

Disability in Literature 42.258.201

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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.

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.

Your Course Goals:

Given the nature of this course, we'll rely upon a participatory, collaborative learning experience. While I have many goals for the course (specified above), hopefully 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: Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 – 10:45

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11 – 12, and by appointment in O'Leary Library 461 (4th floor)

Required Texts: Available at the South campus bookstore

- ⇒ Mark Haddon: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*
- ⇒ Jean-Dominique Bauby: *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*
- ⇒ Lucy Grealy: *Autobiography of a Face*
- ⇒ Lisa Genova: *Still Alice*
- ⇒ Course Packets, to be distributed periodically in class (don't lose these!)

Instructional Resources and Disability Accommodations:

The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services provide many resources, including tutoring in writing: <http://class.uml.edu/>. 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. The office is on North campus, Cumnock Hall C6, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: 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 Line: 978-934-2121

Course Requirements:

- ⇒ Attendance is required. You must be here to join class discussion, make presentations, and participate in group work. You have two “freebies,” no questions asked. For every class beyond those two that you miss, your final grade for the class will be lowered one level (A to A-, A- to B+, and so on).
- ⇒ Good classroom citizenship is required. Good classroom citizenship begins with being prepared for class. 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. Please be considerate of your classmates and make the classroom a space where everyone can speak their mind. As a courtesy to everyone in the room, please turn off your cell phone before class begins.
- ⇒ You are responsible for all the readings and assignments listed on this syllabus. I reserve the right to give reading quizzes as necessary to prod your reading, though I would rather not resort to such ploys.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ One mid-term paper is due roughly half of the way through the course.
- ⇒ There will be one in-class essay exam, roughly 2/3 of the way through the course.
- ⇒ In place of a final exam, students will choose a 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. I will provide more information on this paper later in the semester.

Evaluation and Grading:

Grading is my least favorite aspect of the course; however, grades are necessary, not only to the University, but also in many cases in order to motivate students. I note each day’s attendance with a “check” in my grade book. You will get credit for all quizzes and short writing that you complete and turn in to me. Particularly active class participation or strong short writing assignments will earn a “check plus.” The final grade will include the following elements:

- Classroom Citizenship: 20%
- Three “one-pagers” and three film logs: 15%
- Mid-term paper: 20%
- In-class exam: 20%
- Final Paper: 25%

If you have a concern about a grade or a question about your standing in the class, I am happy to talk with you. This type of conversation is best suited to an individual conference. You can see me during my office hours, or schedule an appointment at another time.

A final note on grades: If you are determined to do only the minimal amount of work and get the minimum passing grade, you might want to know what the bottom line is. 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.

About Academic Honesty:

All University policies on academic dishonesty apply to all assignments in this course. The information below comes from the University’s official policy, which can be found online: http://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic_dishonesty.htm

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- ⇒ *Cheating* - use, or attempted use, of trickery, artifice, deception, breach of confidence, fraud, or misrepresentation of one's academic work.
- ⇒ *Fabrication* - falsification or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise.
- ⇒ *Plagiarism* - representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise.
- ⇒ *Facilitating dishonesty* - helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, including substituting for another in an examination, misrepresenting oneself, or allowing others to represent as their own one's papers, reports, or academic works.

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. Please 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 or 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.

I know that it is easy to find information and indeed whole papers on the internet. You should know that it is also easy for me to find these sources. If I suspect you’ve done this, I will take the time to find the source, and there is every likelihood you will be caught. Please don’t waste your time or mine by plagiarizing a paper. If you’re having difficulty with a writing assignment, please talk to me before the day it is due.

Semester Schedule:

In most cases, I have tried to make the assignments due Wednesday longer than assignments due Friday (working on the assumption that you have more time between Friday and Wednesday than you do between Wednesday and Friday). 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.

DATE	DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE
Wednesday 5 September	First day Introductions & hand-outs
Friday 7 September	Nancy Mairs: "On Being a Cripple" (handout) Write comments & questions on the handout to prepare for class discussion
Wednesday 12 September	Cheryl Marie Wade & others: poems (handout) Written response to Accessibility Scavenger Hunt and discussion
Friday 14 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 1 – 65 (65 pages)(stop before sect. 103) RESPONSE GROUP 1
Wednesday 19 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 65 – 158 (93 pages) (stop before sect. 197) RESPONSE GROUP 2
Friday 21 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident</i> 158 – 221 (63 pages) (read through the end) RESPONSE GROUP 3
Wednesday 26 September	Excerpts from Temple Grandin: <i>Thinking in Pictures</i> (handout) RESPONSE GROUP 4
Friday 28 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 and complete the Film Log
Wednesday 3 October	Jean-Dominique Bauby: <i>The Diving Bell & the Butterfly</i> pgs. 3 – 68 (65 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 1
Friday 5 October	Jean-Dominique Bauby: <i>The Diving Bell & the Butterfly</i> pgs. 69 – 132 (63 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 2
Wednesday 10 October	NO CLASS TODAY: MONDAY CLASS SCHEDULE
Friday 12 October	Mid-term Paper Due Today
Wednesday 17 October	Lucy Grealy: <i>Autobiography of a Face</i> pages 1 – 87 (87 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 4
Friday 19 October	Lucy Grealy: <i>Autobiography of a Face</i> pages 88 - 159 (71 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 1
Wednesday 24 October	Lucy Grealy: <i>Autobiography of a Face</i> pages 160 – 236 (76 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 2
Friday 26 October	Lynn Manning: <i>Shoot!</i> (handout) RESPONSE GROUP 3
Wednesday 31 October	Lisa Genova Still Alice pages 1 – 89 (89 pages) RESPONSE GROUP 4
Friday 2 November	Lisa Genova Still Alice pages 90 – 156 (66 pages)
Wednesday 7 November	Lisa Genova Still Alice pages 157 – 240 (83 pages)
Friday 9 November	Lisa Genova Still Alice pages 241 – 293 (52 pages)

DATE	DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE
Wednesday 14 November	Discussion of film <i>My Left Foot</i> ; Watch the film BEFORE today's class meeting! Complete film log
Friday 16 November	In-class essay exam today
Wednesday 21 November	NO CLASS: Online Current Events Assignment for today
Wednesday 28 November	Discussion of film <i>Murderball</i> ; you need to watch the film before today's class meeting! Complete film log
Friday 30 November	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS
Wednesday 5 December	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS
Friday 7 December	PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL PROJECTS
Friday 14 December	Final Project Due

General Advice to Students:

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

- 1) You should have completed the assigned readings or viewings, and any associated writing. You might even have notes in your book, underlining of passages, or page markers for interesting spots in the reading.
- 2) You should be prepared to listen and talk in discussion. This means you shouldn't come to our class and take a nap, or sit sullenly, or complete your calculus homework.
- 3) 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, and 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, it is better to ask 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. I would rather have a late paper than no paper at all; I would rather have no paper at all than a plagiarized paper. Late papers are subject to a grade reduction at my discretion, and I do not provide comments on late papers.