

McMaster University

Theme School International Justice and Human Rights

Human Rights and Disability

Winter Session 1998 - TSIJHR 3I03
Wednesday 6:30 - 9:30 pm
OT/PT Building T-16, Room 131

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I sometimes think human society is asleep and dreaming a dream where some people are perfect, beautiful, and powerful and others are flawed, unbeautiful, and powerless. In the dream the perfect people play their immortal parts and the imperfect people are rejected from human life. We are helping to awaken humanity to the reality that all people are flawed and yet beautiful, and each one limited in his or her unique way and yet powerful.

Jim Derkson

Course Description

Throughout the twentieth century individuals with disabilities have often been ignored in the development of human rights codes and legislation. In many instances they have been denied rights and protections that have been available for others because of the presence of mental and physical impairments. This is not surprising since the presence of physical or mental impairment has often been used to exclude individuals from education, employment and participation in community life.

This course will use an interdisciplinary focus to examine human rights and disability. Specific learning problems will be used to provide students with the opportunity to explore historical, legal, economic, social and ethical aspects of human rights for individuals with disabilities. The course will focus primarily on Canadian society but international perspectives will be considered.

The central objective of the course is to examine the relationship between human rights and disability and address the question:

Is Disability a forgotten issue or a new frontier in Human Rights?

Course Format

The main format of the course will be a weekly three hour academic seminar. The course will be divided into three main sections. The first part of the course will consist of a series of individual book reviews. The book review is designed to provide a general survey of significant literature related to understanding the experience of living with a disability and the current literature about human rights and disability. Books are to be chosen during the first seminar from a selected list of books.

The second part of the course uses specific case studies or learning problems that allow the student to examine various aspects of human rights and disability both in a Canadian and an international context. Learning problems address issues such as euthanasia, genetic screening, sexuality, immigration, and discrimination. In addition, rights to participate as citizens in a community such as rights to education, employment and transportation are also included. Students are responsible for facilitating group discussion and learning. Students are encouraged to visit agencies or groups that are involved in various aspects of the case studies.

The final part of the course draws on the work of students' research essays and is designed to integrate individual research and identify future issues for students in the area of human rights and disability. A central feature of these sessions will be a discussion of the future roles of students in the area of human rights and disability either as citizens, taxpayers, advocates, parents, or individuals with disabilities.

Information Searching

Literature on disability and human rights is found in a wide range of disciplines and formats. There are at present no specific journals that focus on this topic. Thus it is important for student to be able to effectively search a wide range of information sources. Students are encouraged to use the resources of all the McMaster libraries for research to develop their literature searching strategies.

Discussion of information searching strategies will be a specific focus of the course. Special library sessions are available by Nora Gaskin from Mills Library and Tom Fleming from the Health Sciences library. Times for these sessions to be negotiated during the first seminar.

In addition, Professor Tremblay has a bibliographic database on disability located in her office. Specific searches related to learning problems or research essay can be carried out by appointment.

Other Information Resource Sites

DISH is the Disability Information Service Hotline located at the Hamilton Public Library.

DISH has an information service on a variety of disability issues and the library houses a general collection related to disability. Particular journals Ragged Edge, Mouth, New Mobility, Abilities, Disability Today. Sandi Mugford and Rick Jackman are excellent resource people who staff the service. DISH 546-3139

The Roeher Institute based at York University Campus has an extensive library on disability with particular emphasis on intellectual disability. (416) 661-5701

The following journals should be searched during the course:

- ARCHTYPE is the newsletter of the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped located in Toronto. The newsletter is located in Mills Library and is a useful resource.

- *Disability, Handicap & Society* now called *Disability & Society* is located in the Health Sciences Library is a useful resource for literature about disability.
- *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* located in Mills library.
- *Hasting Centre Reports*, located in the Health Sciences Library, is a useful journal for information about ethical issues and often address issues related to disability.

Internet Sites

- Council of Canadians with Disabilities <http://www.pcs.mb.ca/~ccd/>
- World Association of Persons with Disabilities <http://www.wapd.org>
- ADAPT <http://www.adapt.org>
- Bill Scarborough <http://www.realtime.net/~cyanosis>
- Equal Opportunity, Ontario <http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/>

E-mail

- Paul Longmore longmore@sfsu.edu
- GnarlyBone (general American info.) gnarlyBone@aol.com

Course Schedule

January 7

Introduction to Course and Students.

Discussion and Selection of Book Reviews.

What is Disability? General Discussion

- [Case #1 Edward and Alice Albee](#)

January 14

Health Sciences Library - Mr. Tom Fleming

Framing Disability and Human Rights: A Historical Review - Dr. M. Tremblay

- Introductory Case: Edward and Alice Albee:

General Discussion and Selection of Case Studies

January 21

Videotape: *When Billy Broke His Head and Other Tales of Wonder*

Research Essay Discussion

- [Case #1](#) (1 hour)

January 28

Book review presentations (1 hour)

- [Case #1](#) (1 3/4 hours)

February 4

Book review presentations (1 3/4 hours)

- [Case #2](#) (1 hour)

February 11

Synthesis: What is Disability?

Research Essay Proposals Due (NO EXTENSIONS)

Early research proposals welcomed, will be returned in order of submission

Interim self assessment for participation to be handed in during class.

- [Case #2](#)

February 18 - Break Week

February 25

Videotape: Towards Intimacy

Return of Research Proposals

- [Case #3](#)

March 4

- [Case #3](#)
- [Case #4](#)

March 11

- [Case #4](#)
- [Case #5](#)

March 18

- [Case #5](#)
- [Case #6](#)

March 25

Planning for Research Seminars

- o [Case #6](#)

April 1 & 8

Research Seminars

Final Course Evaluation

Evaluation

1. Student Participation (20 %)

The design of the course emphasizes the use of problem based, student directed learning. Student participation throughout all seminars is important in supporting the learning activities of all students. Student participation will be evaluated on attendance, preparation and participation. See attached guidelines. Students will be asked to submit interim and final self assessment which will be considered in final evaluation by instructor.

2. Book Review (20%: 15% written, 5% presentation)

The book review is designed to provide a quick general survey of significant literature related to understanding the experience of living with a disability and the current literature about human rights and disability. Books address either the experience of living with a disability in society or theoretical frameworks for understanding disability. Books are to be chosen during the first seminar from a selected list of books.

Book review should be 3 - 5 pages, typed, double spaced. Book review should include:

- o a clear, concise description of the book, including the author's reason for writing the book;
- o a critique of the book, including a discussion of the value of the work for understanding issues related to human rights and disability;
- o a discussion of the book's impact on the reader;
- o and a recommendation about whether the book should be used in future.

Book reviews are to be presented in seminar on January 28th and Feb 4th. Evaluation guidelines for presentation are attached. Written book reviews are to be handed in at the end of the seminar in which they were presented.

3. Case Study Seminars (20%)

Case studies will provide the major focus for learning in the course. All students will be responsible for preparing for each seminar but several students will be assigned responsibility for leading the case study seminar. Cases will be chosen early in January. Students are encouraged to use a variety of learning resources and should consider visits to community agencies. Students may wish to invite resource people to participate in part of the seminar. See attached evaluation guidelines for facilitation of case studies.

4. Research Essay (40%: 30% written, 10% presentation)

Each student will have the opportunity to select a research question related to human rights and disability. Students are encouraged to select a question of personal interest and review

question with the instructor. Research paper proposal outlining the specific research question and a outline of the research paper, including a description of possible references and learning resources, is to be handed by February 11th. **NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED.** However early submissions of essay outline are welcome and will be returned quickly!!!!) Outlines received on February 11th seminar will be returned February 25th.

Guidelines for Research Paper:

- Introduction: Clear identification of your specific Human Rights question; an explanation of your rationale for its selection; a brief outline of how you are going to address the question.
- Review of literature: Should address all aspects of the question; can include personal communications with experts in the field as well as literature.
- Discussion: Application of findings to the question.
- Conclusion: Weighing of evidence and other findings to answer initial question. As a result of research it may be necessary to conclude that it is not possible to fully answer the question, this is a valid conclusion and is not a result of poor research. Additionally, new questions or a rephrased question may have arisen, these should be identified in the conclusion.
- Evaluation of Paper: This section should be used to discuss the students personal evaluation of the learning that occurred throughout the project, their evaluation of the quality of the essay and future learning issues that emerged during the project.
- Methods of Citation: A specific method of citation should be Identified and used consistently throughout paper. Student may use a citation method used in your academic discipline. Sample citation methods recommended include K. Turabian *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or *The American Psychological Association Guidelines*, 4th Edition.

Reference list should include all sources used in the text of the paper. Paper is to be typed, double spaced, between 10 - 12 pages. Paper is to be submitted at the end of seminar.

Class Presentations of Research Essays

Students will present the findings of their research essay during seminars on April 3rd. and April 10th. Format for the presentation and evaluation is to be designed by students and instructor.

Suggested Readings

- Bickenbach, J.E 1993. *Physical Disability and Social Policy*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Gadacz, R. 1994. *Re-Thinking Disability: New Structures, New Relationships*. University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Higgins, P.C 1992. *Making Disability: Exploring the Social Transformation of Human Variation*. C.C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill.
- Oliver, M (1996): *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. Macmillan, Basingstoke.

To foster the capacity of communities to respond to their own members, citizens must welcome disabled people into ordinary, rich networks of relationships. People must see that disability does not have to be fixed or cured, but accepted and challenged. The disabled person must be celebrated, listened to and supported in every environment to develop every talent he or she has, just as ordinary people are. In short, every citizen must be an ordinary citizen.