

**Eng 199 CH2: Introduction to Disability Studies in the Humanities**  
**Fall 2008**  
**12:30-1:45 pm TR**  
**59A English Building**

**Prof. Catherine Prendergast**  
**Office Phone: 333-2345**  
**Hours: 10:30 – 11:30 T / 2-3 R**  
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*Poems with Disabilities*

I'm sorry—this space is reserved  
for poems with disabilities.  
I know it's one of the best spaces in the book,  
but the Poems with Disabilities Act  
Requires us to make reasonable  
accommodations for poems that aren't  
normal. There is a nice space just  
a few pages over—in fact (don't  
tell anyone) I think it's better  
than this one. I myself prefer it.  
Actually I don't see any of those  
poems right now myself, but you never know  
when one might show up, so we have to keep  
this space open. You can't always tell  
just from looking at them, either. Sometimes  
they'll look just like a regular poem  
when they roll in—you're reading along  
and suddenly everything  
changes, the world tilts  
a little, angle of vision  
jumps, focus  
shifts. You remember  
your aunt died of cancer at just your age  
and maybe yesterday's twinge means  
something after all. Your sloppy,  
fragile heart beats  
a little faster  
and then you know.  
You just know.  
And the poem is right  
where it  
belongs.

--Jim Ferris

## Course Overview

Disability Studies has emerged as a field of study across several disciplines of the humanities with the common orientation of challenging the notion that disability is primarily a medical fact. Instead, scholars of disability consider how notions of disability emerge and are sustained through cultural and social processes. The study of disability, in departing from the exclusively medical model, has forced new understandings of human diversity, dependency, ability, and inclusion. In this course we will read key texts from several humanistic disciplines that approach disability as a social designation of identity and an embodied experience. Through these key texts we will examine the history, culture, poetic representations, and civic work of people with disabilities.

This course will coordinate with the [Ethnography of the University Initiative](#). The EUI focus will allow students to use the course readings in conjunction with the university archives to explore U of I's history as an early site of disability activism—we have the oldest post-secondary disability support program in the world, the first wheelchair accessible residence halls and accessible fixed bus route—and the current culture of disability on campus. Students will have the opportunity to present their work at EUI's cross-campus conference, and can publish their work (either under their own name or a pseudonym) in EUI's digital repository of student work (housed within the University of Illinois Library's [IDEALS](#)). The work produced in this course will thus contribute to the history of the U of Illinois, and the history of disability in the United States.

Because it is in the spirit of both disability studies and EUI to conduct research that can improve institutional practice, the major project for this course will be a research paper that concludes with recommendations for the Campus Honors Program on how it can be a more accessible and inclusive to students with disabilities. By the end of this course, you should feel as if *you* have had an impact on the U of I.

All assignments will be given and submitted through our Moodle website. To log on, go to <https://moodle.atlas.uiuc.edu/> and follow the instructions at the “How do I get into my Moodle class” link.

## Required Texts

Kenny Fries, *The History of my Shoes and the Evolution of Darwin's Theory*

Robert Murphy, *The Body Silent*

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor: Aids and its Metaphors*

Berube, Michael. *Life as We Know it*

Shapiro, Joseph, *No Pity*

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

## Requirements

In order for us to enjoy all the benefits of being a small class, the active participation of everyone in the course is necessary. Participation includes attending regularly, coming prepared with the reading and assignments for that day completed, taking an active role in the discussion, making comments and suggestions on the work of other students in the class, and listening attentively when other students have the floor. Two absences are

allowed before your participation grade will be affected. An excused absence is one accompanied by a note from a dean. Late submissions of assignments are downgraded.

The major project of the course will be an 8-10 page paper on some aspect of the history and/or present context of disability at the University of Illinois. In your conclusion you will make recommendations based on your research to the Campus Honors Program. Virtually all the shorter assignments in the course will aid you in completing this assignment. We're going to do it bit by bit, in other words, helping each other along the way. The final paper, due on the last day of class, will take the place of a final exam.

### **Grading Breakdown**

Participation and Attendance (25%)

Campus Map (5%)

Short Assignment on *The Body Silent* (5%)

Document/Image/Artifact from the Archives (10%)

Initial Question (10%)

Source Annotated Bibliography (10%)

Revised Question (10%)

Final Paper (25%)

### **Calendar**

Aug 26: Introduction to the course, the topic, and each other

Aug 28: *The Body Silent* (Prologue and Chapter One)

Sept 2: *The Body Silent* (Chapter Two and Chapter Three)

Sept 4: *The Body Silent* (Chapters Five and Six)

**Short Assignment on *The Body Silent* due**

Sept 9: *No Pity* (pp. 3 - 40)

Sept 11: **Campus Map due**

Sept 16: *No Pity* (pp. 41-73)

### **Class Meets at Student Life and Culture Archives**

The Student Life and Culture Archival Program is located in the Archives Research Center, room 105, at 1707 S. Orchard Street in Urbana, Illinois, 61801. This facility is in the former Horticulture Field Laboratory Building (built in 1923), just east of the University of Illinois President's house. Parking is available, and the Orchard Downs #8 bus goes there.

Sept 18: *No Pity* (pp. 74-104)

Sept 23: *No Pity* (pp. 105-141)

Sept 25: **Document/Image/Artifact from the Archives Assignment due**

Sept 30: Ashley Mogged, EUI student project

[https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/1867/2/Final\\_Finding.pdf](https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/1867/2/Final_Finding.pdf)

Jenn Baldwin, EUI student project

<https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/3591/2/ResearchProcess.pdf>

**Response to Mogged or Baldwin due**

Oct 2: *No Pity* (pp. 258 - 288)

Oct 7: *Illness as Metaphor* (sections 1-3)

Oct 9: *Illness as Metaphor* (sections 4-7)

**Initial Question due**

Oct 14: *Illness as Metaphor* (sections 8 – end) and “Susan Sontag’s Final Wish,” an interview with her son David Reiff

[http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2008/02/13/david\\_rieff/print.html](http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2008/02/13/david_rieff/print.html)

Oct 16: *Oedipus Rex*

**Feedback on two classmate’s Initial Questions due**

Oct 21: “Blindness in Ancient Greece”

Oct 23: Disability Initiatives Working Group Recommendations on Disability Access

**Source Annotated Bibliography due**

Oct 28: *Life as We Know It* (Introduction and Chapter One)

Oct 30: **CLASS CANCELLED: Prendergast at Conference**

Nov 4: *Life as We Know It* (Chapter Two)

Nov 6: **Revised Question due**

Nov 11: *Life as We Know It* (Chapter Three)

Nov 13: *History of My Shoes* (pp. 1-54)

Nov 18: *History of My Shoes* (pp. 55-109)

Nov 20: **Draft of Paper due**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 2 *History of My Shoes* (110-155)  
**Feedback on one Classmate's Paper Draft due**

Dec 4 *History of My Shoes* (156 - end)

Dec 9 **Final Papers Due**