

**History 642: HISTORY OF THE DISABILITY MINORITIES IN AMERICA**  
Fall Semester 2001

Paul K. Longmore

Wednesdays, 4:10-6:55 pm

Office: HSS 249. Phone: 338-6498 Office hours: Mon, Tue, 3:00-4:00 pm or by appointment

Not only has disability always been a frequent human experience, some scholars assert that ideologies of disability have been central to the creation of the modern world. Yet we seldom reflect on what “disability” is. Is it a series of medical conditions or a set of social experiences? Do people with disabilities belong to diagnostic categories or to minority groups? Are they best understood as having individual case histories or collective minority-group histories? What can the study of “disability” tell us about “normality”? The answers to these questions are complex and fascinating. Yet scholars usually overlook or avoid considering them. Thus, as the historian Douglas Baynton has observed, “Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write.”

This course seeks to correct that absence. It examines the historical experience of the disability minorities during the modern era. It focuses mainly on the American experience but compares that history to the premodern history of disability and to the contemporaneous histories of disability groups in Western European societies. The course uses the history of several groups (Deaf, blind, developmentally disabled, and physically disabled people) as case studies to analyze the ideological, socioeconomic, and political history of disability. The course has three objectives. First, it seeks to reconstruct ideologies of disability in the modern era. Second, it explores the functioning of those ideologies in various institutions and spheres of society, for example, public policy, medicine, social welfare, education, rehabilitation, and popular culture. Third, it examines organized efforts on behalf of and by these various communities to ameliorate the socioeconomic disadvantages endured by group members.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

Discussion Leadership and Participation: This course is a seminar. Although the instructor will do some lecturing, we will devote the bulk of class time to discussion. Each student will team up with one or two other students to plan and lead discussion of the assigned readings in two separate class sessions. When not involved in discussion leadership, every student will be expected to prepare and participate in discussions.

Essays: Each student will write two essays on two different, historically significant topics, issues, or questions approved by the instructor. For examples: What role has gender played in the historical experience of people with disabilities? How have the historical experiences of blind people and deaf people paralleled and differed from one another? What values and ideologies have shaped various public policies and various cultural representations regarding disability? Each respective essay will address subjects examined in the two parts of the course. Each essay will be 10-12 pages in length. These papers will draw on the assigned readings and any additional reading and research in primary and secondary sources the writer may choose to do. The essays will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Argument/Organization. Does the paper identify a significant topic or issue? Does it propound a thesis clearly? Is the thesis developed and supported with a coherent and convincing argument? Is the conclusion effective in summing up the argument?

2. Evidence/Analysis. Does the writer make accurate use of primary and secondary sources to support the argument? Is sufficient evidence provided to develop his or her claims persuasively? Does the writer demonstrate analytical and critical skills in using these sources?

3. Historiography. Does the writer demonstrate a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods central to the subject and to the discipline of history?

4. Expression. Does the writer use language skillfully and appropriately? In other words, does the writer use a variety of sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary for a formal essay? Is the writing coherent? Do ideas flow clearly? Are they connected logically?

Guidelines. Students may submit their essays electronically through e-mail. Whether electronic or hardcopy, papers must adhere to the following guidelines: Typewritten in a 10- or 12-point easily readable font. Handwritten papers will not be accepted. Double-space all lines, including lines between paragraphs. Do not triple-space! Establish one-inch margins at the top, bottom and sides. Number pages in the bottom center. Staple pages sideways (vertically) in the upper left corner. Do not enclose the paper in a folder, binder or plastic cover. Cite sources of quotations or important information or ideas in short form in parentheses, e.g. (Smith, 310-11). Give full citations to these sources in a separate bibliographic section at the end of the essay.

Grading: Class leadership and participation in discussions will account for 40% of the overall course grade. The two written essays will each constitute 30% of the overall course grade.

### **Readings:**

Nora Groce. **Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Denise Sherer Jacobson. **The Question of David** (Oakland: Creative Arts, 1999).

Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds. **The New Disability History: American Perspectives** (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

James W. Trent, Jr. **Inventing the Feeble Mind, A History of Mental Retardation in the United States** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Fleischer, Doris Zames, and Frieda Zames. **The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

### **Class Schedule:**

## **Part 1: Paradigms and Histories**

### **August 29. The Moral Model of Disability**

Reading:

Gospel According to John, Chapter 9, Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version).

### **September 5. The Medical and Minority/Social Models of Disability**

Readings:

Groce, Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language.

### **September 12. People with Developmental Disabilities, 1800-1930: From Isolation to Education to Institutionalization**

Reading:

Trent, Inventing the Feeble Mind, 1-183.

View The Black Stork in class.

### **September 19. Reforming a Retarding System, 1930-1990**

Readings:

Janice Brockley, "Martyred Mothers and Merciful Fathers: Exploring Disability and Motherhood in the Lives of Jerome Greenfield and Raymond Repouille," in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History, 293-312.

Trent, Inventing the Feeble Mind, 184-278.

View excerpt of video My Country in class.

### **September 26. Pathology or Community? Deaf History, 1750 to Present**

Readings:

R. A. R. Edwards, "'Speech Has An Extraordinary Humanizing Power': Horace Mann and the Problem of Nineteenth-Century American Deaf Education," 58-82;

Hannah Joyner, "'This Unnatural and Fratricidal Strife': A Family's Negotiation of the Civil War, Deafness, and Independence," 83-106;

Susan Burch, "Reading Between the Signs: Defending Deaf Culture in Early Twentieth Century America," 214-35,

all in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History.

Alexander Graham Bell, "On the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race" (1883), on reserve.

### **October 3. The Blind Leading the Blind, 1895-1960**

Readings:

Catherine J. Kudlick, "The Outlook of The Problem and the Problem with The Outlook: Two Advocacy Journals Reinvent Blind People in Turn-of-the-Century America," 187-213;

Kim Nielsen, "Helen Keller and the Politics of Civic Fitness," 268-90;

David A. Gerber, "Blind and Enlightened: The Contested Origins of the Egalitarian Politics of the Blinded Veterans Association," 313-34,  
all in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History.

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 14-32

Jacobus ten Broek, "Have our Blind Social Security?" (1940).

\_\_\_, "The Work of the National Federation of the Blind" (1944).

\_\_\_, "A Bill of Rights for the Blind" (1948).

\_\_\_, "The Neurotic Blind and the Neurotic Sighted - Twin Psychological Fallacies" (1951), on reserve.

### **October 10. Overcoming: Physical Disability in Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America**

Readings:

Brad Byrom, "A Pupil and a Patient: Hospital-Schools in Progressive America," in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History, 133-56.

Paul K. Longmore and David Goldberger, "The League of the Physically Handicapped and the Great Depression: A Case Study in the New Disability History," on reserve.

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 1-13.

Randolph Bourne, "The Handicapped" (1913).

### **Part 2: Acts and Identities**

#### **October 17. Policy Constructions: "Disability is whatever public policy says it is"**

Reading:

K. Walter Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare: The Politics of Disability Compensation for American Veterans of World War I," 236-67;

Richard K. Scotch, "American Disability Policy in the Twentieth Century," 375-92,  
both in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History.

Ianacone, Barbara P., "Historical Overview: From Charity to Rights," on reserve

National Council on Disability <http://www.ncd.gov/>

### **FIRST ESSAY DUE**

#### **October 24. The Independent Living Movement**

Readings:

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 33-87.

Mike Auberger, "Testimony at Hearing on Community-Based Care for Americans with Disabilities";

Lynn Williamson, "Breaking Free: The Story of a Woman Who Found Independence,"

both on reserve.

Freedom Clearinghouse <http://www.freedomclearinghouse.org/>

Independent Living Resource Utilization, Library <http://www.dimenet.com/ilrilib/>  
documents and accounts of the history of the independent living movement:  
Dick Goodwin, "History and Philosophy of Independent Living": Transcript of Class on  
History and Philosophy Presented at IMPACT in 1991. Seven parts.  
Gina McDonald and Mike Oxford, "History of Independent Living"  
Chava Willig Levy, "A People's History of the Independent Living Movement"  
Kathleen Kleinmann, "The Revolution at TRIPIL"

Liberty Resources (Philadelphia Independent Living Center)  
<http://www.libertyresources.org/index.html>

Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living (Pittsburgh Independent Living Center)  
<http://www.tripil.com/tripil/index.html>

### **October 31. From the Margins to the Mainstream**

Readings:

Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, "Disability History: From the Margins to the  
Mainstream," in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History, 1-29.

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 87-131.

Americans with Disabilities Act,

Renee Anspach, "From Stigma to Identity Politics: Political Activism Among the Physically  
Disabled and Former Mental Patients,"

Carol J. Gill, "Who Gets the Profits?"

Laura Hershey, "Economic Literacy and Disability Rights,"

Fred Krueger, "Transportation: Organization is the Key,"

all on reserve.

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law <http://www.bazelon.org/welcome.html>

The Disability Rights Activist <http://www.disrights.org/index.html>

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) <http://www.dredf.org>

View video of documentary film When Billy Broke His Head in class.

### **November 7. Revolutions in Law and Ethics**

Readings:

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 132-99.

William J. Brown, "An Incident at a Restaurant,"

Michael Ervin, "The 25-Day Siege That Brought Us 504,"

Paul K. Longmore, "The Strange Death of David Rivlin,"

"Not the Type to Sue,"

Julie Reiskin, "Crip Girls Go to the Movies,"  
Cheryl Marie Wade, "I'm Not a Reason to Die,"  
all on reserve

American Diabetes Association <http://www.diabetes.org/default.asp>  
Epilepsy Foundation <http://www.efa.org/>  
National Alliance of the Mentally Ill <http://www.nami.org/>  
National Association of the Deaf <http://nad.policy.net/>  
National Federation of the Blind <http://www.nfb.org/>  
TASH <http://www.tash.org/>

View video of news footage of ADAPT civil disobedience protests.

### **November 14. Cultural Constructions: Freaks, Poster Children, and Citizens**

Readings:

Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," 33-57;  
Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," 335-74, both in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History.

Muscular Dystrophy Association: <http://www.mdausa.org/home.html>

Protests against MDA Telethon: <http://www.cripcommentary.com/LewisVsDisabilityRights.html>

View videotape of Freak Out: "Hank, the Angry Drunken Dwarf"; MDA Telethon; video of motion picture clips; ESPN's In Pursuit; ABC News 20/20 segments in class.

### **November 21. Thanksgiving Eve. No Class.**

### **November 28. Engendering Disability**

Readings:

Natalie A. Dykstra, "'Trying to Idle': Work and Disability in The Diary of Alice James," 107-30;  
John Williams-Searle, "Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900," 157-86, both in Longmore and Umansky, eds., New Disability History.

Leonard Kriegel, "Claiming the Self: The Cripple as Ultimate American Male," on reserve.

View videotape of motion picture Gaby in class.

### **December 5. Creating Disability Culture**

Readings:

Fleischer and Zames, Disability Rights Movement, 200-16.

Randolph Bourne, "The Life of Irony" (1913) and "Trans-National America." (1916), on reserve.

Cheryl Marie Wade, "I'm The Woman With Juice" and "Creating A Disability Aesthetic In the Arts," both on reserve.

Art, Disability & Expression Exhibit <http://www.vsarts.org/gallery/exhibits/disability/>  
Artopolis [www.artopolis.org/](http://www.artopolis.org/)  
National Arts and Disability Center <http://nadc.ucla.edu/>  
Tell Us Your Story <http://www.tell-us-your-story.com/index.html#stories>

View video in class Vital Signs: Crip Culture Talks Back

**December 12. Making a Life**

Readings:

Denise Sherer Jacobson. The Question of David.

**December 19. SECOND ESSAY DUE.** Deliver to History Department Office by 4 pm.