

**WOME 3111 SDE | SOCJ 5011 SDG**  
**Gender and Women's Studies Department**  
**Social Justice Studies Program**  
**Lakehead University**



**Term:** Spring 2022

**Instructor:** Dr. Miranda Niittynen

**Email:** mniitty1@lakeheadu.ca

**Meeting Time:** Web, Asynchronous Course

Pre-recorded Lectures Posted Mondays

**Office Hours:** Virtual Office Hours,  
by appointment only

### **Course Description:**

In the course *Representing Disability*, students will be introduced to the field of critical disability studies and its scholarly connection to intersectional feminist research. As an introduction to the field, students will be given the language to discuss disability (in all of its complex embodiments) and critically analyze the ways in which disability has been represented and/or misrepresented in popular media, art and visual culture, advertisement, medicine, museums, fashion, and politics. Through a number of different artistic and visual culture examples, we will discuss historical and contemporary representations of disability – both visible and invisible. We will look at activist movements that address inequality as it relates to physical, cognitive, neuro, and mental diversity, as well as socio-economic factors and other social determinates of access and health. A variety of representational forms will be discussed, such as film, sculpture, painting, performance, memoir, photography, and students will be given the opportunity to produce a small scale creative project or write a research essay. From this course, students will acquire a larger understanding of critical disability studies as an academic field and will be given the tools to politically and creatively approach social justice activism in their own lives.

*No background or knowledge in disability studies required, this course is open to all types of online learners!*

**Student Evaluation:**

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|--|-----|--------------------|
| 1. Weekly Asynchronous Class Attendance:       | 15% | <b>Due Sundays</b> |
| 2. Online Posts (3x15%):                       | 45% | <b>Due Sundays</b> |
| 3. Final Essay ( <i>or</i> ) Creative Project: | 40% | <b>June 13</b>     |

**Required Texts:**

- All course readings, videos, and other materials (including lectures) will be available on the shared D2L course website
- I will do my best to make sure all video links are available, but by the chance that any video links are broken, please send me an e-mail and I will quickly update the video with a new link (or provide an alternative)
- Please get used to checking the course website regularly to see any updated materials/videos posted

***Student Accessibility Services and Student Accommodations***

Lakehead University offers a range of accommodations and accessibility services to help you with your individual learning. I will do all I can to work with students (alongside Student Accessibility Services) to address needs, accommodations, and provide an accessibility learning space.

**Lakehead University Resources:**

Lakehead University offers a number of resources for students who need additional accessibility and resources for their individual learning. “Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible.” For more information on these services contact Student Accessibility Services.

**Student Accessibility Services:**

<http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

Office: SC0003

Tel., 343-8047

Email: [sas@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:sas@lakeheadu.ca)

***Note on Class Content:***

This course is a study on critical disability studies and representational materials. We will collectively analyze a number of representations from museum exhibits, advertisements, film, photography, artworks, performances, as they relate to disability (a broad and diverse concept). Subsidiary to these examples, we will look at a number of artists, activists, and academics who have creatively and critically responded to human rights abuses as they relate to disability (past and present).

Because the materials focus on a number of social and emotional issues, such as historical sideshows, eugenics, racism, postmortem bodily rights abuses, illness, and other forms of complex representations, it is important to practice self-care, good health, and wellness *set by your own individual needs*. While some of the materials might be difficult to navigate, students will be given a number of critical outlets through activist inspired artists, performers, and speakers to help reflect on the realities of the past and the pressing oppressions of the present.

If you are struggling this term, please seek out help through campus counselling. More information can be found at the following url:

Student Health and Counselling:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness>

## Course Evaluation:

### 1. Weekly Asynchronous Class Attendance: 15% of overall course grade.

**WOME 3111:** Students are expected to listen and review weekly online lectures (both powerpoint and audio files), receiving a grade out of /4 every week for successfully viewing lecture. Students have until Sunday at 11:59pm each week to screen/listen to lectures.

Students are also expected to read the outlined materials and actively screen online videos. Without actively engaging with the online course materials, a student's inactivity will be reflected on their final grade.

**Due Date:** Attendance will be **ongoing throughout the course (graded weekly)** and will be documented through your individual use of the online course website.

*Note:* adjustments can be made based on Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodations

### 2. Online Discussion Posts (3 posts total): 45% of overall course grade.

**WOME 3111:** Students will be graded on their participation and engagement with course materials (readings, lectures, videos, art examples) in the virtual classroom via the submission of online discussion posts (*it is your choice what posts you will write based on your interests and schedule*). All online posts are due on the Sunday (before 11:59pm) after the weekly pre-recorded lecture. Each week, students can choose what topics they will post on (up to 3 submissions), based on their individual interests and schedules. All posts should be around **800 words**.

*In every post, students are*

- (1) **required to demonstrate their engagement with the weekly readings and course materials;**
- (2) **are highly encouraged to share other materials including art examples, news articles, blog posts, and audio/visual material such as films and YouTube videos to the online classroom.**

Posts should not simply summarize but pose questions and showcase critical arguments. You can support your argument/analysis with examples or (short) passages from the course readings and by pulling in outside research and examples from scholarly and creative sources. Posts should be comprehensible, edited before posting, and should be written within the allotted word limits. Style, grammar, and punctuation should be considered.

### **ALL POSTS WILL BE SUBMITTED ON D2L UNDER 'DISCUSSIONS'**

**Due Date:** Online Posts are due **Sundays before 11:50pm after posted lecture** on the D2L forum.

*Note:* Assignment guidelines and rubrics will be posted on D2L.

*Note:* Posts will be graded on a weekly basis and, for this reason, late posts will not be accepted; be sure to plan your schedule accordingly

*\*\*Remember: You are only required to complete **three** online posts – any posts exceeding the three requirement will not be graded. The decision is yours of what three topics you will post on throughout the course.*

### **3. Final Essay/Creative Project: 40% of overall course grade.**

**WOME 3111:** Students are given two options for their final assignment. **Option A:** write a final research paper on a topic of your choice related to the course theme of Disability and Representation; **Option B:** create an artistic project that incorporates or responds to a topic or issue as it relates to Disability and Representation.

#### ***Option A: Argumentative Research Paper (8-10 pages) 40%:***

Each Argumentative Research Paper should be 8-10 pages in length, and should **critically analyze a topic of your choice related to the general theme of Representing Disability**. Because the definition and our understanding of disability is far reaching, I invite students to write about a topic that most interests them (this can include topics not addressed in this course). Research papers must include two course readings/concepts, as well as relevant secondary scholarly research materials.

#### ***Option B: Creative Project and Short Paper (3-4 pages) 40%:***

Come up with a creative project that critically addresses Disability and the Politics of Representation. Creative projects are open to all mediums and approaches, but should highlight content related to the discussion of disability and representation.

#### **Project / Art piece 10%:**

*Example ideas:*

Create a visual art piece; create a sculpture or painting; create a photography project; stage a small scale museum installation; create an activist project and stage it; create a short comic strip;

write a short scene for a musical; write a short act for a play; create a short film; write a short story; choreograph a dance and perform it / tape it; create a performance piece; write a song and perform it/tape it. *The options are limitless.*

**Creative Projects will be photographed and emailed alongside the written assignment**

*Note:* Keep all projects manageable to be completed within the course term, as there is also a written component to the project.

Written Component for Creative Project (3-4 pages) 30%:

Each creative project submission should include a short written component (3-4 pages). Written components must include two course readings/concepts and any other relevant scholarly secondary research materials. *The short paper is each student's opportunity to both reflect and explain the ways in which their creative project fits in the themes of the course.* Each student will be asked to critically reflect on their art piece and discuss how it relates to the course themes.

**Reminders**

- Page count should exclude formal bibliography
- Put your Name on your paper/project
- Include a Paper/Project Title
- Times New Roman font; pt. 12 size font
- Double-spaced
- Page numbers
- Be sure to properly cite IN-TEXT the sources you are using throughout
- Include a formal bibliography
- **Citation style:** you can use the following style: *MLA*

**Due Date:** Final Research Papers / Creative Projects are due **Monday, June 13** before 11:59pm submitted by email.

*Note:* Due to the quick turnaround for Spring-term grades, extensions will not be made available unless under SAS accommodations or other extenuating circumstances, please schedule your final submission accordingly.

**ALL FINAL PAPER / PROJECs WILL BE EMAILED TO ME IN DOCX  
FORMATTING**

Please send final papers/projects with document title: Last Name, First Initial – Essay / Project (ex., Niittynen, M – Final Paper or Creative Project)

**Reading Schedule:**

**W1/May 2:                      Introduction: Representing Disability**

*Course Syllabus*

*Introduction to Representing Disability*

**W2/May 9: What is Critical Disability Studies?***Required Readings:*

- Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin – “Disability”
- Tobin Siebers – “Introducing Disability Aesthetics”
- A.J. Withers – “Constructing Difference, Controlling Deviance: The Eugenic Model”

*Video Clips:*

- *Surviving Eugenics*
- *Disability History Video Exhibit Timeline* (2015)

**Key Topics:** Eugenics, Mind/Body, Normalcy, Disability in Art History, Medical Model of Disability, Social Model of Disability, Feminist Approaches to Disability

**W3/May 16: Extraordinary Bodies: Disability, Race, and Gender***Required Readings:*

- Robert Bogdan – “Race, Showmen, and the Freak Show”
- Nadja Durbach – “Monstrosity, Masculinity, and Medicine: Re-Examining ‘the Elephant Man’”
- Anna Kérchy and Andrea Zittlau - Introduction to *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows and ‘Enfreakment’*

*Video Clips:*

- *The Greatest Showman* (2017)
- *The Elephant Man* (1980)
- *Freaks* (1932)

[\***Content Warning**\* These films depict outdated cinematic depictions of persons with disabilities]

**Key Topics:** Disability in the Entertainment Industry, Nineteenth Century ‘Freak-’shows, Extraordinary Bodies, Disability Intersections with Race, Gender, and Age, Constructing ‘Monstrosity,’ Mermaids, Anatomy Museums

**W4/May 23: Disability in Contemporary Visual Culture***Required Readings:*

- Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin – “Cinematic Images of (Dis)Ability”
- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson – “Disability and Representation”
- John Hendrickson – “The Tension at the Heart of CODA”
- Catherine Shoard – “Peter Dinklage Criticizes Disney for ‘Backwards’ Remake of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”

*Video Clips:*

- *Cinemability* (2013)
- *CODA* (2021)
- Disability in Film
- Zuzanna Filipiuk – “Representation of Disability in Film and Sociopolitical Implications”

**Key Topics:** Disability and Popular Culture, Disability in Cinema, Advertisement and Counter-Culture, Underrepresentation of Actors with Disabilities, Disability Awareness

### W5/May 30: 'Crip' Art, Sexuality, and Activism

#### *Required Readings:*

- Victoria Ann Lewis – “Crip”
- Robert McRuer – “Crip/Queer Horizons: Disability and Dispossession”
- Jenna Reid – “Crippling the Arts: It’s About Time”

#### *Video Clips:*

- *Crip Camp* (2020)
- *Bedding Andrew* (2014)
- *A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement*
- Robert McRuer on Crip Theory

**Key Topics:** ‘Crip’ Theory, Queer Theory, Desire, Representations of Disability and Sexuality, Disability Activist Movements

### W6/Jun 6: In/Visibility: Chronic Pain, Illness, and Cognitive Disability

#### *Required Readings:*

- Licia Carlson – “Feminist Approaches to Cognitive Disability”
- Eli Clare – “Violence of Cure”
- Sander L. Gilman – “Seeing the AIDS Patient”
- Sandy Sufian and Licia Carlson – “Thoughts of Precarity, Disablement, and Risk during COVID-19”

#### *Video Clips:*

- Eli Clare, Lecture: *Grappling with Cure*
- Spencer Schilinger – “Life is Pain: An Exploration of Suffering in Art”
- Vicky Potter – “Disability Not Invisibility: My Experience with Chronic Illness”

**Key Topics:** Cognitive Disability, In/Visible Disability, Mental Illness, Mad Studies, Injury, Illness, Chronic Pain, Debility, HIV/AIDS Crisis, Art of Frida Kahlo

### W7/Jun 13: Art, Prosthetics, and Posthuman Aesthetics

#### *Required Readings:*

- Sara Hendren – “All Technology is Assistive”
- Alison Kafer – “Crip Kin, Manifesting”
- Sunaura Taylor – “Animals, Ableism, Activism”

#### *Video Clips:*

- Miscellaneous videos Wangechi Mutu
- Miscellaneous Lisa Bufano performances

- Examined Life – Sunaura Taylor and Judith Butler
- Sunaura Taylor Lecture, “Disabled Ecologies: Living with Impaired Landscapes”
- *Animal and Disability Liberation* – with Sunaura Taylor

**Key Topics:** Posthumanism, Assistive Technologies, Art and Artists, Human-Animal Studies, Animal Disability, Performance Art

## Course Policies:

**Online Posts:** Students are expected to read all readings and screen/view artistic/video examples before discussion posts are due. Expectation is that students will critically engage with all assigned course materials when posting online.

**Active Online Participation:** Students are expected to asynchronously attend all pre-recorded lectures, read all assigned readings, and screen/view artistic/video examples on a weekly basis.

If a student is absent for more than 20% of virtual class attendance (without a valid reason or accommodation) the professor is not permitted to pass the student in the course.

*As per Lakehead University’s Regulation VIII, part (d):*

(d) A student is required to attend the courses of instruction and the examinations in all subjects prescribed. A student whose *attendance* at lectures and laboratories is deemed to be unsatisfactory by the Senate may have her/his/[their] registration in that course cancelled at any time.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to know Lakehead University’s policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Lakehead University’s policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the following url: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/provost-vice-president-academic/academic-integrity-plans-policies/academic-dishonesty-regulations>

**Policy on Missed/Late Assignments:** Students are required to submit all assignments on the assigned due date. If accommodations are needed for an assignment, students should make arrangements with the instructor ahead of time.

- Due to the quick turnaround for Spring-term grades, extensions will not be provided without SAS accommodation or other extenuating circumstances (please make arrangements early and plan your schedule accordingly)
- Arrangements can be made for accessibility needs regarding due dates. Please make sure to sort out arrangements with the instructor prior to the due date

### Email Etiquette:

All correspondence should be polite, respectful, and professional. Email inquiries must include:

- a salutation (i.e. “hello”, “dear”, “To”, etc.)
- a detailed question, or polite request
- a signature (i.e. your name). Emails that do not follow this format will be discarded.



- *Before* you email a question, be sure to read the course syllabus to see if you can find the answer there.
- If you have to discuss an in-depth issue, please email the instructor and make an appointment during office hours or request a meeting time that works for both you and the instructor.

Every effort will be made to respond to emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends). If you have not received a response after 48 hours, please send a polite reminder as sometimes emails can get lost in the shuffle.

### **Copyright**

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., lectures, audio lecture, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

### **As the university policy stipulates:**

“In the course *Representing Disability, WOME 3111 SDE*, in the context of remote instruction and participation, video, and audio recordings of class activities will be made to ensure students' and instructors' easy and comprehensive access to those activities. The recordings are confidential and are intended only for the use of the course students and instructors. They may otherwise not be used or disclosed. During recording, to protect others' privacy, each student should ensure that no one else is present in the location where they are being recorded without that non-student's consent. The recordings are made under the authority of sections 3 and 14 of *The Lakehead University Act, 1965*. Questions about the collection of the images and sounds in the recordings may be directed to Dr. Elizabeth Birmingham the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities, BB 1072D, Lakehead University Campus, (807) 343-8167.”

### **Submitting Assignments:**

All assignments that are submitted by email must include the students name and be in docx formatting (Microsoft word). Please send essays with document title: Last Name, First Initial – Assignment Name (ex., Niittynen, M – Final Paper or Creative Project).

### **Other LU Resources:**

Student Success Centre:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre>

Academic Support Zone / Writing Tutors:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone>

Tutoring and Peer Assistant Learning:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/academic-support/tutoring>

Student Health and Counselling:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/health-and-counselling>

Aboriginal Cultural and Support Services:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services>

Pride Central:

<http://pride.lusu.ca/>

Gender Equity Centre:

<http://gic.lusu.ca/>