

Critical Disability Studies Course Reflection

From my studies, a main takeaway I will hold with me beyond this class is that disability is a diverse community. The concept of disability extends beyond the medical differences of bodies and minds. It is a way of life that has meaning and value beyond an ableist framework that may suggest disability as a disadvantage because of the disability itself. What we have been learning in critical disability studies indicates more clearly that the issues that arise from disability are often due to an unfit environment. This distinction clarifies the disability is only considered such because of an environment that favors a different way of physical and mental expression. In thinking about what it means to be disabled and disability justice, the disability principals were a recurring theme throughout the semester, with readings and watched material relating back to a disability principal in some way. I think back to *Good Kinds Bad Kings* and the ways the book showed how institutionalization hindered the expression of disability justice and emphasized the importance of the disability principle of collective liberation. In *Crip Time*, we explored how sustainability comes in many different forms and being disabled can mean the need for operating on a personalized flow of time that may deviate from what is commonly pushed forth in society. These principles lay the groundwork for disability justice and the sentiments mentioned often appear in many different forms, such as fiction or personal narratives from people with experience in disability.

For my midterm project, I reflect on how I incorporated disability justice as a way to emphasize the limitations to the ableist ideology that the concept of eugenics promotes. In working towards a subjective ideal, wholeness is disregarded and there is failure to see how worth extends beyond value within a capitalist society. The creation may not have done things in

a conventional way, but their acts and being still held value. In the end, I see that collective liberation was a key takeaway, with the scientist coming to the epiphany that the creation should be worked with in community and not left behind or replaced. The creation is a representation of the disabled community that holds worth beyond capitalist ideals and notions of how a body should be. It reiterates that collaboration is possible if understanding and kindness is present to make room for accessibility.

In taking this class, my understanding of accessibility has evolved. Prior to this class, I looked at accessibility for disability mainly under the context of physical disabilities that require changes for ease of navigation. Though this is an important component of accessibility, now I see it as an expansive form of care that can manifest in different ways between individuals. Accessibility is ever flexible and changing. Because of this, it should be a recurring theme when thinking about ways all different types of bodies and minds experience the world. Accessibility can also exist through small scale acts of consideration and don't necessarily have to exist within a capitalist framework of cost for implementing architectural changes like ramps. It can be things like giving grace for students that need longer for completing assignments or, in the work environment, using inclusive language so all are able to engage.

Learning of general concepts and information about disability studies happened primarily outside the classroom through the assigned readings and videos. This allowed me to get a sense of the components of disability culture and how it manifests in an able-bodied society. Specific learning of the wider significance of what was being learned and how it applies to the broader world happened mainly within the classroom. Through hearing other people's perspectives, I was

able to have a deeper understanding of how the information applies to disability culture and disability in general and why disability justice is ongoing and poignant in today's society. I believed I contributed to other people's learning through offering my perspective of disability and adding discussion to some of the topics that came up from the readings. I was able to engage with the CCW artist through the time I went to CCW to get to hear the artists speak about their works and what inspired them. This allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the creativity present and the kindness shared. I engaged with the exhibition through writing a description for one of the pieces on display for the exhibition, folding some of the zines, and attending the exhibition itself to show my support.

Beyond this course, I will take away the diversity of humans, whether it be their bodies or minds, is something to be cherished and not shunned. There is not nor should there be a golden standard to how we exist in this life. We navigate it differently in unique ways that work for us and this often only becomes a problem when the environment isn't accepting. For disability in particular, this can be seen when an environment actively isn't accepting of the natural ways a person experiences the world. To work in a more accessible environment, compassion must be present and one should take care to consider not just the majority within their own perspective, but also other groups that deserve to be able to navigate the world as comfortably as possible without feeling like they are being marginalized. Be open-minded and willing to expand your perspective to the needs of others and how they live. If that can be done, I truly believe that we can work towards a future where barriers can be broken and people of all different backgrounds can come together in harmony.