



Disability Studies 2210A (570)
Education & Disability Studies
Fall 2026

Instructor: Mel Gollan-Wills, PhD

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

Learn about current and past frameworks for exceptional learners in education. Examine common systemic tensions between: macro-social policies and individualized learning plans, inclusion and specialized supports, universal design and quality, and how families navigate accessibility and relationships amidst limited resources and neoliberalism.

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

Antirequisite(s): Childhood and Social Institutions 2294B if taken in Summer 2014.

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.



Education and Disability Studies

2210 A (570)—Fall 2026

King's University College | Western University

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 PM via Zoom

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CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

Learn about current and past frameworks for diverse learners in education. Examine common systemic tensions between: macro-social policies and individualized learning plans; inclusion and specialized supports; universal design and quality; and how families navigate accessibility and relationships amidst limited resources and neoliberalism.

Details: 3.0 Lecture hours, 0.5 course; Non-Essay Class

Prerequisite: Disability Studies 1010 A/B or the former Interdisciplinary Studies 1010 A/B

Antirequisite: Childhood and Social Institutions 2294 B if taken in Summer 2014

Academic Dean's Office Note: Unless you have either the requisite(s) for this course or written 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 if you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

How do educational systems envision and take up support for diverse learners?

How can a societal model of disability inform our educational systems?

Educational systems in both public and private spheres, including K-12 education and postsecondary institutions, must address and actively 'take up' new questions about how to effectively program with and for diverse learners in ways that (re)imagine disability not as a problem as understood through a deficit discourse, but rather as an integral part of human diversity.

The central aim of this course is to introduce students to both former and current or contemporary ways that disability—often referred to as exceptionalities or diverse abilities—is handled within educational systems. While such questions were once the exclusive domain of

“Special Education,” as best understood within a medical model with access controlled by medical professionals, schools and educational institutions today are being called on to engage in more proactive, social, and inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. Some changes are bureaucratic and technical, while others involve potentially radical re-thinking of the design and purpose of education.

In this class, we employ a Disability Studies (DS) lens to look at how disability has been *constructed* in education, then purposefully *deconstruct* our/those past understandings in hopes of *reconceptualising* how a social or societal model of disability might inform education policies and practices for exceptional pupils. This course will challenge students’ thinking about *fairness* in broader educational contexts—an understanding that fairness is not necessarily sameness.

This course can be counted towards the Major and Minor in Disability Studies – (DS). For more info:

<https://kings.uwo.ca/apps/current-courses/?program=ds> or in calendar:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/timetables/master/ttindex.cfm>

COURSE OUTCOMES:

In this class, students will:

1. Explore current **infrastructure** for special needs and exceptionalities within **local, national, and global** contexts.
2. Examine the **roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders** involved in the current (local) model of Special Education including, but not limited to: students, parents/guardians, educators, educational support staff, administrators and policymakers, community members and organizations, system staff, among others.
3. Discuss cases and broader educational issues such as **accommodation and accessibility**.
4. Reflect upon key debates and **tensions** surrounding equity, inclusion, segregation, and meeting individual learners’ needs.
5. Critically examine and **challenge dominant discourses**, understandings, and representations of disability in educational contexts.
6. Become familiar with and demonstrate knowledge of major approaches within Disability Studies so we might **re-think disability in educational contexts**.

N.B., I acknowledge that some individuals prefer person-first terminology (e.g., learners who have exceptionalities), whereas others prefer identity-first terminology (e.g., exceptional pupils). Out of respect for both perspectives, I will use the person-first and identity-first terms interchangeably throughout this course.

Some key questions:

1. What *kinds* of supports are available at the school, system/board, or community levels? How are families supported in navigating the system? Must all boards, districts, or even individual schools support in the same way?
2. What does the *literature* tell us about various school settings, placements, programs and services? Are there gaps or tensions between the *intended* and *enacted* supports?
3. What are the *tensions* between the medical model and the social/societal model of disability? What *informs* educational policies and processes? Does “practical adequacy”¹ apply?
4. How might *Learning for All (LfA)* and *Universal Design for Learning/Instruction (UDL/UDI)* inform approaches to meeting students’ diverse needs? What are the benefits to these approaches? What are the barriers to their enactment?
5. How might the current infrastructure (legal Ministry guidelines) in Ontario for exceptional learners *support* or *miss the mark* for students with different learning abilities?
6. How do other established *processes* for seeking additional supports for exceptional pupils locally, nationally, or globally compare? Are they effective? For whom? Who decides?
7. How do we define *inclusion*? What are the pros and cons of mainstreaming (inclusion) all students into regular classes? Who gets to decide?
8. Is it acceptable to place students in their own classes or programs or even schools (*segregation*) if their needs are best met in these settings? What is lost and what is gained and for whom?
9. What might some *barriers* be that are perhaps preventing exceptional learners from fully accessing their right to education? How do the *UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child* and the *Rights of Persons with Disabilities* inform policies and practices at home and abroad?
10. What might/could *fairness* look like in education through a DS lens?

REQUIRED READINGS:

- ☐ All required readings are detailed by lecture/topic in the full course outline.
- ☐ Digital readings will be made available in OWL Brightspace (where possible) for students to access.
- ☐ A supplemental reading list will be provided to students as an additional resource only.
- ☐ Details will be made available ahead of the first class if requested.
- ☐ Purchase of books is **not** required for this course.
- ☐ OWL Brightspace will be used in the course.

¹ Gable, A. S. (2014). Disability theorising and real-world educational practice: A framework for understanding. *Disability and Society*, 29(1), 86-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.776485>

COURSE FORMAT (570):

The delivery format of this course is **in-person, synchronous learning** where all aspects of the course are delivered in person.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Below is a *brief* outline of topics in this course. Any changes to topics/readings/guest lectures will be noted in OWL Brightspace. A final and more detailed version of the syllabus will be made available by the Professor closer to the start date of the course. Please also note that this is **not** a Special Education course, although many of the topics would be relevant to those individuals interested in that field.

Topics
Introduction to Disability Studies Concepts, Course Themes, and Requirements
Investigating Established Infrastructure
Various Models of Support for Exceptional Pupils and Grappling with Pathologizing for Access
Unpacking Constructions of Disability and Inclusion Confusion
A Closer Look at Accessibility
Accountability, Neoliberalism, and Education
Meeting Individual Learning Needs: Examining Equity through Inclusion vs. Segregation
Environmental and Placement Considerations
Intersections of Difference and Rethinking the Parallel System
Reconceptualising Special Needs & Next Steps for DS in Education

EVALUATION:

As a non-essay course, written work in the class will not exceed 1800 words. Below is a list and brief overview of assessments for the 2210A course. Separate documents detailing all assignment expectations and assessment will be provided to students during the course. All written work is to be in APA 7th edition format.

Assignment Snapshot			
	Assignment	Due Date	% of Final Grade
[1]	Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	15%
[2]	Tutorial #1* and Critical Analysis (Paper 1)	Monday, October 19, 2026	20%
[3]	Mini Inquiry Project (Paper 2)	Monday, November 23, 2026	20%
[4]	Tutorial #2**	Monday, November 30, 2026	15%
[5]	Final exam	Date determined by registrar	30%

1. Attendance and Participation—15%

- ☐ Weekly engagement/participation with the readings and discussions.

2. Tutorial #1 and Critical Analysis (Paper 1)—20% (10% tutorial, 10% critical analysis paper)

- ☐ 1 x 60-90 min (depending on class size) tutorial session facilitated **face-to-face** and during class time; focused on depth and breadth of discussion, participation, and preparedness; and
- ☐ 1 x two-page/500-word written, critical analysis on Tutorial #1 theme/topic(s) with connections to course readings and DS concepts/lens.
- ☐ ****Important:** Given the dialogic nature of a face-to-face tutorial, where rich understanding and depth of discussion comes from building off colleagues' ideas and making meaning together, it is difficult to replicate this experience and to assess should a student miss this type of assessment.*

3. Mini Inquiry Project (Paper 2)—20%

- ☐ Exploring a phenomenon of interest in education through a DS lens; individual written submission of 1250 words/4-5 pages on research and reflection on next steps/implications of phenomenon under investigation.

4. Tutorial #2—15%

- ☐ Again, 1 x 60-90 min tutorial session facilitated **face-to-face** during class time; focused on depth and breadth of discussion, participation, and preparedness.
- ☐ ****Note re: Academic Consideration Policy:** As indicated in [2], it is difficult to replicate this experience and to assess should a student miss this type of assessment—especially when the tutorial is student-led. Given the importance of

*shared dialogue, and the challenge with rescheduling individual tutorials, **this 15% assessment (if missed) will require formal supporting documentation.***

5. Final written exam (December Exam Period)—30%

CLASS POLICIES & OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:



ATTENDANCE:

Please be advised that there are regulations in place that **require regular attendance** for classes. The Academic Handbook (specifically Examinations and Attendance Regulations, see below), outlines sanctions for chronic absence. Attendance and participation account for 15% of the overall grade in the DS 2210A/B course. In the event that you are unable to attend class, I thank you in advance for your email correspondence. I make notes of this correspondence and take this into consideration. Likewise, if I do not hear from you, I simply record the absence.

The following is from the Academic Handbook:

"EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE: A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) **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. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration."

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf

*Please note that **"absent far too frequently" for the DS 2210A/B course is between 20-25% absence (approx. 2.5-3.0 classes), which will warrant a formal warning by the Professor.** Should subsequent absences from class continue, the Professor is obliged to follow current policy (see above).

LATE PENALTY:

Assignments are due at the **beginning** of class. This includes a hard copy submitted to the Professor, as well as a digital copy (Google doc format) submitted in OWL Brightspace. It is the expectation that all work is submitted on time. All due dates are listed within the syllabus that is made available to students prior to the start of the course, which means students will have at least 5 to 11 weeks notice of all due dates to plan accordingly.

Should a student require an extension, it must be negotiated **prior** to the due date and will only be considered in cases of extenuating circumstances and at the direction of the Professor.

Late assignments will be penalized **5% per day *after* the established due date/time**. Please be advised that a weekend counts as 2 days. Assignments will **not** be accepted after being one week (7 days) late **without any** contact from the student. It is my hope that late mark deductions are not necessary and that all students will communicate in advance should they need support.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION:

Further to the previous section on late penalty, this Professor fully recognizes that things can occur outside of our control. To support you in your learning in the DS 2210A/B course, please communicate with your Professor should the need for academic consideration arise. How course requirements/components will be met in the case of academic consideration will be discussed on an individual basis between the student seeking support and the Professor, in consultation with the Academic Advising Office where necessary.

Given the dialogic nature of a face-to-face tutorial, where rich understanding and depth of discussion comes from building off colleagues' ideas and making meaning together, it is difficult to replicate this experience (especially when it is student-led) and to assess should a student miss this type of assessment. Given the importance of shared dialogue, and the challenge with rescheduling individual tutorials, **TUTORIAL B (15%) assessment (if missed) will require formal supporting documentation**.

CLASS POLICY ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS:

Within this course, DS 2210A/B, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, among others) are **not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation**, which includes the critical analysis paper and mini-inquiry paper. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

It is also advised to **refrain** from utilizing such AI tools for **input** (such as asking AI to summarize an article) as these tools have been known to misinterpret human nuance and may give incorrect information. Additionally, part of the skills developed and assessed in this course are analysis and synthesis of a variety of professional and scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, so you are encouraged to read and review the material, attend lectures, and connect with your Professor for maximum learning and skill development.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

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.

The recording of lectures or tutorials **without** the explicit consent of the Professor is grounds for academic discipline. Members of the DS 2210A/B course have the expectation that they are engaging in good faith discussion without concern that they are being recorded. Exception is made when recording is an approved accommodation for a pupil and the instructor is aware.

A NOTE ABOUT ACCESS:

We begin with the assumption that access is an ongoing process that needs to be negotiated by all members in the course, and not merely an individual matter. Thus, we will make space in class for discussion of the meaning of access as an ongoing part of the course. Student participation and reflection on the issue of access is invited.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS:

1. Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) are formal evaluations of the class completed by students and will occur in the final weeks. Students are encouraged to complete these surveys to provide the Professor with meaningful feedback on their experiences with the course and their learning. Class time will be provided for students to complete these.
2. If you would like your assessment re-marked, it is no problem. Please note:
 - Write in point-form what you believe was graded improperly and why; note which page/paragraph you refer to. Leave the note and essay/test with the Professor to review for at least one week.
 - Understand that re-marking can take a grade **up or down**.

CLASS CANCELLATIONS:

All reported class cancellations are posted at: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-life/service-disruptions/>

**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.