment vs. disability" and "ableism," and examine how cultural reinforcements of "acceptable norms" for bodily behavior were challenged by disabled people. Highlighting the importance of *lived experiences*, we will closely examine the role of users as shapers, collaborators, and manipulators of their own dis/ability technologies and how such control reflected or contradicted social definitions of disability, invisibility, and normality.

Learning Outcomes
This course is designed for you to gain knowledge in material culture and historical research to become familiar with understanding and applying disability theory. A primary goal is for students to develop critical and creative thinking skills and apply those skills in their projects.

Statement of Diversity and Inclusion
This class gathers on the ancestral territory of the Unami-speaking Lenape people. This class is an inclusive learning environment and I am committed to ensuring all students are respected and valued. My intention is to view student diversity in identity and background as a crucial source of strength. This course aims to provide materials and activities to present inclusive histories with respect to gender, sexuality, race, disability, class, culture, and ethnicity. I acknowledge that students have different learning styles and thus, this course is *specifically* designed to be inclusive with regards to assignments and grading. It is expected that for all class activities and discussions, we will together contribute to enriching our learning environment by being respectful of the diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences by listening to others' views. This means all personal attacks or insults that degrade someone's character will not be tolerated. I will gladly honor any requests to address an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me at the start of the semester.

Accessibility
If you have any specific personal and/or academic accessibility requirements (learning disability, physical disability, language comprehension, etc.), I welcome you to speak with me or email me to let me know how to best accommodate your needs, especially if you don't have an apparent disability, have ongoing health issues or are trying to pass. You are NOT obligated to disclose

any of these issues with me, only specify if there's any accommodations required. Trust me when I say I'll understand. If you need any adaptations for course materials (large font, pacing, image description, closed captioning), this is easy for me to do, so let me know. You are also encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Support Services, but it is not a requirement.

My goal is to ensure that all students are able to engage fully in this course – this also means students are expected to attend, participate, and contribute to the seminar.

Professor Availability
Face-to-face contact is the most direct and effective means for communicating with me. I have regular office hours. Email is good too. Per university policy, use your udel.edu email only; I will not reply to any emails sent from other accounts. Use proper email etiquette; it's good practice for post-university correspondence. Professors usually receive dozens of messages daily so do not be concerned if it takes me two days to reply to your email; and don't shy from sending me prompts!

Technology Etiquette
Respect the classroom time: leave the video-watching, social media browsing, and internet shopping for another time. Do not text or send emails during class. Even if it doesn't distract you, it will certainly disrupt your peers' focus and even mine. Use courtesy and common sense. Silence your cellphones. Laptops are for notetaking and accessing course readings only.

Academic Honesty
The University of Delaware Student Guide to Academic Honesty indicates:

> "All students must be honest and forthright in their academic studies. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance."

Read the Statement and outline of violations in plagiarism and cheating:
http://www1.udel.edu/stuguide/17-18/code.html#honesty

Please do not, in any shape or form, commit the act of plagiarism. If you are having **ANY** difficulties with the course material, or with essay writing, or even with reading and understanding, please email me or make an appointment to see me. Any proven violations of Academic Honesty will result be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

ASSIGNMENTS

This is a course about disability technologies: how they are made, who uses them, how they are adapted, and what means we have for accessing them. This is *also* a course on diversity and inclusion that acknowledges everyone has different learning styles.

Thus, you are going to create your own grading system by choosing amongst the three categories listed below to add up to a total grade of 90%, with the remaining 10% a mandatory assignment. Here are the guidelines:

1. ONE assignment must be from EACH category.
2. You are welcome to do the same assignment option twice, if it is different, to add up to a total grade of 90%.
3. Select deadlines that make sense for you, but at least ONE assignment must be due by March 25 for midterm assessment. All assignments must be submitted by May 22.
4. Hand in your grading breakdown with deadlines to me by the second class.

Full assignment details will be distributed in class.

ANALYSIS (35%)	
• Research Paper	• ADA Campus Survey Report
• Research Poster	• Create a 10 min documentary
• Object Analysis	• Graphic Comics Narrative

PRÉCIS (15%)	
• Book Review	• Blog Post
• Op-Ed Article	• Presentation
• Lead 1-hour class discussion	• Condensed Object Analysis
• Create a 1-hour class activity	

PARTICIPATION (10%)	
• Post on class Instagram	• Create a comic strip
• Engaged, active participation in class	• Other creative art response to
• Manage class Twitter feed	readings and course theme(s)

MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT (10%)
• Develop an infographic on a topic related to one of the course themes

You are welcome to discuss alternative options with me at the start of the semester.

COURSE READINGS

There is one required textbook for this course which can be purchased from the University of Delaware library or online. All other readings will be posted on Canvas or are online.

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).

PART I: MEDIATORS OF DISABILITY

February 12: Why Users Matter

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, Introduction.

Katherine Ott, "Material Culture, Technology, and the Body in Disability History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, eds. Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 125-39.

February 19: Exhibition/ism

Elianna Gerut, Sarah Levin, Daniel Rabinovitz, Gabe Rosen, and Ben Schwartz, "It's Time for a National Museum of Disability," *The New York Times* (2 September 2018).

Katherine Ott, "Collective Bodies: What Museums do for Disability Studies," in *Re-Presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, eds. Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 269-79.

Mara Mills and Rebecca Sanchez, "Design with Disability," *Public Books* (2 October 2018).

Bess Williamson, "*Access+Ability*, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution," *Design and Culture: The Journal of the Design Studies Forum*, 10, 2 (2018): 223-26.

February 26: Representations

Jenifer L. Barclay, "Disability, Race, and Gender on the Stage in Antebellum America," in *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, eds. Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 351-68.

Krista A. Murchison, "[Guide Dogs in Medieval Art and Writing]."

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, Chapters 1-3.

PART II: DEVICES & DESIGNS

March 5: Crafting the Body

Leila McNeill, "[The woman who made a device to help disabled veterans feed themselves—and gave it away for free]," *Smithsonian Magazine* (17 October 2018).

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, Chapters 4-5.

Katherine Ott, "Carnage Remembered: Prosthetics in the US Military since the 1860s," in *Materializing the Military,* eds. Bernard Finn and Barton Hacker (London: Science Museum, 2005), 47-64.

David Serlin, "Crippling Masculinity: Queerness and Disability in U.S. Military Culture, 1800-1945," *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* 9 (2003): 149-179.

March 12: Wheelchairs and Mobility Aids

Nicole Belolan, "'Confined to Crutches,'" James Logan and the Material Culture of Disability in Early America," *Pennsylvania Legacies* 17.2 (2017): 6-11.

Emily Noko, "[How Wheelchair Accessibility Ramped Up]," *The Atlantic* (22 June 2017).

Mary Tremblay, Audrey Campbell, and Geoffrey L. Hudson, "When Elevators were for Pianos: An Oral History Account of the Civilian Experience of Using Wheelchairs in Canadian Society. The First Twenty-Five Years: 1945-1970," *Disability and Society* 20.2 (2005): 103-116.

Penny Wolfson, *Enwheeled: History, Design, and the Wheelchair* (New York: Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, 2014), selections.

March 19: Vision and Blindness
This class will be held at Morris Library, where we will be examining the [Mark Samuels Lasner Collection,] with a special lecture by Mark Samuels Lasner.

Holly L. Cooper, "A Brief History of Tactile Writing Systems for Readers with Blindness and Visual Impairments," *See/Hear Newsletter* (Spring 2006).

Kate Torgovnick May, "How technology is changing blindness: 6 talks on how those who can't see can drive cars, take photographs and more," *TEDBlog* (11 September 2013).

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, Chapter 6.

March 26: Accessible America
The first half of this class will be guest lectured by Dr. Bess Williamson

Amy Merrick, "Designing for Disability," *The New Yorker* (16 April 2015).

Saba Salman, "What would a truly disabled-accessible city look like?" *The Guardian* (14 February 2018).

Bess Williamson, "From Accessible to Universal: Design in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Accessible America: A History of Disability and Design* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

April 9: Hearing Devices

R.A.R. Edwards, "'Hearing Aids are Not Deaf': A Historical Perspective on Technology in the Deaf World," in *The Disability Studies Reader, Third Edition*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2010). 403-16.

Mara Mills, "Hearing Aids and the History of Electronics Miniaturization," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 33.2 (2011): 24-44.

Hillel Schwartz, "Hearing Aids: Sweet Nothings, or an Ear for an Ear," in *The Gendered Object*, ed. Pat Kirkman (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 1996), 43-59.

Jaipreet Virdi, "The Hearing Aid's Pursuit of Invisibility," *The Atlantic* (4 August 2016).

April 16: Communication Technologies

Meryl Alper, "Can Technology Really 'Give Voice' to Disabled People?" *Pacific Standard* (6 March 2016).

Meryl Alper, "Augmentative, Alternative, and Assistive: Reimaging the History of Mobile Computing and Disability," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 31.1 (2015): 96, 93-5.

Nathan Hurst, "Can Biomusic Offer Kids with Autism a New Way to Communicate?" *Smithsonian Magazine* (2 April 2018).

Graham Pullin, "Expression Meets Information," in *Design Meets Disability* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, [2009] 2011), 157-79.

April 23: Medical Insertions

Lisa Cartwright and Brian Goldfarb, "On the Subject of Neural and Sensory Prostheses," in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 125-54.

Alex Faulkner, "Casing the Joint: The Material Development of Artificial Hips," in *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics*, eds. Katherine Ott, David Serlin, and Stephen Mihm (New York & London: New York University Press, 2002), 199-206.

Audre Lorde, "Breast Cancer: Power vs. Prostheses," in *The Cancer Journals* (New York: Spinsters Ink, 1980), selections.

PART III: ADAPTATION

April 30: Cultural Representations

Sara Hendren, "All Technology is Assistive," *Wired Magazine* (16 October 2014).

Amanda Hess, "The Social Media Cure," *Slate* (4 March 2016).

Kelly Richman-Abdou, "'Alternative Limb Project' Showcases the Creative Possibilities of Prosthetics," *My Modern Met* (8 October 2018).

Browse comics by Jessica and Lianna of *The Disabled Life*

Kelsey McConnel, "Disability in Marvel Comics: The Necessity of Normalization," *Comicverse* (9 May 2017).

May 7: Work Adjustments

Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, Chapters 7-8.

Elizabeth R. Petrick, *Making Computers Accessible: Disability Rights & Digital Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), selections.

Edward Salvishak, "Artificial Limbs and Industrial Workers' Bodies in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh," *Journal of Social History* 37.2 (2003): 365-88.

May 14: Lifehackers

Margaret Andersen, "Why Accessible Design Isn't a Niche Market," *Eye on Design* (13 February 2018).

Aimi Hamraie, "Universal Design and the Problem of 'Post Disability' Ideology," *Design and Culture* (August 2016): 1-25.

Liz Jackson, "We are the Original Lifehackers," *The New York Times* (30 May 2018).