Extraordinary Bodies

From freak shows to the ADA to contemporary crip culture, the past century has witnessed dramatic shifts in how bodily difference has been figured. Using representations of non-normative bodies in literature, art and popular culture as a jumping off point, this course will examine what our attitudes toward embodiment reveal about our cultural values.

Readings
All listed readings are required. There is one book (Eli Clare Brilliant Imperfection Duke University Press 978-0822362876) that you will need to purchase. Other written texts are available on Blackboard. Digital content can be found via the links or embedded videos below. You are also responsible for reading the lectures for each unit. These will be posted under the lectures tab off of the Blackboard home page.

Course Expectations
Because you will be completing course work independently, it is vital that you stay on schedule and seek assistance early if you find yourself confused about specific readings or assignments. You are expected to critically read all assigned texts and to complete a series of reading questions (this will be my way of both gaging your completion of the readings, but also places where there may be confusion).

Beyond responding to these discussion-style questions, assignments will be module specific. In the first module you will need to complete a quiz demonstrating that you have an understanding of key vocabulary we will be using throughout the course. You will also be performing an access audit of a public or university building near your location and writing an analysis of your findings. For the second module, you will be producing an audio description track to accompany a short film and analyzing that process. Your coursework will culminate in a 10-page final research paper in which you will analyze an artifact that you identify over the course of the term (a book, film, building, sign, technology, etc.) pertinent to ideas discussed in the course. More details for all assignments are available on individual assignment sheets.

As this is a senior values course, it is expected that you are familiar with the basic techniques of close reading, scholarly research and essay writing. If this is not the case (or if you find yourself struggling with particular texts or assignments), you are responsible for seeking out additional help. In addition to email, I will also be available to meet in Google
chat (via text) for office hours at a time of mutual convenience; don’t hesitate to get in touch if you want to discuss something in real time.

**Evaluation**
Fordham uses a lettered grading system. For this course, grades will be assigned according to the following point values:

- A+  >97
- B+  87-89.9
- C+  77-79.9
- D  65-69.9
- A  93-96.9
- B  83-86.9
- C  73-76.9
- F  <65
- A-  90-92.9
- B-  80-82.9
- C-  70-72.9

All assignment grades and your running weighted total will be available in the grading section of Blackboard.

Your course grade will be broken down according to the following percentages:

- Reading questions: 20%
- Quiz: 10%
- Access Audit: 20%
- Audio Description: 20%
- Final Paper (including process work): 30%

Office hours will be conducted via text in Google chat and can be scheduled for a time of your convenience.

**Resources and Access**
The majority of our readings will touch on issues that some of us may find challenging. It is imperative that we are respectful of one another in our postings and interactions, as well as of the topics themselves. If you find engagement with particular readings or topics of discussion to be more harmful than productive, let me know so that we can discuss alternative ways for you to meet course requirements. I would also be happy to provide content warnings around specific issues (requests can be made anonymously through Blackboard).

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, all members of the campus community are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you have (or think you might have) a disability that will impact your participation in the activities, coursework, or assessment of this class, you may be entitled to accommodations through the Office of Disability Services. You can contact them at 718-817-0655, disabilityservices@fordham.edu or, if you are on campus, by visiting the lower level of O’Hare Hall (RH campus) to schedule an appointment and learn more about your options.

Whether or not you have documented accommodations, your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of the course that are not accessible to you, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies to meet
both your needs and the requirements of the course. Also keep in mind that many campus resources you may find useful, such as the Writing Center (Walsh Library Reference Area Room 121, 718-817-0077) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Basement of O’Hare Hall, 718-817-3735) are available to all students, regardless of disability status.

**Academic Integrity**
Fordham takes academic integrity very seriously. Violations fall under three main categories: submitting work that is not your own, submitting work that you have previously handed in for another class (without instructor approval), and failing to appropriately document your sources. Sanctions range from receiving an F on the assignment to being expelled from the university. If you plagiarize (or commit other acts of academic dishonesty) you will get caught. Seek out assistance prior to submitting work if you have questions about what constitutes an appropriate use of sources.

**Schedule:**

**Module 1: Normalcy**

Unit 1: Vocabulary
Readings:
Stella Young “I’m Not Your Inspiration” (Ted Talk)
Lennard Davis “Disability, Normality, and Power”
Robert McRuer “Normal” (from *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*)
Alison Kafer *Feminist Queer Crip* Introduction
*Speechless* pilot (available online)

Assignments: readings, quiz and response paper by **12 pm EST M June 4**

Unit 2: Neurodiversity
Readings
Mel Baggs “In My Language” (YouTube)
Loud Hands Project “I Stim Therefore I am” (YouTube)
Joseph Strauss “Autism as Culture”
Melanie Yergeau “Introduction” *Authoring Autism*

Assignment: reading questions due by **12 pm EST M June 11**

Unit 3: Disability in Public
Readings:
Sunaura Taylor and Judith Butler “Examined Life” (YouTube)
Susan Schweik “Introduction” *The Ugly Laws*
Millett-Gallant “Sculpting Body Ideals: Alison Lapper Pregnant and the Public Display of Disability”
Riva Lehrer “Where All Bodies Are Exquisite” (New York Times piece)

Assignment: reading questions and access audit due by **12 pm M June 11**th

**Module 2: Futurity**

Unit 1: Cure and Eugenics
Readings:
Eli Clare *Brilliant Imperfections*
Michael Bérubé “Disability, Democracy, and the New Genetics”
McBryde Johnson “Unspeakable Conversations”

Assignment: Reading questions due **M June 18**

Unit 2: Building Accessible Futures
Readings:
Disability Visibility Podcast Ep. 2 “Assistive Technology”
Jay Dolmage “Disability Rhetoric”
Annie Easley “Casual ableist Language” (YouTube)
Audio Description examples and explanation (folder available here)

Assignment: reading questions and audio description due by **12 pm Sun June 24**

**Module 3: Disability Artifacts**

Assignment: final paper due by 12 pm F June 29