



2201 F (570)
Rethinking Disability
Fall/Winter 2025-2026

Professor: P. Cushing, PhD
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

Disability Studies challenges the historical, medical and mainstream views of disability and mental illness as personal tragedies or solely problems to be fixed. We explore diverse approaches to imagining disability, changes over time, and associated symbolic and material outcomes.

Prerequisite(s): Disability Studies 1010A/B

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 2 lecture hours, 1 tutorial hour

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: DISABST

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Rethinking Disability

DS 2201F (570) ~ Fall 2025

Professor Pamela Cushing,
PhD Cultural Anthropology

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(no 'g')

This course builds on the introduction in DS 1010 by diving deeper into the Social & Individual Models' origins, purposes, and limitations. We journey through the historical circumstances and public understandings about disability and how those fed into discrimination in education, rights, jobs and housing policies of the past. How does the past influence what we perceive, believe and do with disability today? What alternatives does a D.S. lens offer? What are the barriers to implementation? These conversations are sprinkled with Social Inclusion policies, rights and laws, the Politics of Representation and some best practice cases in the world today.

Course Delivery:

This is a regular in-person, essay course. Content includes lectures, video clips, tutorials, discussions and activities. Some materials are on OWL Brightspace (ex: videos, readings, discussion boards, and asynchronous media). Students need microphone & webcam to participate as required occasionally online for class or tutorial.

Required Texts:

All required readings are available from the libraries or owl website. Class has one local field site visit that you will need to arrange transportation to.

Course Assessments and Schedule:

ITEM	% Grade	Due
Attendance	5	Ongoing
Tutorial Project (2 parts)	20	Ongoing
Tutorial Participation	10	Ongoing
Midterm Test (mixed format) *(date to be confirmed)	30	Week 6*
Representation Paper (RMHC)	35	Week 13
Total	100	

Course Notes:

- Essay course: with 2000 words + writing across all assessments
- **Collaboration:** Final paper can be done with a partner (must get approval)
- **Alternative Assessments:** Professor is open to student ideas for this
- **Submissions:** All assessments must be submitted in paper copy and on OWL/Brightspace
- **Late Marks Policy:** See policies section for details on how late marks are levied.
- [Academic Integrity](#) (link): Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the policies, especially the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence

- **AI courses policy:** Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are permitted for items indicated in the Assessment instructions. Students must proactively acknowledge if and how they used AI tools otherwise. Unauthorized AI use will be subject to academic discipline.

Course Description:

How do you Imagine Disability?

This class aims to show you that the disability experience is about so much more than just the biological aspects of impairment. We explore how ‘disability’ even emerged as a relatively recent and culturally-specific category of thought – or a way to ‘group’ people. We examine how it is bound up in many modern systems and definitions that might seem unrelated such as perfect baby contests, poor laws, wars, sports heroes, normalcy, industrialization and “Freak Shows”. In the past, disability was mainly viewed as an ‘individual problem’ to ‘fix, erase, or segregate’ by professions like: medicine, education, psychology, social work. People with lived experience of impairment (self-advocates) and their families and allies put up decades of resistance to this reductive perception of them. The **Disability Studies** field emerged from that, to offer alternative ways to understand impairment, access, disability and ableism.

You’ll learn what a Disability Studies lens offers in terms of new ways to perceive disability, access and ableism. I try to promote lively discussions on topics and ideas that don’t necessarily have a single answer or even a ‘right’ answer – though it is important that you back up your input with data, or course concepts. Importantly, we don’t all need to end up in the same place, or to agree on every point. University is a place for the interplay of ideas and research so I hope you can take it all in by giving diverse points of view a fair hearing. Bring your curiosity, experiences, and imagination.

Course Outcomes:

Rethinking disability means to move beyond typical societal assumptions to learn more about impairments, disability and ableism. To explore actual lives and learn how they are about more than their impairment, and yet paradoxically often uniquely shaped by it. Together we’ll cultivate a more expansive notion of disability and rethink common assumptions about its role in a person’s life.

Learning Objectives: The class a success if students learn to:

1. Identify historical views of disability as a personal problem to fix and how DS flips that.
2. Apply DS research and theories to challenges faced by real people & organizations as job skills.
3. Learn career skills such as how to analyse real scenarios and develop DS-informed solutions.
4. Understand the historical power and cultural politics at play that led to today’s beliefs and actions
5. Research and debate controversial topics in the disability arena and policies that could help.
6. Become at ease and competent to discuss disability-related topics in class or in public.

Course Schedule:

Date		
Week 1	Sept 5	Course Introduction & DS review
Lecture		Introductions; Review Course Outline; Tutorial set up/sign up; Assignments; Disability Studies Review
Reading		Mallett <i>Approaching Disability: Foundational Perspectives</i> (Review from DS1010)
Tutorials		571 – NO CLASS this week 572 – ALL COME (sign ups)
Week 2	Sept 12	History Part 1
Lecture		How did we get here? Origins of Canadian & western ideas about disabled people and who decided how they should live (institutions, segregation) and be perceived?
Readings		Simmons <i>The Rise of Orillia (2 Excerpts)</i> i) Costs, categories, committed (11p) ii) Education or Resignation (10p)
		Reaume <i>Patients at Work: Ontario Insane Asylums (20p)</i>
		Hunter <i>I've been in hospital all my life (5p – bio)</i>
Tutorials		Students propose tutorial topic ideas for feedback + tutorial Sign-ups
Week 3	Sept 19	History Part 2
Lecture:		We explore the official and covert reasons for Deinstitutionalization in Canada and USA, + what came next: Community & Independent Living
Readings		Roehrer <i>Closing Institutions (13p)</i>
		Schwarz <i>Beyond Institutions (CBC: Ideas) (12p)</i>
Tutorials		> Tutorial Project Part A Due (all) > Discuss Lecture exercise
Week 4	Sept 26	Normalcy

Lecture:	<i>Surprise! Past humans did not think of themselves in terms of ‘what’s normal’ and were not tortured by the narrow standards this produces. We explore how it emerged as a ‘culturally constructed’ marker. Next, we look at other socially sanctioned narratives about community, care and inclusion that function to limit what’s possible by subsuming alternatives.</i>	
Readings	Davis	<i>Constructing Normalcy (20p)</i>
	Cushing	<i>What Counts as Community?</i>
Tutorials	Student Projects Sharing	
Week 5	Oct 3	Representation: Freakshows & Staring
Lecture:	<i>We explore the politics of representation and how those have played out in the past and present for disabled people. We look at the Freakshows of yesteryear and the voyeuristic tv shows that mimic this rosy, at a distance. We ask was it all bad? Was there ‘good staring’ that occurred? What does that mean? Can learning and connection be built through staring?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Mid-term review 	
Readings	Bogdan	<i>In Search of Freaks (16p)</i>
	Garland-T	<i>Beholding (9p)</i>
Tutorials	Student Projects Sharing	
Week 6	Oct 10	Mid-term Test
Lecture:	Mixed Format Test; In class, on paper (wk 1-5)	
Readings	<i>None</i>	
Tutorials	-Instructions for main Project RMHC + form groups -RMHC video intro	
Week 7	Oct 17	RMHC site visit (*tbc)
Lecture:	Visit the RMHC site for conversations and tour	
Readings	Option List	<i>Choice of readings – each read 1 and post comments</i>
Tutorials	Online zoom debriefs if requested	
Week 8	Oct 24	Attitudes and Encountering Difference
Lecture:	When people think about exclusion and inaccessibility, they often think about needed changes to the built environment such as accessible washrooms and ramps. While vital, there are many other barriers to inclusion that are less overt or concrete. Today we discuss the roots of negative attitudes and stigma and what we know about changing them.	
Readings	<i>Cushing: Disability Attitudes, Culture & the Moral Imagination (16p)</i>	

		<i>Allport: The Effect of Contact</i>	
Tutorials		>Debrief Site Visit and conversations + Discuss Project > Student Projects Sharing	
Week 9	Oct 31 (Halloween)	Social Inclusion & Exclusion	
Lecture		No in-person class (Online Video lecture) In this class we take the meaning of inclusion and exclusion seriously and study research on what elements increase inclusion. This research is detailed and specific policy work so may seem dry, but know that policy is one of the most powerful tools in achieving disability rights. (Denmark ex)	
Readings		Cushing Editors	<i>SI & SE Policy (pgs x to x)</i> [Optional: <i>Case vs. Special Olympics (5p)</i>]
Tutorials		Student Projects Sharing (only if needed & virtual)	
10	Nov. 7	Reading Week (no class)	
Wk 11	Nov. 14	The Nature of Prejudice	
Lecture:		We discuss ableism and other intersectional discrimination a lot in DS but until we understand more about what prejudice is and where it comes from, we will continue to fail to change the culture. We'll use 2 chapters from a King's Psych Professor's book to work on this knot.	
Readings		Jackson	<i>1: Defining Prejudice (11p)</i>
		Jackson	<i>5: Ideology & Prejudice (23p)</i>
Tutorials		Discuss Lecture & Exercise	
Wk 12	Nov 21	Accessibility & Rehabilitation	
Lecture:		Two accessibility cases: personal and university-based	
Readings		Titchkosky Mairs	<i>'Where': To Pee or not to Pee (22p)</i> <i>Opening Doors, Unlocking Hearts (20p)</i>
Tutorials		Discuss Lecture & Exercise	
Wk 13	Nov 28	Ableism	
Lecture			
Reading		Goodley	<i>The Psychopathology of the Normals: Why People are so messed up about dis/ability (17p)</i>
Tutorials		<i>None – Optional 1 on 1 meetings with professor re: projects</i>	
Wk 14	Dec 5		
Lecture:		<i>Final Papers Due</i>	

Pedagogical Methods:

I. Lecture & tutorials

During Lecture classes, I will share lectures with slides that are posted on owl. We may have some Q&A but most interactive discussion will be in the tutorials (half the size). Research shows that adult learners work best with regular changes in teaching format so I strive to do that across both formats.

II. First-person Experience

I strive to involve people living with disability in our class through first person speakers, their writing and fieldtrips. This gives students a less mediated version of their stories and lived experiences. If a student has an impairment and wants to explore that, discuss your idea with the professor.

III. Inquiry Approach.

An inquiry approach to learning is well-suited to the social sciences and liberal arts – it means starting with the assumption that no one has yet figured out a perfect or universal understanding of most human questions. Our collective insight constantly changes & not always for the better; it is complex and viewed differently by people in distinct life-worlds. Using an inquiry approach here means that I do not expect students to develop ‘answers’ or solutions to the questions that we study. Instead, we expect students to dig deep into the literature and narratives to identify, explain, critique and compare the key issues at play. Your task is to figure out what are the main arguments and evidence being used by people who are experts (scholarly and first-person) on the topics. I encourage students to critique or elaborate on readings or their biases with data, or other research. See: H. S. Barrows (1996) Problem-based Learning in Medicine and Beyond. Vol 1996, Issue 68, Winter, p 3 -1 2.

IV. Pre-Reading.

Students should grapple with the course material in a smart, analytical way in class or web discussions. As you read, jot down questions about an article or author to extend or contrast with their argument; try to think of specific examples to challenge the ideas or how to improve them. It is essential that you read & reflect critically on assigned readings *before* class. If you don't, you miss a key benefit of university life –the chance to practice, over and over, your skills of analysis, synthesis and contextualizing.

Other Important Information

Communication: 3 options: post questions in the OWL discussion board; come to my office hours; email me (subject line includes: DS2201 + subject of email (ex: test, deadlines etc). Review syllabus /owl first. If you have any issues with the course or me throughout the term, feel free to reach out to me to adjust.

Class Rapport: Discussions should presume an ethic of mutual respect for differences of opinion and diverse experiences. Disagreement is part of a healthy university environment, just to be

respectful. Feel free to draw on your experiences in discussions by linking them directly to readings/course concepts.

Electronic Gadgets: Please organize your plans prior to class so you can focus during class. I ask that you turn notifications off – good news can wait. Such use distracts you, others, and me.

Support & Accommodation: If you require special arrangements for tests, lectures or assignments, (family reasons, athlete schedules, SSD) I can accommodate them. Please follow process as early in term as possible by seeking ADO approved absence or an official ACSD plan. http://www.uwo.ca/kings/Student_Services/services.htm

Re-Marking: You may request re-marking by emailing me in point form what you believe was graded improperly & why, and note which page/paragraph you refer to. This will be a full re-assessment.

Assessments Overview

Brief explanations below. Full instructions separate.

Attendance (10 points ~ 5%)

Attendance is being there for at least 80% of the class.

Tutorial Projects (20 + 20 points ~ 20%)

- This project is designed with career-readiness skills top of mind.
- Theme: Environment-changing and Barrier removal that facilitates accessibility
- The topic is up to the student involving a scenario with barriers and how you'd apply DS Social model for barrier-removal (not building/physical barriers).
 - ◆ PART A: Share scenario and solution in tutorial for suggestions
 - ◆ PART B: Integrate feedback and share in a LinkedIn post.

Tutorial Participation (20 points ~ 10%)

These marks will be for submitting thoughtful feedback to other students in the class on their project and for generally engaging in the tutorial discussions. There are NO marks for simply attending tutorial, but a mark deduction for each one skipped up to 10 points off.

Mid-term Test (100 points ~ 30%)

- Mixed format (fixed choice and written)
- Specific instructions for the test content & format will be given ahead in class
- The test covers all readings and lectures up to date of test (weeks 1 to 5)
- Test is in class, on paper (see schedule) [exception: Accommodated Services]
- Make up tests must be approved by the ADO & are a different format.

Representation, Stigma & Inclusion Paper (100 points ~ 35%)

Students will meet with someone from a local disability organization (eg. RMHC, Hutton House etc) for a semi-structured conversation about their experiences with stigma and staring. A goal of this dialogue is for you to practice centring a disabled persons lived experience and perspective about their own life. Based on that conversation and what you've learned in class about these 3 topics (Representation, Stigma and Inclusion), you develop a final paper that will weave together their experience and course concepts / readings. For instance on how prior perceptions and representations can foster inclusion and self-acceptance or be factors in exclusion or hurting someone's daily functioning and well-being.

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find

information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality_Reports - TurnItIn.html.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.

