

BT 3441 ~ Disability and Difference: Theological and Ethical Perspectives
Iliff School of Theology
Winter 2006

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PRIMARY GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will gain a basic familiarity with the language, history, methodology, principal sources, and primary issues related to the field of disability studies.
 2. Students will become familiar with the field of disability theology, including reflection on issues such as the nature of God, humanity, suffering, and healing.
 3. Students will have the opportunity to engage in ethical reflection on issues of justice, morality, and responsibility in relation to living in a diversely embodied world.
 4. Students will be better prepared for competent and respectful interaction and service in relation to people with disabilities.
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REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at Cokesbury and on reserve at Taylor Library)

- 1) Davis, Lennard J., ed. *Disability studies reader*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- 2) Eiesland, Nancy, and Don E. Saliers, eds. *Human disability and the service of God: Reassessing religious practice*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998
- 3) One of the following three texts:

Black, Kathy. *A healing homiletic: Preaching and disability*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Block, Jennie Weiss. *Copious hosting: A theology of access for people with disabilities*. New York: Continuum, 2002.

Eiesland, Nancy L. *The disabled God: Toward a liberatory theology of disability*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

ADDITIONAL READINGS WILL BE ASSIGNED FROM:

- 4) Exley, Helen, ed. *What it's like to be me*. New York: Friendship Press, 1984 (out of print, on reserve)
 - 5) Adams, Maurianne, et al., eds. *Readings for diversity & social justice*. New York: Routledge, 2000 (on reserve; a few copies are also available at Cokesbury)
 - 6) Selected on-line and current events readings, to be announced in class.
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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

(all assignments subject to change, as announced in class)

Part One: Introduction to Disability Studies

1a/Tuesday, January 10 Introduction to the course	No reading assignment
1b/Thursday, January 12 Disability definitions, models, and methodologies Film: Breaking Barriers (30 min)	Read: Exley, browse entire book
2a/Tuesday, January 17 History of disability studies and disability rights Film: Opening the Doors of Tomorrow (30 min)	Read: Davis 1-51, 75-109 Adams 319-339
2b/Thursday, January 19 Deafness as a different disability Guest Speaker	Read: Davis 153-171 Adams 343-351 Davis 52-74 <i>or</i> 128-150
3a/Tuesday, January 24 Disability in the first person Guest Speaker	Read: Adams 356-366, 377-378
3b/Thursday, January 26 Disability and epistemology Student presentations: Disability encounters Assignment #1 due	Read: Davis 401-428
4a/Tuesday, January 31 Film: Murderball (90 minutes)	No reading assignment
4b/Thursday, February 2 Discussion of Murderball, transition into theology	Eiesland & Saliers 15-31
Part Two: Theological Reflections	
5a/Tuesday, February 7 Intersections of disability and religion (scriptural, historical and contemporary)	Eiesland & Saliers 33-101
5b/Thursday, February 9 Intersections of disability and religion (continued)	Eiesland & Saliers 103-164
6a/Tuesday, February 14 Introduction to disability theology	Begin Black, Block, or Eiesland
6b/Thursday, February 16 Three models: Accessible God, Interdependent God, Disabled God	Finish Black, Block, or Eiesland

7a/Tuesday, February 21 Discussion/presentations based on Assignment #2 Other models? Assignment #2 due	No reading assignment
7b/Thursday, February 23 Discussion of disability theology (current & future); transition into ethics	Eiesland & Saliers 187-280
Part Three: Ethical Reflections	
8a/Tuesday, February 28 Film: Sound and Fury (90 min)	No reading assignment
8b/Thursday, March 2 Ethical concerns related to medical and minority understandings of disability	Davis 241-311
9a/Tuesday, March 7 Case study: Bioethics and disability	Online Readings TBA
9b/Thursday, March 9 Case study: End-of-life issues and disability	Online Readings TBA
10a/Tuesday, March 14 Student presentations: Final course project Discussions of difference: relating disability to other diversities	Adams (pages TBA)
10b/Thursday, March 16 Theory into practice: self-critically relating to and working in a world of difference Assignment #3 due	No reading assignment

Due Dates: Assignments need to be turned in on the dates specified on the syllabus, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor in advance. Penalties may be assigned for late assignments. Because this is an interactive class, *incompletes* are strongly discouraged. If a situation arises where you believe you will not be able to complete the course requirements, please see the instructor as soon as possible.

E-mail: Assignments or queries may be e-mailed to the instructor at dcreamer@iliff.edu. Do not assume the instructor has received your message unless you receive a reply from her.

Pass/Fail: Students interested in taking the class pass/fail should discuss this with the instructor by January 17th.

Academic Integrity: All students are expected to abide by Iliff's statement on Academic Integrity, as published in the Masters Student Handbook and on the Iliff intranet.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with the instructor during the first two weeks of class.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course will introduce participants to disability theology as an avenue through which to examine our theological and anthropological assumptions while simultaneously enhancing our abilities to live, work, and interact with others in a diverse world. This course will begin with an introduction to various discourses of disability, including history and methodology. The course will then examine and thoughtfully evaluate a variety of theological structures based on the lens of disability, while simultaneously attending to other differences of embodied and constructed difference. The test of such structures will come in the form of ethical reflection and review, particularly in the contexts of bioethics and end-of-life issues. A final project will offer students the ability to put such reflection into practice.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment #1: Student Encounters (15% of grade)

Students will be asked to complete a worksheet, prepare a brief presentation (5-10 minutes) and write a short reflection paper (2 pages) describing one of the following encounters with disability:

- Interview a person with a disability
- Read a first-person account of a person with a disability
- Watch and reflect on a biographical description of disability in film or media

Worksheet, distributed in class on Jan 17, will focus on basic information about the type of disability as well as the individual's experience(s) of and attitude(s) towards disability. This worksheet will also help guide students toward responsible and respectful engagement with this person/issue. **Due January 26.**

Assignment #2: Theological Evaluation and Construction (25% of grade)

Students will be asked to write a paper (4-5 pages) which reflects on a series of questions related to the disability theology text of their choice (Block, Black, or Eiesland) and offers them the opportunity to propose their own constructive project related to diversity and difference (including image of God, nature of human, and model of community). Questions distributed February 7; assignment **Due February 21.**

Assignment #3: Final Course Project (35% of grade)

Students will be asked to focus on one of the following three emphases and write a research and application paper on a subtopic of choice (determined in conjunction with the instructor). Findings will be presented in class during the final week of the quarter. Students will choose between emphases on:

- a) Theological evaluation and construction
- b) Ethical reflection and application
- c) Practical/pastoral considerations

Paper should be 5-7 pages (or comparable investment in an alternative format).

Complete guidelines for the project will be presented in class on February 23; assignment **Due March 16.**

Engagement/Participation (25% of grade)

Students will keep an *engagement journal* throughout the course and will also be expected to offer quality participation in course discussions. Students should complete reading assignments prior to class (note: you are allowed to use reading buddies for this class). Additional exercises and assignments will also be assigned to supplement the in-course learning (including films, disability awareness activities, current events readings, and internet based exercises). Engagement/participation grade will reflect both quantity and quality of overall effort in this class.