Disability, Space, and Society
Human rights issues embedded around us
Original course development by Dr. Rob Kitchin, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland

Course information
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In collaboration with International Center for the Advancement of Human Rights, FSU
http://www.cahr.fsu.edu

Instructor: Dr. Dan Jacobson
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Summer Session B (May 8th – June 14th)

GEO 4930 Sect 02 Geog & Disabilities
GEO 5934 Sect 02 Geog & Disabilities

(with differing expectations and requirements for undergraduate/ graduate academic levels)

Readings will be placed in the Bellamy copy center and also on reserve at Strozier library.

Synopsis
In this course, students will explore how geography has contributed to the study of disability issues and explore the socio-spatial processes that underlie and reproduce the geographies of disability, i.e the fundamental denial of human rights-access to housing, education, employment, and the built environment. More sinister is the historical issue of eugenics that is now re-emerging as ‘new-eugenics’ under the wealth of ethical issues surrounding genetic engineering. Recently highlighted by debates around stem cell research. In particular, the course will focus upon issues of human rights, exclusion, domination and resistance, social justice, and the reciprocal relations between society and space. A number of substantive and conceptual issues relating to living with disabilities in contemporary society, including planning and access, transport and mobility, employment and poverty, tourism and recreation, will be introduced and examined. The course will draw mainly on UK and US studies and writing.

The World Health Organization states that 10% to 15% of any given society can be classified as “disabled”. It is also highly likely as society ages these very issues are ones we will have to confront. There is fierce debate between medical and socially constructed models of disability, and as to what constitutes a disability (visible/invisible etc.)
For example, I am a “disabled person” because my legs don’t function and I use a wheelchair- this is my “impairment”. Is it society that “disables me” and denies my human rights because an architect thought 3 steps down and 3 steps up would make for a pleasant entrance to the library I need to access?

**Objectives**

1. To gain an understanding of the complex relationships between disability, space and society.
2. To explore how disabled people are denied their human rights.
3. To gain an understanding of the everyday geographies of living with disabilities.
4. To gain an understanding of the links between academic theory and the lives people live, and of researching disability issues.

**Operation**

The course aims to operate as a form of border pedagogy, valuing the knowledges and experiences of those undertaking the course and relating these to the writings of others. As such, the course is designed to not just value the views of the teacher and the texts read but also the thoughts and opinions of the participants. The course will consist of lectures leading to seminars, and possible focus group based fieldwork. The lectures will blend to seminars after opening doorways for discussion. The seminar will consist of open discussion of the themes developed in the readings, and highlighted in the lectures with additional material supplied where needed.

**Assessment**

Grades will be based upon

- Participation 50% (class discussion, evidence of completing readings)
- Paper or Project 50%

**Project work could potentially involve**

- Accessibility audits of the built environment
- Accessibility audits of technology, i.e. usability studies
- Accessibility audits of internet sites
- Researching the implications of the American’s with Disabilities Act, its current status, and potential dismantling by the Supreme Court

The project work should be documented, and presented with similar guidelines to the paper below.

**Paper topics**

A paper concerning the socio-spatial processes that underlie and reproduce geographies of disability, and their implications for human rights.

The paper should not be purely descriptive but should be theoretically-driven. That is, you need to move beyond what and where to explain why these geographies have occurred; to detail theories of socio-spatial identity and exclusion in relation to the geographies of disability and their fundamental implications for human rights.

There is no set length for the paper, but a rough guide would be 10-15 pages double spaced, 10 or 12 point font with reasonable margins.

**Grading Scale**
The following grading scale will be used to compute final grades:

- **A** = 92.5% - 100%
- **A-** = 90.0% - 92.4%
- **B+** = 87.5% - 89.9%
- **B** = 82.5% - 87.4%
- **B-** = 80.0% - 82.4%
- **C+** = 77.5% - 79.9%
- **C** = 72.5% - 77.4%
- **C-** = 70.0% - 72.4%
- **D+** = 67.5% - 69.9%
- **D** = 62.5% - 67.4%
- **D-** = 60.0% - 62.4%
- **F** = 59.9%
- **S** = 70% and above
- **U** = 69.9% and below

**Course text (Required)**
ISBN: 1 899085 87 4
Available in FSU book store

I expect the course to depending on the interests of those involved focus around two main foci:

- the underlying and implicit nature of the exclusion of disabled people from their basic human rights
- whether the approaches to resolve this problem are best addressed
  - from ‘theoretically’ driven social constructions to move towards an inclusive society
  - or by the development of assistive technology that promotes ‘universal access’ and modifications to the built environment

Clearly there is no simple answer – this will provide the students with a theoretical bridge to the technology driven research that I undertake to develop novel interfaces to computers, that are potentially life enhancing providing opportunities for access to education, information, training and employment.

See [http://www.hapticsoundscapes.org](http://www.hapticsoundscapes.org)

**Course outline – Course schedule**
(Additional texts / readings are included as a bibliography at the end of this document)

**Week 1 – May 8th**
1. Introducing the course.
Jacobson, R.D. (2000) Exploring Geographies of Blindness: Learning, Reading and Communicating Geographic Space. PhD, Queen’s University of Belfast, Geographies of Disability, Chapter 2


**Week 2 – May 13th, May 15th**

2. Geographies of Exclusion


**Week 3 – May 20th, May 22nd**

3. Approaching Disability / Understanding Ableism


**Week 4 – May 27th, May 29th**

4. Geography and Disability / Geographies of Ableism


**Week 5 – June 3rd, June 5th**

5. Geographies of Blindness


**Week 6 – June 10th, June 12th**

6. Practical Answers to Practical Problems, and the emerging Digital Divide??


**Attendance Policy**

There is no attendance policy for this class. However, you are expected to attend class having read the assigned readings. Remember that 50% of your grade is devoted to class participation. You cannot participate if you are not in class!

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: (1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC); and (2) Bring a letter to me from the SDRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class. Every effort will be made to make the class and learning environment as inclusive as possible.

**Extended set of readings / references**

1. **Introducing the course.**
   Jacobson, R.D. (2000) Exploring Geographies of Blindness: Learning, Reading and Communicating Geographic Space. PhD, Queen’s University of Belfast, Geographies of Disability, Chapter 2

2. **Geographies of Exclusion I.**
3. Geographies of Exclusion II
Pratt, G. and Hanson, S. (1994) Geography and the construction of difference. *Gender, Place and Culture* 1: 5-29.

4. Approaching Disability.

5. Understanding Ableism I.

6. Understanding Ableism II

7. Geography and Disability

8. Geographies of Ableism

9. Mental Illness and Mental Impairment I
10. Mental Illness and Mental Impairment II

11. Planning and Access

12. Transport and Mobility

13. Employment and Poverty

14. Tourism

15. Geographies of Blindness

16. Geographies of Disabled Resistance


17. Practical Answers to Practical Problems.

18. Reacting to Ableism: Social Justice

19. Disability and Gender

20. Doing Disability Research I:

21. Doing Disability Research II

22. Towards an inclusive society I: