

## Disability in Literature 42.258.201

Fall 2014

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Our course will explore how texts portray people with disabilities of many kinds – physical, emotional, social, and mental. We will read short stories, poems, memoirs, essays, and plays. The majority of texts will be roughly contemporary, but some will also help us to historicize images of disability in literature. We will also watch films, both documentary and otherwise. We'll read texts written by disabled and non-disabled writers. We will explore the ways that many stereotypical portrayals of the disabled undermine, invalidate, and infantilize the disabled community, and seek out literary voices that empower the disabled and question our definition of “normal.” Studying disability in literature helps us to explore what our culture decides is “normal,” and asks us to consider what makes us human. Literature both reflects and creates cultural messages about ability and disability, “normal” and “abnormal.” Literature can help us understand the experience of the disabled, as well as understand our own responses to disability in our own lives and in our culture.

We'll be visiting the Lowell Association for the Blind (LAB) in downtown Lowell during one class period. You have the *option* to complete a Service-Learning project with LAB for credit in the course. You may, if you wish, replace one small writing assignment (a one-pager) with a one-hour reading for radio project (along with reflection paper) or, you may design and execute a larger service learning project with LAB (again, including a reflection paper) in place of your final paper project. We'll talk lots more about these options as the semester continues.

### Learning Objectives:

- ⇒ To become familiar with the history of the portrayal of disability in literature.
- ⇒ To make connections between literary portrayals and real-life situations.
- ⇒ To gain understanding of the varied experiences of the disabled community.
- ⇒ To develop skills of close and careful reading.
- ⇒ To enhance discussion skills through a focus on participating in classroom discussion and leading classroom discussion.
- ⇒ To improve presentation skills with an end-of semester paper presentation.
- ⇒ To develop writing skills through multiple drafts and peer response on papers.
- ⇒ To learn about local community resources for the disabled and consider the possibility of a service-learning opportunity there.

### Your Course Goals:

This course works as a participatory, collaborative learning experience. Ideally, you also have your own goals for this course, whether that's focused on what you learn about the topic, what you do in the classroom, or what work you do outside the classroom. Take a moment right here at the beginning of the semester to write down **at least 3 goals for yourself in this course:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Class Meetings:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:45

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 – 12, and by appointment in O’Leary Library 461 (4<sup>th</sup> floor)

**Required Texts:** Available at the South campus bookstore

⇒ Mark Haddon: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*

⇒ Lisa Genova: *Still Alice*

⇒ Course Packets, to be distributed periodically in class (don’t lose these!)

### **Instructional Resources**

The Writing Center, located on the third floor of O’Leary Library, offers free writing tutoring. You can meet with a tutor about any writing assignment in any class. The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services provide many tutoring resources <http://class.uml.edu/>. I encourage you to seek assistance if you are struggling in this or any class here at UML. Their services are free to use (and paid for by your student fees!).

### **Disability Accommodations:**

In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Their office is at University Crossing, 220 Pawtucket Street, Suite #300, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: [Disability@uml.edu](mailto:Disability@uml.edu). This documentation is confidential.

### **A note on classroom conduct:**

In this class, and in all classes at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, students are expected to exhibit professional and respectful behavior that is conducive to a mutually beneficial learning environment in the classroom. Examples of inappropriate behavior include: text messaging, listening to music, cell phone use (other than the campus alert system), late arrivals, early departures, use of laptops for other than class purposes, disrespectful comments or behavior, intentional disruptions, failure to follow faculty directives. Students in violation of these standards may be asked to leave class and/or be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

**University Cancellation Information:** 978-934-2121, or check [uml.edu](http://uml.edu). If the University closes, upon return to class, the items for both the missed class and the day of return class are due. In the case of an exam or paper due on a day the University closes, the exam or paper is due on the day we return to class.

### **Course Requirements:**

- This is a 3 credit course, as defined by federal regulation (I’m not kidding). You should expect to complete 6 hours of out of class work each week for approximately 15 weeks, for a total of 90 hours of outside-of-class work.
- Attendance is required. This is not a correspondence course. You can fail the course for not attending class. You have two (2) “free” absences to use as you need. For every class beyond those two that you miss, your final grade for the class will be lowered one grade step. (I.e., if you have a “B” for the class, but have missed 4 classes, you will receive a “C+” for your final grade.) Excessive or habitual lateness can also count as an absence.
- Good classroom citizenship is required. Good classroom citizenship goes beyond just “participation” in the sense of raising your hand a lot. It includes sharing your thoughts and actively listening to the thoughts and comments of your peers. We will have both full-class discussions and small group work. If you are not particularly comfortable speaking in the full-class discussion, be sure you are making up for it in the smaller group discussions. Please be considerate of your classmates and make the classroom a space where everyone can speak their mind. Also, as a courtesy to everyone in the room,

please turn off your cell phone before class begins. If you must eat or drink during class, please be respectful of those around you, and of those who come after you by cleaning up after yourself.

- You are responsible for completing all reading assignments on the dates they are due. You need to have read (and have the assigned text with you) so that you can join the discussion and participate in each class session's activities. I reserve the right to give reading quizzes as necessary to prod your reading, though I would rather not resort to such ploys.
- You are responsible for completing all writing assignments on the dates they are due. I do not accept papers over e-mail or on electronic storage devices. If a paper is due, that means it is due in printed, hard-copy form, not electronically. Do not attach documents to e-mails that you send to me unless you check with me first.
- You must view the three films. The films are available on reserve in our library through the media center, where you can watch them. They are also available through Netflix and Blockbuster, and at many local public libraries. Start thinking well ahead of time about how and when you will watch the films. Like a reading assignment, you should watch the film BEFORE coming to class and be prepared with notes to facilitate discussion.

### **Graded Assignments:**

- At three assigned times during the semester, students are required to prepare a one page informal response to the reading on the day it is due. See the "one-pager" handout for details.
- One mid-term paper is due roughly half of the way through the course. Paper requirements guide will be handed out well in advance of the due date.
- There will be one in-class exam, roughly 2/3 of the way through the course.
- There is a no final exam, but there is a final project (a paper with presentation) instead. Students will choose a disability-related book that does not appear on the syllabus and write a final essay of roughly 8 to 12 pages. There will also be short presentations associated with the final papers. You have the option to do a Service-Learning project (with reflection paper and presentation) in place of the traditional final paper.

### **Evaluation and Grading:**

Please keep in mind the attendance policy (already detailed in the "Course Requirements" section above). Absenteeism is the leading cause of poor grades in my courses. Excellent attendance and participation will have a positive effect on your grade, particularly if you end up on a "borderline" between two grades. Following is information on how final grades will be calculated:

#### **Breakdown of points for the final grade:**

Classroom Citizenship: 20%  
Short writing assignments (includes three "one-pagers," three film logs, and any other short in-class or pre-class writing): 20%  
Mid-term paper: 20%  
In-class exam: 15%  
Final Paper Project: 25%

#### **Final grade ranges:**

94-100=A: Superior work, *highest quality*  
90-93=A-: High Honors Quality  
87-89 = B+: High Quality  
83-86= B: Basic Honors Quality  
80-82=B-: Below Honors Quality  
77-79=C+: Above Satisfactory Quality  
73-76=C: Satisfactory  
70-72=C-: Below Satisfactory  
67-69=D+: Above Minimum Passing  
60-66=D: Minimum Passing  
below 60=F: Failed

If you have a concern about a grade or your standing in the class, I am quite happy to talk with you. This type of conversation is best suited to an individual conference. Please e-mail me to schedule an appointment.

*Please note: This much is **nonnegotiable**: you are not eligible for a passing grade of D unless you have attended at least 11 of 14 weeks worth of classes, and completed 90% of the assignments.*

### **Academic Integrity**

Please review the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx>

*If you plagiarize or cheat on an assignment in this course, you will receive an “F” for this course, and you are subject to other discipline (including expulsion from the University) at the discretion of the instructor and the University. Keep in mind that even if you write some part or even “most” of the paper, if some portion of the paper is copied from another source without proper attribution, (i.e., if you “only plagiarize a little”) **you will still get an “F” for the course.** Don’t plagiarize at all.*

Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. You must cite all sources that you use, including online sources. Also, remember that “using” a source includes directly quoting, paraphrasing, and using ideas from any source. There is nothing wrong with “getting help” from other writers, just be sure to acknowledge it by using quotation marks and author/page citation appropriately. Please take the time to give proper credit to the work of other authors. It is a matter of respect – for yourself, for other authors, for your classmates, and for me.

Don’t waste your time or mine by plagiarizing a paper. If you’re having difficulty with a writing assignment, talk to me before the day it is due.

### **Semester Schedule:**

In most cases, I have tried to make the assignments due on Tuesdays longer than assignments due on Thursdays (working on the assumption that you have more time between Thursday and Tuesday than you do between Tuesday and Thursday). I’ve noted page numbers in many cases to help give you a better sense of the reading expectations, but keep in mind, as always, that “your mileage may vary” and some reading assignments may go more quickly (or more slowly), depending on many factors. Please come to class having completed the assigned reading (or writing or viewing) for the day. We need everyone to be prepared and ready to join the discussion.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE</b>
Thursday 4 September	First day Introductions & hand-outs
Tuesday 9 September	Nancy Mairs: “On Being a Cripple” (handout) Write comments & questions on the handout to prepare for class discussion
Thursday 11 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 1 – 65 (65 pages)(stop before sect. 103) Write (all): response to Accessibility Scavenger Hunt
Tuesday 16 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 65 – 158 (93 pages) (stop before sect. 197) GROUP 1: One-pager
Thursday 18 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 158 – 221 (63 pages) (read through the end) GROUP 2: One-pager
Tuesday 23 September	Excerpts from Temple Grandin: <i>Thinking in Pictures</i> (handout) GROUP 3: One-pager

<b>DATE</b>	<b>DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE</b>
Thursday 25 September	Discussion of film <i>Temple Grandin</i> (2010 Biopic from HBO starring Claire Danes) You need to watch the film BEFORE today's class meeting Complete Film Log.
Tuesday 30 September	Reading packet on sight impairment (handout) In class: Visit from Elizabeth Cannon from Lowell Association for the Blind
<b>Thursday 2 October</b>	<b>OFF-CAMPUS: VISIT TO LOWELL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND</b> We will meet downtown at 169 Merrimack Street.
Tuesday 7 October	Lynn Manning: <i>Shoot!</i> (handout) GROUP 4: One-pager
Thursday 9 October	Poetry Packet (handout) includes "How to Read a Poem" & many poems GROUP 5: One-pager
Tuesday 14 October	David Foster Wallace: "The Depressed Person" (handout) GROUP 1: One-pager
Thursday 16 October	Jillian Weise essay & poems (handout) GROUP 2: One-pager
Tuesday 21 October	Meghan O'Rourke "What's Wrong with Me?" (handout) GROUP 3: One-pager
Thursday 23 October	Discussion of film <i>My Left Foot</i> (1989 award-winning drama about a man with C.P.) You need to watch the film before today's class meeting. Complete Film Log
Tuesday 28 October	Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" (handout) GROUP 4: One-pager
Thursday 30 October	Harriet McBryde Johnson "Too Late to Die Young" (handout) GROUP 5: One-pager
Tuesday 4 November	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> 1 – 89 (89 pages) GROUP 1: One-pager
Thursday 6 November	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> 90 – 156 (66 pages) GROUP 2 & 3: One-pager
Tuesday 11 November	No Class – University Closed for Veteran's Day
Wednesday 12 November	Extra credit opportunity: UML Disability Studies Conference Event
Thursday 13 November	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> 157 – 240 (83 pages) GROUP 4 & 5: One-pager
Tuesday 18 November	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> 241 – 293 (52 pages) Last day to do a make-up one pager (if you missed one previously)
Thursday 20 November	In-class essay exam today
Tuesday 25 November	Discussion of film <i>Murderball</i> (2005 documentary about wheelchair rugby) You need to watch the film before today's class meeting! Complete film log
Wednesday 26 November	TUESDAY CLASSES OFFICIALLY MEET TODAY, but we will have an ONLINE assignment to accommodate challenging schedules. See handout. Online assignment: Current Events/Issues in Disability
Thursday 27 November	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

<b>DATE</b>	<b>DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE</b>
Tuesday 2 December	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS
Thursday 4 December	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS
Tuesday 9 December	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS Last Day of Class!
Thursday 12 December	Final Project Due

### **General Advice to Students:**

Check your UML e-mail regularly for important updates from the University and from me.

Come to class prepared to work. This means several things:

- 1) You should have completed the assigned readings, and any associated writing. You might even have notes in your book, underlined passages, or page markers for interesting spots in the reading.
- 2) You should have the appropriate assigned text (whether that's a book or a packet I hand out) with you every day. You should buy, rent, or borrow a copy of the required books so that you can read the assignments, write the papers, and participate in class discussion.
- 3) You should be prepared to listen and talk in discussion. This means you shouldn't use our class time to take a nap, or sit sullenly, or complete your calculus homework.
- 4) You should avoid distractions during class. Distractions include things like small pets, cell phones and text messaging devices, notes to classmates, i-pods, or any other gadget that will engage your brain in something other than the academic discussion in the classroom. While you may think I don't notice, I do, and so do your classmates. It's distracting for you, but also for those around you.

When you don't come to class (for whatever reason) it is your responsibility to find out the work that was missed, including any handouts, in-class activities, or changes to the syllabus. If you can do this via e-mail before the next class meeting, that's great. If you can't, you should definitely come speak with me before class, after class, or in my office hours. In any case, don't try to avoid me, hoping that I didn't notice you were absent.

If you need extra time for an assignment, for whatever reason, ask (preferably early). I do not automatically give extensions; however, I am a reasonable person, and you should ask for help or time if you need it. An "extension" is something you ask for before a paper is due. When you ask for extra time on the day a paper is due (or in the days after it was due), that is called "late." Late papers are subject to a grade reduction at my discretion, and I do not provide comments on late papers. In general, I would rather have a late paper than no paper at all; I would rather have no paper at all than a plagiarized paper.