

Disability in Literature 42.258.201

Fall 2015

Dr. Bridget M. Marshall: bridget_marshall@uml.edu

Web site: <http://faculty.uml.edu/bmarshall/>

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. We will also watch films, both documentary and otherwise. The majority of texts will be roughly contemporary, but some will also help us to historicize images of disability in literature. 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 short papers, peer response, and revision.
- ⇒ To learn about local community resources for the disabled and consider the possibility of a service-learning opportunity there.
- ⇒ **Essential Learning Outcomes:** By meeting the learning objectives listed above, this course meets the Essential Learning Outcomes of **Diversity & Cultural Awareness** and **Social Responsibility & Ethics** as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements.

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: Fridays 9 am – 11:50

Office Hours: Fridays 11:50 – 1 and by appointment in O’Leary Library 469 (4th 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: <http://www.uml.edu/Writing-Center/>.

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. 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. 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. We only meet once a week, so it’s really important that you come to class every week. You should also arrive on time and stay for the entire class meeting. 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 various online and retail movie rental businesses, 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.

Evaluation and Grading:

Please keep in mind the attendance policy (explained 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%
- > 4 Discussion Starters: 30% (note that there is a built-in optional 5th Discussion starter that can be used to make up a missed assignment or to replace a poor grade)
- > Current Events paper & report: 20%
- > Final Paper Project: 30%

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.

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:

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
Friday 4 September	First day Introductions & hand-outs Nancy Mairs: “On Being a Cripple” (handout e-mailed to all enrolled students). Please read the article to prepare for class discussion
Friday 11 September	Mark Haddon: <i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time</i> (yes, the whole thing – it’s a fast read, I promise!) Red Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 18 September	Excerpts from Temple Grandin: <i>Thinking in Pictures</i> (handout) 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 Blue Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 25 September	Lynn Manning: <i>Shoot!</i> (handout) Essay & poems packet on blindness (handout) Today’s class meets downtown at Lowell Association for the Blind (LAB) Red Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 2 October	Discussion of film <i>My Left Foot</i> (1989 award-winning drama about a man with C.P.) Packet on C.P. Blue Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 9 October	Prepare Current Events article paper (3 pages) and brief (1 minute) presentation E-mail link to your article to Bridget.Marshall@uml.edu by 5pm Thursday 8 Oct
Friday 16 October	Meghan O’Rourke “What’s Wrong with Me?” (handout) Charlotte Perkins Gilman “The Yellow Wallpaper” (handout) Red Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 23 October	Harriet McBryde Johnson “Too Late to Die Young” (handout) David Foster Wallace: “The Depressed Person” (handout) Blue Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 30 October	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> pages 1 – 156 Red Team: Complete Discussion Starter
Friday 6 November	Lisa Genova <i>Still Alice</i> pages 156 – end Blue Team: Complete Discussion Starter

Friday 13 November	Discussion of film <i>Murderball</i> (2005 documentary about wheelchair rugby) Packet on Spinal Cord Injury Read Team: OPTIONAL make-up or replacement Discussion Starter
Friday 20 November	Jillian Weise essay & poems (handout) Blue Team: OPTIONAL make-up or replacement Discussion Starter
Friday 27 November	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break
Friday 4 December	Last Day of class! Presentations on Final Projects Today!
As scheduled by registrar	Final Project Paper 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.