

DIS STD 187: *The Politics of Disability Aesthetics in Visual Culture*
Disability Studies Minor, Undergraduate Education Initiatives
University of California Los Angeles

Fall 2016: Wednesdays, 3pm – 5:50pm, MS 5200

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Amanda Cachia

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Office hour: Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30pm, Kaufman Room 185

Course website: <https://ccl.e.ucla.edu>

Course Overview:

Inscribed surface, political object, sign, flesh, boundary, matter, cultural product, artistic work—these are some of the many ways that the disabled body has been theorized and imagined in a wide cross-section of critical scholarship and cultural production. This interdisciplinary course seeks to provide a broad overview of the presence of disability and its various manifestations throughout modern day visual culture, with a special emphasis on how disabled artists have offered a revision to the existing negative constructs typically associated with the disabled form. Conventional art history has not typically accounted for intellectually and physically disabled subjects and their accompanying atypical bodies through the art museum and their curated exhibitions, through commercial art galleries and biennials, or the entire exhibition complex structure. A small number of patronizing and demeaning representations have appeared in art genre presentations such as ‘outsider art’ but these derogatory constructs have generally failed to be challenged by art historians, critics, curators and artists. It is important to build a new vocabulary and methodology around disability and access in challenging and stimulating ways, and this class will attempt to find the language to build this framework around how disability might fit into the discourse of visual culture. We will engage primarily with work that interrogates the social, political, and philosophical stakes of complex embodiment, on occasion drawn from other fields that have a history of interrogating embodiment in visual culture, such as within the discourses of race, gender, class, colonialism, and sexualities. We will also examine how we might trouble the ostensible normative narratives in museum and gallery spaces, and consider how access might become a dynamic conceptual tool for destabilizing reductive categories. The overarching goal is to engage in dialogue that centers on the creative potential of disabled bodies to generate social transformation within visual culture at large.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Grasp concepts and issues around the use and appearance of the disabled body in art, architecture, dance, photography, performance.
2. To identify a framework and language for how disability fits into the discourse of visual culture within a social justice lens.
3. To understand how disability has impacted visual culture within the broader context of twentieth century social, cultural and political history.
4. To develop your own framework for understanding the relevance and meaning of disability in visual culture within modern and contemporary society.

Requirements:

- **Participation:** Consistent and engaged participation in discussions is required. I expect for you read thoroughly and critically and come to seminar prepared with questions and comments. We will be supportive and respectful of one another as we engage in debate--good collegiality is a form of politics and our classroom is a community. Missing more than one class meeting will negatively affect your standing in the course.
- **(1) Collaborative Class Facilitation:** A group of 2-3 students will facilitate a 30-40 minute class discussion every session (apart from the first session). I will ask you to fill in a spot for a presentation date on a form on the first day of class, and I will e-mail the list of working groups the following day. (If our class size is smaller than I anticipate we may have individual presentations.)

Facilitations will provoke dialogue about; 1-the central argument(s) of the scholarship being engaged, 2-the theoretical and methodological approaches utilized and innovated by the scholars, 3-the potential social, cultural, and political stakes of the work, 4-how the work connects to other scholarship we have engaged in the class (with the exception of the first group).

I encourage facilitation groups to utilize media (such as short video screenings), group activities (such as free writing or creative writing exercises), and other methods to create a dynamic space. However, these are not required, what is most important is that we have a quality exchange in the seminar.

- **(2) 2-3 page Response Papers:** You will submit **two** 2-3 page **printed** response papers in the third and sixth week of the course. Response papers are due to me in class in Week 3 and Week 6, and late responses will not be accepted. Response papers are tools for working through the material and thinking about how the material can relate (or not) to your own scholarly, artistic, and social justice interests. They can be critical, open-ended, and/or personal. What I am looking for is an earnest engagement with the work. Make sure that your papers engage with all of the readings assigned, although more emphasis on one or two within that context is acceptable.
- **Final Project & Presentation:** The final project can take several forms.
 - Research Paper
 - Substantive Creative Project with Artist/Curatorial Statement that includes Access components

ALL TOPICS TO BE APPROVED BY INSTRUCTOR BY WEDNESDAY (IN CLASS) OF WEEK 6 - PLEASE PREPARE A WRITTEN PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING YOUR PROJECT.

Brief presentations of your Final Project (5-7 minutes each) will be held during our final meeting in Week 10, and the written portions (not to exceed 10-12 pages) will be due the same day. If you have a creative media-based project, please bring this on a Flash Drive. Any creative media-based project MUST be accompanied by a one-paragraph description explaining the connection to the objectives of the course and to any assigned readings.

Summary of grade allocation:

Participation: 10%

Collaborative Class Facilitation: 30%

2 X 2-3-Page Response Papers: 20%

Final Project & Presentation: 40%

Total: 100%

Students with Disabilities:

Given the sensitivities of this class towards disability, any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities to discuss specific needs. Please contact <http://www.cae.ucla.edu> to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Evaluation Rubric:

A= Excellent

This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good

This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average

This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory

This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F=Failed

This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D = 60-64
F = 0-59

Course Policies:

Absences and Lateness

Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

Format

Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently throughout your writing.

Grade Appeals

Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

General Decorum

Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at UCLA. This relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens. Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you

- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or
- plagiarize.

Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning, and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:

- copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
- download documents from the Internet;
- purchase documents;
- report from other's oral work;
- paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people's ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources.

Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

Avoiding Academic Dishonesty

- Organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.
- Learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another's work need to be acknowledged.
- Always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks, footnotes and other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.
- Do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.
- Save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

Disciplinary Sanctions

When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken following the department procedure or through referral to the Committee on Student Discipline.

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

Week 1

9/28: Introduction to class & review of syllabus.

What is Disability Aesthetics?

Reading:

1. Tobin Siebers, "Introduction" from *Disability Aesthetics*
2. Michael Davidson, "Aesthetics," from *Key Words in Disability Studies*, NYU
3. Ann Millett-Gallant, "Introduction: Enabling the Image" from *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art*
4. Ann Millett-Gallant, "Disarming Venus" from *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art*

** Snyder, Joel. "Audio Description: The Visual Made Verbal," *International Congress Series 1282* (Sept. 2005): 935-939.

Week 2

10/5: Historical Representations of Marginal Forms

Reading:

1. Sander Gilman, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality" from *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*.
2. Sharon Snyder, "Infinites of Forms: Disability Figures in Artistic Traditions" from *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*.
3. Lennard Davis, "Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso," *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*.

Week 3

10/12: Contemporary Political Positions on the Appearance of Identity

Reading:

1. Amanda Cachia, "Composing Dwarfism: Re-framing Short Stature in Contemporary Photography" in *The Review of Disability Studies*
2. Derek Conrad Murray and Soraya Murray, "Uneasy Bedfellows: Canonical Art Theory and the Politics of Identity," *Art Journal*, Spring 2006
3. Joseph Grigely, "Beautiful Progress to Nowhere," *Parallel Lines Journal* <http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/article-beautiful-progress-nowhere.html>

**** RESPONSE PAPER #1 IS DUE IN CLASS TODAY.**

Week 4**10/19:****Representations of Physical Disabilities****Reading:**

1. Amanda Cachia, "The (Narrative) Prosthesis Re-Fitted: Finding New Support for Embodied and Imagined Differences in Contemporary Art," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, Special Issue on Disability and Visual Culture, Vol. 9, No.
2. Ann Millett-Gallant, "Sculpting Body Ideals: Alison Lapper Pregnant and the Public Display of Disability" *Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard Davis
3. Joseph Grigely, "Postcards to Sophie Calle," from *Points of Contact: Disability, Art and Culture*, ed. Susan Crutchfield and Marcy Epstein
4. Amanda Cachia, "LOUD silence: Turning Up the Volume on Deaf Voice," *The Senses & Society*

Week 5**10/26:****Developmental Disabilities & Outsider Art****Reading:**

1. Robert Storr, "Mindscapes, Landscapes, and Labyrinths" from *Martin Ramirez* catalog, American Folk Art Museum, 2007
2. Lynne Cooke, "Orthodoxies Undermined," in *Great and Mighty Things: Outsider Art in the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2013
3. Lynne Cooke, "Peer Review," from *Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound* catalog in conjunction with exhibition at Brooklyn Museum, 2014
4. Amanda Cachia, "From Outsider to Participant: Developmentally Disabled Dialogue in Socially Engaged Art," *Museums and Social Issues: A Journal of Reflective Discourse*

Week 6**11/2:****Disability & Performance****Reading:**

1. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artists & the Dynamics of Staring," from *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*, edited by Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl.
2. Bree Hadley, "Introduction: Disability, Performance and the Public Sphere" in *Disability, Public Space, Performance and Spectatorship*
3. Park McArthur, Lezlie Frye and Alice Sheppard, "Disability and Disabled Theater,"
<http://dismagazine.com/disillusioned/59706/disability-and-disabled-theater/>

**** RESPONSE PAPER #2 IS DUE IN CLASS TODAY.****** WRITTEN PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING YOUR FINAL PROJECT IDEA ALSO DUE IN CLASS TODAY.**

Week 7

11/9:

Disability and/in Artistic Practice**TODAY'S CLASS WILL BE HELD BY SKYPE. MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW.**

1. Amanda Cachia, "The Alterpodium: A Performative Design and Disability Intervention," *Design and Culture: A Journal of the Design Studies Forum*, Fall 2016, Vol. 8, No. 3

Explore these websites before class:

2. barak adé soleil: <https://dunderbelly.wordpress.com>
3. Petra Koppers, The Olimpias Performance Research Project: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~petra/>

Week 8

11/16:

Exhibition Models & TemplatesReading:

1. Amanda Cachia, " 'Disabling' the Museum: Curator as Infrastructural Activist," *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 2013, 12 (3): 257-289.
2. Ann Fox and Jessica Cooley, "Re/Formations: Disability, Women, and Sculpture" essay from exhibition held at Van/Every Smith Galleries, Davidson College, NC, 2009
http://www2.davidson.edu/academics/acad_depts/galleries/ref_ormations/about/essay.html
3. Elizabeth Dungan and Katherine Sherwood, "Blind at the Museum," Berkeley Art Museum exhibition,
<http://www.blindatthemuseum.com>
4. Matt Smith, *Queering the Museum*, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
<http://www.mattjsmith.com/downloads/Queering%20the%20Museum.pdf>

Explore these websites before class:

1. Amanda Cachia, "Flesh of the World," 2015, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto Art Centre, Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto <http://fleshoftheworld.ca/>
2. Amanda Cachia, "What Can a Body Do?" 2012, Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, PA,
<http://exhibits.haverford.edu/whatcanabodydo/>
3. Amanda Cachia, "Crippling Cyberspace: A Contemporary Virtual Art Exhibition" *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 2013
<http://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/issue/view/7/showToc>
4. Amanda Cachia, "Marking Blind," Arts & Disability Ireland, 2015
<http://www.adiarts.ie/curated-space>

Week 9**11/23:****Disability Arts Festivals & Conferences****Reading:**

1. Christopher Smit, "Introduction," in *Art of the Lived Experiment* publication for *DisArt Festival*, 2015, <http://disartfestival.org>
2. Amanda Cachia, "The Grand Disability Arts Experiment," in *Art of the Lived Experiment* publication for *DisArt Festival*, 2015
3. Website for *DaDaFest*: <http://www.dadafest.co.uk>
4. Website for *Unlimited*: <http://unlimited.southbankcentre.co.uk>
5. Website for *Bodies of Work*:
<http://www.ahs.uic.edu/dhd/bodiesofwork/>
6. Leah Sandals, "8 Things Everyone Needs to Know About Art and Disability" <http://canadianart.ca/features/7-things-everyone-needs-to-know-about-art-disability/>
7. Jeanna Reid, "Crippling the Arts: It's About Time" <http://canadianart.ca/features/cripping-arts-time/>
8. UCLA Disability Studies Minor 2017 Conference: "Disability as Spectacle"
<http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/dsconference/>

Week 10**11/30:****FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cachia, Amanda. "Loud Silence: Turning Up Volume on Deaf Voice" *The Senses & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 3., 2015
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- Cachia, Amanda. "The Alterpodium: A Performative Design and Disability Intervention." *Design and Culture: A Journal of the Design Studies Forum*. Fall 2016, Vol. 8, No. 3
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- Fox, Ann & Jessica Cooley. "Disability Art, Aesthetics, and Access: Creating Exhibitions in a Liberal Arts Setting." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2014
- Garland-Thompson, Rosemarie. "Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artists & the Dynamics of Staring" from *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*. Edited by Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

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- Gilman, Sander. "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality." *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.
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