

## **Ability, Disability, and the Idea of the Self** **THEOCRIT 9150**

**Professor:** Jeremy Colangelo (jcolang2@uwo.ca)

**Class time:** Wednesdays, 1-4 p.m.

**Office Hours:** StvH 1144, Wednesdays 4-6 p.m or by appointment

As Emmanuel Levinas observes in his early book *On Escape*, the bourgeois subject “admits no inner division and would be ashamed to lack confidence in himself” and is instead wedded to a “conception of the ‘I’ as self-sufficient.” With this understanding as a starting point, *Ability, Disability, and the Idea of the Self* examines how in the cultural arena of disability an understanding of the self as undivided and self sufficient becomes wrapped up with an understanding of normativity. One can understand the notion of ability, then, as a form of phenomenological hegemony, where a culturally manufactured understanding one’s own self as a self-sufficient unit substitutes for more complex understandings while producing “abled” subjects resistant both to notions of collective action and to the evidence of their already-existing dependencies. Through the lens of disability theory, and to a lesser extent phenomenology, this course explores questions of how questions of abled and disabled selfhood play out in relation to (and at times against) broader conceptions of normativity.

### **Assignments**

Note: all word count lengths exclude notes and bibliography. Please use either Chicago or MLA formatting (most recent edition).

#### Contribution to in-class discussion – 15%

This grade will reflect your overall contribution to class discussion during the course. Note that the grade will reflect the quality, rather than the quantity, of contributions, not only in terms of their insightfulness but also how they reflect the general tone of respectful collegiality expected of an academic discussion. Thus, comments which are disrespectful, rude, or marginalizing towards your colleagues in this course will result in a lower contribution grade.

#### In-class presentation – 25%

During the first class you will choose a week during which you will deliver a 15-20 minute presentation (please no longer than that) based on one or more of that week’s readings, which will serve as a prompt for the ensuing class discussion. Presentations will begin on Week 3, and I would prefer if no more than two students present during a given week. These presentations may be used as a testing ground for ideas you plan to explore in your final paper. Please note that you are not expected to unify or systematize the readings for your week, but rather to explore suggestive or provocative interpretations which arise from putting the texts in conversation. That is to say, you are expected not to have the final word, but the first one, to begin the conversation we will continue during class discussion.

#### Short paper – 20% – due during class on November 10

This paper should respond critically to one or more of the readings from a given week. The week selected *must* be different from the week you chose for your in-class presentation. The length of the paper should be 1,500-2,000 words.

Final paper – 40% – due electronically (via OWL) on December 8

This paper can be on any topic related to the course and ideally should build off of your work in the short paper and in-class presentation (though it need not do so). This will be your chance to refine and complete the concepts you have been working on in your earlier assignments as well as in-class discussion. I encourage all students to visit me during office hours to discuss this paper ahead of time, though I will not require you to do so. The length of the paper should be 6,000-7,000 words.

### **Class Policies**

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of two points per weekday after the due date if no extension has been given. So, e.g, if your paper is due on Wednesday and is worth an 88 but you hand it in the following Thursday instead then the mark you receive will be 86. That being said, I am quite open to adjusting expectations in light of a student's particular circumstances, so please get in touch with me as soon as possible if you believe your assignment may be late.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence, at the following URL: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

Students are expected to abide by university policy regarding COVID-19 precautions, which can be found here: <https://www.uwo.ca/coronavirus/>. Anyone attending in-person class activities, including seminars and office hours, must wear a protective mask unless they have a documented medical exemption.

### **Course Books**

The following list includes all texts which are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. Other readings are available via the OWL site, in either the Course Readings or Resources tabs.

- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*
- Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory*
- Emmanuel Levinas, *On Escape: De l'évasion*
- Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*
- Therí Alyce Pickens, *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness*
- Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*

Students are expected to have read all assigned readings for each week prior to the start of that week's seminar.

### **Course Schedule**

<b>Week 1 – Sept 8 - Introduction</b>	<p>Class introductions and selection of presentation schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levinas, <i>On Escape: De l'évasion</i></li> <li>• Siebers, <i>Disability Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction (1-33)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>Week 2 – Sept 15 – Normativity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goffman, <i>Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 4, “The Self and its Other” (126-139)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Davis, <i>Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Preface (xi-xxi)</li> <li>○ Ch. 1 “Introduction: Disability, the Missing Term in the Race, Class, Gender Triad” (1-22)</li> <li>○ Ch. 2 “Constructing Normalcy” (23-49)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 3 – Sept 22 – Unruliness</b>	<p>In-class presentations begin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garland-Thomson, <i>Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction” (5-18)</li> <li>○ Ch. 2, “Theorizing Disability” (19-54)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• McRur, <i>Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Introduction: Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence” (1-33, only up to p.19)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Puar, <i>The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Preface: Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!” (ix-xxiv)</li> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Bodies with New Organs: Becoming Trans, Becoming Disabled” (33-62)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 4 – Sept 29 – Supplementarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siebers, <i>Disability Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 5, “Disability as Masquerade” (96-119)</li> <li>○ Ch. 9, “Disability and the Right to Have Rights” (176-186)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Samuels, <i>Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 6, “Proving Disability” (121-140)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mitchell and Snyder, <i>Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Introduction: Disability as Narrative Supplement” (1-14)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Davis, <i>Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 6, “Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso” (126-157)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 5 – Oct 6 – Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>The Merleau-Ponty Reader</i>, eds. Leonard Lawlor and Ted Toadvine. Northwestern UP, 2007. Pp. 351-378</li> <li>● Bolt, <i>The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-Reading of Twentieth Century Anglophone Writing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 4, “‘A Hand of the Blind Ventures Forth’: The Grope, the Grip, and Haptic Perception” (67-79)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Kleege, “Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>Journal of Visual Culture</i> 4.2 (2005): 179-190</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Ahmed, <i>Queer Phenomenology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Orientations Toward Objects” (25-64)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 6 – Oct 13 – Representation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Puar, <i>The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 3, “Disabled Diaspora, Rehabilitating State: The Queer Politics of Reproduction in Palestine/Israel” (95-126)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Siebers, <i>Disability Aesthetics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 4, “Disability and Art Vandalism” (83-99)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Yergeau, <i>Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Introduction: Involution” (1-34)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 7 – Oct 20 – Epistemology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guenther, “Epistemic Injustice and Phenomenology” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice</i>, eds. Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus. Routledge, 2017. Pp. 195-204</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Medina, <i>The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Active Ignorance, Epistemic Others, and Epistemic Friction” (27-55)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● O’Connor, <i>Oppression and Responsibility: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Social Practices and Moral Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 5, “Moving to New Boroughs: Transforming the World by Inventing Language Games” (81-98)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Davis, <i>Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 5, “Deafness and Insight: Disability and Theory” (100-125)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Siebers, <i>Disability Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 6, “Disability Experience On Trial” (120-134)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Mills, “Epistemological Ignorance”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology</i>, eds. Gail Weiss, Ann. V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon. Northwestern UP, 2020. Pp. 107-114</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8 – Oct 27 – Pain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siebers, <i>Disability Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 3, “Body Theory: From Social Construction to the New Realism of the Body” (53-69)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Scarry, <i>The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction (3-26)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Patsavas, “Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>Journal of Literary &amp; Cultural Disability Studies</i> 8.2 (2014): 203-218</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Price, “The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>Hypatia</i> 30.1 (2015): 268-284</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>No Class – Nov 3</b>	Fall Reading Week
<b>Week 9 – Nov 10 – Sexuality</b>	<p>Short papers due in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siebers, <i>Disability Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 7, “A Sexual Culture for Disabled People” (135-156)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Chitty, <i>Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Homosexuality and Capitalism” (21-41)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Davidson, <i>Invalid Modernism: Disability and the Missing Body of the Aesthetic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 5, “Pregnant Men: Biofuturity in Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf” (102-122)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Halberstam, <i>Female Masculinity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men” (1-44)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 10 – Nov 17 – Race</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pickens, <i>Black Madness :: Mad Blackness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Preface or About Face, Giving Face” (ix-xvi)</li> <li>○ “Introduction: What’s Good?” (1-22)</li> <li>○ “Conversation 1: Making Black Madness” (23-49)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Garland-Thomson, <i>Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 5, “Disabled Women as Powerful Women in Petry, Morrison, and Lorde” (103-134)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quayson, <i>Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 4, “Toni Morrison: Disability, Ambiguity, and Perspectival Modulations” (86-114)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 11 – Nov 24 – Madness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pickens, <i>Black Madness :: Mad Blackness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Conversation 2: A Mad Black Thang” (50-73)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Guenther, <i>Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Introduction: A Critical Phenomenology of Solitary Confinement” (xi-xxx)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gorman, “Quagmires of Affect: Madness, Labor, Whiteness, and Ideological Disavowal” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>American Quarterly</i> 69.2 (2017): 309-313</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Yergeau, “Clinically Significant Disturbance: On Theorists Who Theorize Theory of Mind” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>Disability Studies Quarterly</i> 33.4 (2013): np</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 12 – Dec 1 – The Future</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hester, <i>Xenofeminism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “What is Xenofeminism?” (6-32)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Samuels, “Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In <i>Disability Studies Quarterly</i> 37.3 (2017): np</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Russell, <i>Capitalism and Disability: Selected Writings by Marta Russell</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 19, “Eugenics and the ‘Sole Possible Economic Order’” (152-169)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Muñoz, <i>Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ch. 1, “Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermenutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism” (19-32)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>