

**CONCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY (SOCI 313:10) – 3 CREDITS**  
**Department of Sociology, St. Francis Xavier University**  
**Fall 2022**

*This course acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We are all Treaty people.*

**COURSE INFORMATION:**

Instructor: Dr. Katie Aubrecht; E: [caubrech@stfx.ca](mailto:caubrech@stfx.ca); T: 902-867-4845

Office Hours (Make Advance Appointments): Wed. 1pm-2pm & Fri. 1pm-2pmAST\*

Course Meeting Day & Time: Wednesdays 9:45am-11:00am & Fridays 8:15am-9:30am

Course Meeting Location: MULH 4030

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will provide students with an introduction to the field of disability studies through an examination of the ways in which disabled people and disability issues have been defined and treated within contemporary society. Students will employ a sociological perspective and interpretive sociological methods to understand and unpack the meaning of disability, as made to appear in research, policy, practice and everyday life. Community-based contributions and responses to disability knowledge are emphasized and common ideas and assumptions about disability are situated historically to illustrate changing relations to disability over time, and to the role of disability knowledge in social change.

This course outlines dominant ways of knowing disability and questions whether established ways of knowing disability align with the realities, needs, desires and lived experiences of disabled persons. It is guided by the following questions:

- What is disability?
- How has disability been conceived in sociology?
- How do conceptions of disability shape how disability is perceived and experienced?
- How is disability being redefined by disability communities?

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\* There may be times when office hours are rescheduled. During those times, a notification will be shared in class where possible, via email, and on the course Moodle page. Students are encouraged to make appointments for all meetings, and each student must meet with the professor in person at least once over the course of the term.

Within the course students will analyze the role that social institutions such as the family, education, work, government and the media, play in organizing how disability is known. Social and political conceptions of disability are contrasted to medical and individualistic definitions of disability with the aim of developing a critique of taken-for-granted conceptions of normal bodies, minds and senses.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- Analyze conceptions of disability;
- Identify and explain approaches to conceptualizing disability, with a focus on the social model of disability;
- Describe how conceptions of disability have changed across time and place;
- Conduct sociological research and analysis using a disability studies perspective.

## **Course Materials**

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**Required Course Textbook:** Adams, R., Reiss, B., & Serlin, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Keywords for disability studies*. New York: New York University Press.

Other required readings and supplementary readings will be available on the Course Moodle Site.

## **Teaching Methods**

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This seminar style course is delivered online and supported electronically by a Moodle online classroom. The online classroom is a resource, and students must attend all seminars delivered via Collaborate and participate in the course discussions to advance in the course.

## **Expectations of Students**

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**Active participation** in the course discussions is expected of all students. The discussions are our space to share our reactions, thoughts and questions related to the readings. Each lesson will include guiding questions to support the conversation, but students are also encouraged to pose their own questions, think critically and take the conversations in new directions.

Attendance will be taken at each class. **Students who miss a total of 3 classes will have their names forwarded to the Dean's Office.**

**Our criteria for success is engaged, critical and creative dialogue that is informed by the readings.** For this to happen, it is expected that students will have read required

readings *before class* (as they are listed in the schedule), and will engage one another by listening to and responding to one another in respectful ways. A collective sense of trust, and respect for one another, will be essential to supporting meaningful engagement.

**Students may share related materials from outside of the course** as part of their responses to the readings; for example, digital audio and/or visual excerpts with the class (with a description and where possible, captions), links to media stories, current events, popular culture, social policies and programs, references to poetry or literature, etc. However, it is critical that the **main focus of any response is on the required readings**.

It is expected that all submitted writing assignments will include **direct references to course material** cited in **ASA or APA formatting**, in addition to the student's own reflections and creative contributions. When describing material from outside of the class, indicate where this information is from, using quotations for direct citations, and/or a reference that shows where you retrieved the information from. Do not overuse direct quotations; this will negatively impact your grade. When you do use a quotation be sure to introduce it and explain the meaning of the passage in your own words.

Students are expected to complete assignments before or by due dates listed on the **syllabus** unless previous arrangements have been made. If circumstances arise which make meeting a due date difficult, please inform me in advance, as soon as possible.

**Clear and continuous communication** throughout the course is critical. I care about your progress. Contact me if you have questions or require clarification around instructions or expectations for assignments using my email [caubrech@stfx.ca](mailto:caubrech@stfx.ca).

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Please include your name and student ID number on each document submission. Pay attention to assignment due dates and please consult assignment rubrics posted on Moodle before beginning and before submitting assignments.

Assignments must be uploaded via Moodle on or before the due date. **Marks may be deducted at a rate of 5% per calendar day for late assignments. Assignments without a negotiated extension and which are not received within 10 days of the submission date will not be accepted and will receive an automatic grade of zero.** Extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances, upon negotiation directly with the course professor.

Assignment	Due Date	Value
Participation	Weekly Participation on Collaborate and In-Class	15%
Major Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	Oct. 3	15%
Mid-Term Quiz	Oct. 19	20%
Course Drop Date Nov. 2 (via Banner)		
Presentations on the Readings	Ongoing throughout Nov.	20%
Conceptualizing Disability Major Research Paper	Dec. 6	30%

Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before November 2. After this date students are not permitted to drop courses without permission from their Dean. (please see 3.1 in academic calendar for policy regarding course drops).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity must be upheld throughout the course. The following offences will result in an automatic zero:

- 1) **Plagiarism** - the misrepresentation of another's ideas, words, or other work as one's own, plagiarism is a form of theft. Types of plagiarism may include: a) paraphrasing or re-arranging another's words without proper acknowledgement; b) using material from the Internet, a database, a book, a journal, or any other source without attribution.
- 2) **Cheating** - A more direct form of academic theft, cheating may include: a) buying, selling, or sharing papers or other assignments, or submitting them as one's own work; b) collaborating on assignments designated as individual; c) submitting to one instructor work completed for another; d) copying or using unauthorized aids during examinations; e) impersonating another or allowing oneself to be impersonated; f) illicitly obtaining, viewing, or sharing information about an assignment or an examination before it is administered.
- 3) **Falsification** - requesting extensions dishonestly.
- 4) **Tampering** - interfering with others' work, including their use of computer or other resources.

### **Copyright and Intellectual Property**

These course materials are designed for use in “Conceptions of Disability” (SOC1 313) at St.F.X. University and are the property of Dr. Katie Aubrecht. Copying this material for distribution, online posting, or selling of this material to third parties without permission is subject to Canadian Copyright Law and is strictly prohibited.

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to all academic regulations that are outlined in Chapter 3 of the academic calendar.

## Detailed Assignment Instructions

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### Participation (15%)

- **Due: Ongoing weekly**
- Attendance and participation are mandatory. All students are expected to come to class having completed the readings in advance and prepared to engage with the material, the professor, fellow classmates and guest speakers.
- Each week students must submit a brief reflection and critical thinking question based on the required readings online on the discussion forum and be prepared to discuss in-class (100 words).
- Students who miss classes for approved reasons may contact the professor to explore other ways of achieving participation grades (i.e., short assignments).

### Major Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (15%)

- **Due: Oct. 3**
- Students will submit a proposal for their major papers via Moodle.
- In the papers students will use what they have learned from the course readings and class discussions about conceptions of disability to **research, analyze and interpret a conception of disability from a sociological disability studies perspective.**
- The proposal should be formatted as follows:
  - **Title Page:** The proposal must include a title page with the student's name and ID, professor's name, the date of submission, the title of the course, title of the assignment (proposal), and original title based on the expected focus of the paper.
  - **Proposal (2 pages):** Identify the concept related to disability and describe the plan for analyzing this concept from a sociological perspective. Plans should be specific, listing the actual materials that will be used from the course and outside of the course (for example, specific required readings, newspaper articles and other media sources, community activist blogs, publicly available organizational communications, newsletters, academic publications, etc. It is not sufficient to say you will include journal articles).
  - **Annotated Bibliography (1-2 pages):** Students must list 2 course readings and 2 external references for published peer-reviewed academic research (University published book or academic journal article), presented in ASA or APA formatting. Each source should be followed by a 2-4 sentence description of what the reference is about, why the reference was chosen, and how it will support an analysis of the disability related controversy. Bibliographies must demonstrate that the student has read the article or book referenced.

## Midterm Quiz (20%)

- **Oct. 19 In-Class**

## Presentations (20%)

- **Due: Nov.** A sign-up sheet for the presentation date and reading will be circulated in-class.
- Students will individually develop and share a presentation on one of the readings in the class.
- The presentation must be orally delivered, and 5 minutes long. It should provide a brief summary of the reading, critical reflection on the strengths and limitations make a connection to something outside of the class - popular culture or a current event, and pose a question for class discussion.
- Additional details will be provided in-class.

## Conceptualizing Disability Major Paper (30%)

- **Due Dec. 6**
- Students must submit a research-informed major paper via Moodle that draws from the readings and discussions as well as an independent review of the sociology and disability studies literature on a disability related topic.
- The purpose of the major paper is to conduct an **in-depth examination of the social construction of *disability* using a sociological disability studies perspective.**
- Papers must include at least **8 references: 4 course readings and 4 external peer-reviewed academic research articles that represent a sociological/disability studies perspective**
- The paper must be no less than **8-10 pages double-spaced**, with a separate title page listing the course title, your name and student ID, and the date, and a separate reference page. The paper should have one-inch margins, be double spaced 12-point font Times New Roman, and all pages should be numbered. Papers may also be submitted in 16 or 18-point font to support accessibility, and in such cases the page length must be adjusted accordingly.

## Statement on Equitable Learning

Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space – both real and virtual – that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

Please feel free to talk with me about your questions or concerns about equity in our classroom or in the STFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor. The Human Rights and

Equity Advisor is Megan Fogarty. Megan can be contacted by email at [mfogarty@stfx.ca](mailto:mfogarty@stfx.ca) or by telephone at 902-867-5306.

### **‘Resources to Support Equitable Learning:**

- *Student Success Centre*, Angus L. Macdonald Library, Main Floor; Website: <https://www.mystfx.ca/student-success/>; Email: [sscentre@stfx.ca](mailto:sscentre@stfx.ca); Telephone: 902-867-5221
- *Health and Counseling Services*, Bloomfield Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor (Room 305); Website: <https://www.mystfx.ca/health-and-counselling/home>; Telephone: 902-867-2263
- *Student Advisory Services, Aboriginal, Black, International and LGBTQ Student Advising*: <https://www.mystfx.ca/equity/student-advisory-services>

### ***Religious, Spiritual or Cultural Observance***

Everyone should feel welcome and encouraged to bring their full selves to the class. Please feel free to speak with me about any religious, spiritual or cultural commemorations or celebrations that you plan to observe during the term.

### **Accessibility & Accommodations<sup>†</sup>**

This class will be a **disability, Mad, Deaf and Neurodiverse positive space**. I recognize that accessibility should not follow a ‘one-size-fits-one’ standard, and therefore we will create our own access commitments, building on the accessibility already built into this course, during the first week of class. We will revisit these access commitments throughout the course to make sure that we are still following them, and that they still work for us.

St. Francis Xavier University supports academic accommodation for students with disabilities so that they may meet the learning objectives of their courses and be given the opportunity to be fairly evaluated on their mastery of course material. The Tramble Centre for Accessible Learning welcomes students with documented disabilities and offers them a student-centered program of support. For more information about access and accommodation please see: [http://sites.stfx.ca/accessible\\_learning/](http://sites.stfx.ca/accessible_learning/) **If you have a registered accommodation, please let me know.**

Not all disabilities are diagnosed and/or documented. **Please also let me know if you live with disability and/or difference but do not have a registered accommodation.**

**If you are not able to access the course material for any reasons, please let me know as soon as possible.**

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<sup>†</sup> This statement has been adapted from a statement created by Dr. Eliza Chandler for Ryerson University’s School of Disability Studies.

## COVID-19

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**Masks are mandatory in all academic instructional spaces** (such as classrooms, labs, and studios) **and are strongly encouraged elsewhere on campus.** In those spaces, faculty who are teaching, and students who are presenting, may remove their masks when speaking, if they are physically distanced. In all other spaces on campus, masks are strongly recommended. Students are encouraged to stay home if sick.

## Self-Care

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Due to the focus of sociological study (social relations/social order/power and inequality), course related discussions may contain information that could be potentially disturbing, triggering, and unsettling. If this happens you can identify it in the class discussions and we can talk through it collectively as a class, and/or contact me after class and work with me to develop appropriate strategies of address. In cases of more intensely felt disquiet you can also obtain peer support (talk to a friend) or seek assistance from resources listed in the STFX academic calendar.

## Child and Elder Care

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Many students have care responsibilities. If care responsibilities ever come into conflict with the course schedule, please do not feel as though you need to miss a class. We can discuss how to support your progress.

## SCHEDULE

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### WEEK 1 (SEPT. 7 & 9): WELCOME & INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Introductions and orientation to the course.

*Online Discussion Response (post the first week of class, as part of participation grade):*

**A) Personal Narrative:** As part of the first lesson you are asked to provide a **personal narrative** to introduce yourselves and describe your background experiences, your relation to the course subject, and your interest in the course. As part of your narrative introduction, reflect on personal understandings of disability.

⇒ Please identify the first word or image that comes to mind when you think of ‘disability’. Unpack the meaning of this word. What do we need to know, believe and value for it to make sense? What social institutions shape the meaning of this work and how? What can this word teach us about society?

**B) Commitment to Accessibility:** Describe your understanding of accessibility. What is involved in imagining accessibility from a sociological perspective? How can we work together to create and sustain accessibility within our class? Why is this important?

## **WEEK 2 (SEPT. 14 & 16): WHAT IS DISABILITY?**

### **Required Readings**

Course Textbook: “Disability” (pp. 5-11) & “Ability” (pp. 12-17)

Excerpt from: Oliver, M. & Barnes, C. (2012). *The new politics of disablement* (pp. 11-51). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

### **Supplementary Reading**

Course Textbook: “Rehabilitation” (pp. 148-151)

## **WEEK 3 (SEPT. 21 & 23): SOCIOLOGY OF DISABILITY**

### **Required Readings**

Course Textbook: “Citizenship” (pp. 37-39), “Impairment” (pp. 107-108)

Shuttleworth, R. & Meekosha, H. (2012). The sociological imaginary and disability enquiry in late modernity. *Critical Sociology*, 39(3), 349-367.

Simmel, G. (1950). The Stranger. In K. Wolff (Ed.), *The sociology of Georg Simmel* (pp. 402-408). New York: Free Press. Retrieved

<http://www.wattis.org/MEDIA/00413.pdf>

### **Supplementary Reading**

Barnes, M. & Oliver, M. (1993). Disability: A sociological problem ignored by sociologists (23pp). Retrieved from <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Barnes-soc-phenomenon.pdf>

## **WEEK 4 (Sept. 28): (DE)CONSTRUCTING DISABILITY**

### **Required Reading**

Course Textbook: “Human” (pp. 98-102), “Madness” (pp. 114-120)

Dolmage, J. (2014). An archive and anatomy of disability myths. In *Disability rhetoric* (pp. 31-62). New York, Syracuse University Press.

Szasz, T. (1960). The myth of mental illness. *American Psychologist*, 15, Retrieved from <https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Szasz/myth.htm>

### Supplementary Reading

Smith, D. (1978). 'K is mentally ill': An anatomy of a factual account. *Sociology*, 12(1), 25-53.

## NO CLASS SEPT. 30<sup>th</sup>, NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION

### WEEK 5 (OCT. 5 & 7): (INTERACTIONAL) WORK

#### Required Reading

Course Textbook: "Diversity" (pp. 61-64), "Invisibility" (pp.115-116), "Passing" (pp. 135-136), "Stigma" (pp. 173-176)

*Excerpts from:* Goffman, E. (1986 [1963]). Information control and personal identity. In *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity* (pp. 41-104). New York: Touchstone.

Scully, J.L. (2010). Hidden labour: Disabled/nondisabled encounters, agency, and autonomy. *International Journal of Feminist approaches to Bioethics*, 3(2), 25-42.

#### Supplementary Reading

Bailey, M. & Mobley, I.A. (2019). Work in the intersections: A Black feminist disability framework. *Gender & Society*, 3(1), 19-40.

Low, J. (2020). Stigma management as celebration: Disability, difference and the marketing of diversity. *Visual Studies*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2020.1763194>

#### Video

Rosemarie Garland Thomson: Staring and Its Implications in Society. 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jALsDVW63wo>

### WEEK 6 (OCT. 12 & 14): FAMILY

#### Required Reading

Course Textbook: "Dependency" (pp. 54-58), "Eugenics" (pp. 74-79), "Family" (pp. 81-84), "Normal" (pp.130-132), "Reproduction" (pp. 155-158)

#### Supplementary Reading

Lalvani, P. (2017). Gatekeepers of normalcy: The disablement of families in the master narratives of psychology (pp. 287-308). In M. Rembis (Ed.). *Disabling domesticity*. Buffalo, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

## **WEEK 7 (OCT 19 & 21): EDUCATION**

### **Oct. 19 – Midterm Quiz**

### **Oct. 21**

#### **Required Reading**

Course Textbook: “Education” (pp. 64-67), “Accommodation” (pp. 19-21), “Minority” (pp.122-124)

#### **Supplementary Readings**

Course Textbook: “Design” (pp. 59-60), “Race” (pp. 145-148)

Dolmage, J. (2017). Universal design (pp. 115-151). In *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hamrai, A. (2017). All Americans: Disability, race, and segregated citizenship. In *Building access: Universal design and the politics of disability* (pp. 65-93). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Aubrecht, K. (2012). The ‘new vocabulary’ of resilience and the governance of university ‘student life’. Special Issue of *Studies in Social Justice*, 6(1), 67-83.

Bruce, C. (2016). Divergent encounters with normal: Are they really so different after all? *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(1).

## **WEEK 8 (OCT. 26 & Oct. 29): HEALTH, MEDICINE, CULTURE**

#### **Required Reading**

Course Textbook: “Illness” (pp. 105-107), “Medicalization” (pp. 120-121), “Narrative” (pp. 126-130), “Representation” (pp. 151-154)

Zola, I. (1996). Culture and symptoms – an analysis of patients presenting complaints. *American Sociological Review*, 31(5), 615-630.

## **WEEK 9 (NOV. 2 & 4): FALL BREAK - NO CLASS**

## **WEEK 10 (NOV. 16 & 18): TOTAL INSTITUTIONS**

#### **Required Reading**

Course Textbook: “Institutions” (pp. 109-112)

Ben-Moshe, L. (2011). Disability incarceration: Connecting disability to divergent confinements in the USA. *Critical Sociology*, 1-19.

Malacrida, C. (2005). Discipline and dehumanization in a total institution: Institutional

survivors' descriptions of time-out rooms. *Disability & Society*, 20(5), 523-537.

### **Supplementary Reading**

Goffman, I. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Anchor Books.

## **WEEK 11 (NOV. 23 & 25): DISABILITY JUSTICE**

### **Required Reading**

Course Textbook: "Activism" (pp. 21-25), "Crip" (pp. 46-48)

### **In-Class Documentary Viewing**

Crip Camp Screening: <https://cripcamp.com/>

### **Supplementary Resources**

Mingus, M. (2013). Beyond access: Mia Mingus on disability justice. *Equitable Education.ca*. Retrieved <http://equitableeducation.ca/2013/mia-mingus-disability-justice>

Mingus, M. (2011). Changing the framework: Disability justice. How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness. *Leaving Evidence*. Retrieved from <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/>

## **WEEK 12 (NOV. 30 & Dec. 2): OPEN WEEK**

One extra class in case a class is cancelled and/or need an extra class to get caught up. The final class will focus on a review of material.