



Disability Studies 2202A (570)
Understanding Disability Labels
Fall/Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: Dr. Mark Benner

Email: mbenner4@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

Learn how common disability and neuro-diversity conditions are defined and resourced. Understand the complex nature and tacit assumptions of diagnostic contexts and care systems, past and present. Consider both the empowering and constraining bio-political implications of medical labelling for individuals and groups.

Prerequisite(s): Disability Studies 1010A/B.

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours

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 enrol 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.

**UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY LABELS
DISABILITY STUDIES DS 2202B- 570**

Fall 2026

Contact: Mark Benner, mbenner4@uwo.ca

Appointments: Please email or see me to arrange an appointment

Mode of Instruction: in-person

Course Description:

Labelling – What's In A Name?

This course supports students to become familiar with the diversity of disability by exploring some of the more common labelling categories of disability, such as mental health, developmental, mobility, visual, hearing, cognitive and health-related. Students gain a more detailed understanding of specific disabilities such as learning, depression, acquired brain and spinal cord injury, mental health, autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity, chromosomal, intellectual, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, ambulatory, etc. Focus is on the more common examples of disability. The traditional socio-cultural and medical depictions and conceptualizations of disability as deficit, impairment and disordered-ness is presented but challenged with the goal of reimagining disability as an empowering strength.

Students learn and contrast numerous models of disability and the varying perspectives of how disability is conceptualized. We study how this influences the response to disability within society, culture and community. Students explore the connection between social constructs of persons with disabilities and identity formation.

Inherent in any study of disability is the concept of labelling. We learn about the labelling process including who does the labelling, the role of assessment in the establishment of a label and the criteria used in placing a label. This course illustrates that labels can be positive and/or negative and empowering and/or disempowering. Using a problem based inquiry/learning perspective, as well as a critical thinking perspective, students are encouraged to see all aspects.

Required Texts:

All required readings are available from the UWO and affiliate libraries or available on the course website.

Pedagogical Method:

I. Lecture

Students learn information concerning disability and labelling through an informal lecture structure. A modular concept assists students to learn material in sections and in an organized format. The open format encourages inquiry and discussions. Students should come prepared for class by completing any assigned readings or reflective assignments. PowerPoint format is used but students should take notes in order to gather adequate and relevant information for testing purposes. Students are encouraged to express themselves in an open dialogue with the professor and their peers. Disability is a sensitive topic and students will be supported to feel comfortable in a respectful classroom environment.

II. Personal Narratives and Experience

A select number of speakers who have been impacted by labels will share their experiences. They will discuss how their labels were helpful and life changing but also how they have been hurt and marginalized by their labels. Students are expected to come to hear guest speakers after doing some independent research about the topic being presented and/or the guest speaker(s).

The professor will share their direct clinical experiences of supporting persons with labels and give a reality base to theoretical information and concepts.

III. First-Person Emphasis

An inclusive atmosphere rather than an “us and them” perspective encourages the student to see that we all have, or will be touched or impacted by disability in the broadest sense. Through independent readings and reflective assignments, students are prompted to consider their own differences or “disabilities” and how labels have impacted them. To assist students to personally relate to disability, the Continuum Model of disability will be used as a foundation of consistent reference when learning the various disability labels.

IV. Web-Based Activities

Web-based resources will provide students with access to focused information to stimulate learning and reflection. Selected readings allow students to ponder alternative, and at times, critical perspectives about disability and labelling. Regular checking in to the course website will allow the student to be aware of upcoming class topics and activities.

Course Outline:

Note – this schedule may change

Week/Date	Topic/Theme
1- Sept. 9	Disability Labels with a Historical Context, Labelling Theory
2 – Sept. 16	Models of Disability and How They Influence Labels
3 – Sept. 23	Labels and Developmental Disability
4 – Sept. 30	NATIONAL DAY for TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION (non-instruction day)
5 – Oct. 7	Labels and Cognitive Disability
6 – Oct. 14	READING WEEK
7 – Oct. 21	MID TERM EXAM
8 – Oct. 28	Labels and Mobility
9 – Nov. 4	NO CLASS – INDEPENDENT STUDY
10 – Nov. 11	Labels and Mental Health
11 – Nov. 18	Guest Speaker – First-Person Narrative – Autistic Label - to be confirmed
12 – Nov. 25	Guest Speakers – First-Person Narrative – Intellectual Disability Label and Advocacy - to be confirmed
13 – Dec. 2	Labels and Power, Self-Advocacy, Stigma, Identity
14 – Dec. 9	Valorizing Disability Roles and Labels, Avenues for Portraying Positive Role and Image Enhancement

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify the common disability and neuro-disability conditions.
2. Describe Labeling Theory and recognize and explain its relevance in their own lives.
3. Extend practical knowledge gained to the experiences of first person narratives.
4. Question social medicalization of disability labels
5. Describe a society where disability is valorized
6. Recognize their own unique and personal “labels” and describe the impact on their lives.

Course Evaluation:

Both assignments are reflective and include application of concepts learned and discussed in lectures.

Both exams are a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blanks and short answer application questions.

Dates below are subject to change. Please confirm due dates with professor.

Assignment 1	15%	(approx. 1,000 words)	Due: October 7, 2026
Assignment 2	15%	(approx. 1,000 words)	Due: November 25, 2026
Test 1 (midterm) *	35%		Date: October 21, 2026
Test 2 (final) *	35%		Final Exam Period
Total	100%		

***NOTE: Since both midterm and final exams are each worth 35%, they are not eligible for self-reported absences.**

Assignments:

All assignments are considered mandatory and must be completed in order to pass this course. The 2 assignments are connected and therefore each must be completed.

All assignments are to be completed **independently** and submitted as individual work. Since the assignment are reflective, the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline. These assignments must be completed without the assistance of artificial (AI) tools such as text generators.

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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students should submit both their assignments on the due date established. Assignments will be accepted only after 72 hours being late. Due to this flexibility, students will not be eligible for self-reported lateness for assignments.

All assignments must be submitted as per Professor's instructions. Students should keep both hard and file copies of all assignments as they will be used for further assignments and may need to be resubmitted. Reflective assignments are considered personal and therefore private. They will not be shared with anyone except the professor.

Missed Tests:

Medical documentation may be required for all missed tests. **It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor prior to the test and again, within 48 hours of a missed test.**

Arrangements can be made to complete authorized missed examinations if the student is eligible. Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

The student must submit documentation directly to the appropriate Faculty Chair's Office and not to the instructor. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, the Chair's Office in consultation with the student's instructor shall determine appropriate academic accommodation.

Please see the POLICY OF ACCOMMODATION FOR MEDICAL ILLNESS at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf and

STUDENT MEDICAL CERTIFICATE (SMC) at:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>

Academic Offenses:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholasc_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All required papers might 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

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.

***NOTE: Since both midterm and final exams are each worth 35%, they are not eligible for self-reported absences.**

Respectful Classroom:

Labelling is a topic that can be sensitive for some people for reasons that aren't always self-evident or visible. As such, it is expected that students will be open and respectful in our discussions to allow space for different, and potentially contrasting, points of view and stories of experiences. Students should feel welcome and free to present their thoughts and to ask questions. The Professor draws on his career in the field to present a variety of distinct and common case situations in order to give students a sense of how labeling processes play out in real lives. This material is always adjusted to preserve people's confidentiality.

Computers and Electronic Messaging During Class Time:

Use of computers for note taking is acceptable but using computers for any other purposes is not considered respectful or appropriate. King's University College at The University of Western Ontario acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of laptop computers 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 laptops by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using laptops for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct. See:

http://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/studentLife/conduct/code_of_conduct_2003.pdf.

Inappropriate use of laptops 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 are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

Cell phones should be turned off and texting during lectures can be distracting to other students and is considered as unprofessional and disrespectful.

Students will not audio or video record any classroom activity without permission of the professor.

Attendance:

Consistent attendance at lectures will assist in student success. Attendance will be taken each class and it is the responsibility of students to inform the professor if they are late for class. In the event of a difference in the student's record of attendance and the professor's record, the professor's will be the record of determination.

Students will be given a warning if their attendance appears to be impacting their potential to succeed. Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class will be reported to the Dean.

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.

Additional Course Format Information:

This course begins on **September 9, 2026** and continues until **December 9, 2026** honouring all important dates derived from University approved guidelines and academic policies (<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/currentstudents/academic-resources/academic-dates-and-events/>).

Throughout the course, you are expected to interact regularly with other students, and with me, as your instructor. The course is designed to structure and guide some self-paced elements as well as offer interactive opportunities for community learning. This work may happen in smaller groups, or through opportunities to meet as a class. Each student brings their own knowledge, experience, and interests to our learning community, which we will build on and use our course material (readings, discussions, lessons, etc.) to amplify learning for everyone.

We will all be responsible for our own learning progress and also for contributing to the growth of our learning community through our participation in all course activities and assessments. We will be ready to engage and connect meaningfully. We will be present, professional, respectful and ready to contribute to our group.

Intellectual Property:

Recording of lectures or tutorials without the explicit consent of the Professor or TA is grounds for academic discipline.

Course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.