

Intellectual Disabilities and Society

A SESP Student Organized Seminar
Northwestern University, Winter 2006
Course Syllabus

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4 – 5:20 PM, Annenberg G15

Instructors: Julie Keller (j-keller5@northwestern.edu; 206-683-9831) and
Charles Rosentel (c-rosentel@northwestern.edu; 847-302-0358)

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Rationale

College students, insulated in a selective environment largely unreflective of the outside world, have little experience with or knowledge of people with intellectual disabilities. This seminar will provide weekly face-to-face experience with Special Olympics athletes while examining intellectual disabilities, the issues that people with such disabilities face, the lens through which our society views these people, and the organizations that attempt to improve their lives and include them in society.

Course Description

This course counts for an elective credit and is graded on a pass or not pass (P/N) basis. Designed for all Northwestern undergraduates, this Student Organized Seminar (SOS) will introduce college students to a group that has been historically brushed to the margins of society, but has been slowly emerging onto the television screens and into the discourse of modern culture. This SOS will inspect the status that 14- to 40-year-olds with intellectual disabilities hold in society and the eyes through which our culture views them. The first section of this course, framed by history and observed by students, will identify the medical, social, and political definitions of intellectual disabilities. The second part of the course will compare the realities of intellectual disabilities and the perceptions by which mainstream culture characterizes them. The final third of the course will scrutinize the intentions and effectiveness of organizations, especially Special Olympics, that have tried to support people with intellectual disabilities in an increasingly inclusive society. This SOS will utilize fiction and non-fiction readings, mainstream movies and documentaries, and speakers with experience in the week's topic to enrich each discussion. Students will coach at Special Olympics sites in the community, writing weekly reflections on their real-world experiences to begin to understand a group of people with which they have had limited interaction.

Content Objectives:

- To make developmental and intellectual disabilities have a more human aspect for Northwestern students, so that these conditions are no longer just “disorders,” but are connected in the minds of students with real people and experiences.

- To educate students on the current perceptions of disabled individuals, ages 14 to 40, in the justice system, the educational system, and the media.
- To give students a base of knowledge about the disabilities themselves from mental, psychological, emotional, and physical standpoints.

Skills Objectives:

- To familiarize Northwestern students with people with intellectual disabilities in a coaching setting as well as in an educational setting, through speakers and panels.
- To participate in discussions in which all members of the class feel free to express their opinions and ask questions.
- To participate in weekly coaching sites and submit written reflections on coaching experiences.

Value Objectives:

- To make students aware of their own misconceptions about intellectual disabilities and to have a critical eye towards the depictions of disabled individuals in the media and the legal system.
- To interact with other students in a comfortable way and be able to explore these issues without discomfort.
- To learn from interactions with people with disabilities and to develop a comfort level for future interactions.

Course Readings:

- Course Packet (Available at SESP Student Affairs Office on Annenberg 1st Floor)
- Haddon, Mark. *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. (Available at Borders or Barnes & Noble)

Coaching Write-ups:

Students are required to turn in a weekly 1-2 page double spaced reflection on their experiences at their coaching site. Write-ups should include what the student feels he or she has learned, if anything was surprising or thought provoking, and his or her general emotions and thoughts regarding the experience. These write-ups are designed to encourage serious thought about interacting with persons with intellectual disabilities and to provoke honest discussion during class, so please take them seriously.

Grading Policies

This class is pass/fail. However, we will not hesitate to fail those who do not adequately meet the course expectations. You are expected to attend every class, and if you do not make it to class, send an e-mail to Charles and Julie preferably beforehand or very soon after the missed class. More than two absences will hurt your grade. Frequent absences from coaching sites will also negatively affect your grade.

Final Paper and Presentation – 35%
Participation and Attendance – 25%
Coaching Write-Ups and Coaching Attendance – 20%
Small Research Assignments and Preparedness for Class Debates – 20%

Above 65% = Pass

Below 65% = Fail

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and to Charles and Julie as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential. For more information, visit www.northwestern.edu/disability.

Part I: Medical, Social, and Political Definitions of Intellectual Disabilities

Class 1: January 4

Introduction to the course, sign up for coaching sites

Reading(s):

- Jenkins, Richard. "Culture, classification, and (in)competence." *Questions of Competence*. Pp. 1-24.
- Davies, Dr. Stanley Powell. *Social Control of the Mentally Deficient*. Pp. 1-26.

Class 2: January 9

What are intellectual disabilities? What's the difference between intellectual disabilities and mental illness?

DUE: 1 page write-up of your definition of "intellectual disability" – no Webster definitions allowed!

Reading(s):

- Byrne, Peter. *Philosophical and Ethical Problems in Mental Handicap*. Pp. 16-44.
- Castles, Elaine E. "We're People First:" *The Social and Emotional Lives of Individuals with Mental Retardation*. Pp. 3-39.
- Davies, Dr. Stanley Powell. *Social Control of the Mentally Deficient*. Pp. 27-46.

CLASS DEBATE

Class 3: January 11

Down Syndrome

DUE: Coaching write-up #1

Reading(s):

- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 139-144, 149-156, 167-173.

Speaker(s):

- KIDS (Keeping Involved with Down Syndrome)
- National Association for Down Syndrome
- Down Syndrome Network

VIDEO EXCERPT: EPISODE OF “LIFE GOES ON”

Class 4: January 16

Down Syndrome

Reading(s):

- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 79-82, 199-204.

Speaker(s):

- KIDS (Keeping Involved with Down Syndrome)
- National Association for Down Syndrome
- Down Syndrome Network

Class 5: January 18

Autism

DUE: Coaching write-up #2

Reading(s):

- Grandin, Temple and Margaret M. Scariano. *Emergence: Labeled Autistic*. Pp. 13-23, 82-95, 96-111, 131-140, 170-180.
- Siegel, Bryna and Stuart Silverstein. *What About Me?* Pp. 5-16.
- Haddon, Mark. *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. Pp. 1-120.

Speaker(s):

Class 6: January 23

Autism

Reading(s):

- Carey, Benedict. “To Treat Autism, Parents Take a Leap of Faith,” New York Times, Dec. 27, 2004.
- Harmon, Amy. “How About Not ‘Curing’ Us, Some Autistics Are Pleading,” New York Times, Dec. 20, 2004.
- Haddon, Mark. *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. Pp. 121-240.

Speaker(s):

- John Haderlein, Autism Society of Illinois
- Eric Smith, Autism Society of Illinois

Part II: Mainstream Culture, Reality vs. Perception

Class 7: January 25

The History of Intellectual Disabilities

DUE: 2 page write-up of summary of outside research on specific time period (to be assigned in class)

DUE: Coaching write-up #3

Reading(s):

- Shorter, Edward. *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation*. Pp. 11-27.
- Adams, Margaret. *Mental Retardation and Its Social Dimensions*. Pp. 16-51.
- Gollay, Elinor, Ruth Freedman, Marty Wyngaarden, and Norman R. Kurtz. *Coming Back: The Community Experiences of Deinstitutionalized Mentally Retarded People*. Pp. 7-22.
- Schwier, Karin Melberg. *Speakeasy*. Pp. 13-21.

Class 8: January 30

Media and Linguistics

Reading(s):

- Shorter, Edward. *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation*. Pp. 11-27.
- Adams, Margaret. *Mental Retardation and Its Social Dimensions*. Pp. 16-51.
- Gollay, Elinor, Ruth Freedman, Marty Wyngaarden, and Norman R. Kurtz. *Coming Back: The Community Experiences of Deinstitutionalized Mentally Retarded People*. Pp. 7-22.
- Schwier, Karin Melberg. *Speakeasy*. Pp. 13-21.

VIDEO EXCERPTS: *RAIN MAN* AND *THE OTHER SISTER*

Class 9: February 1

Media and Linguistics

DUE: Coaching write-up #4

Reading(s):

- Nelson, Jack A. "Broken Images: Portrayals of Those with Disabilities in American Media." Nelson, Jack A., Ed. *The Disabled, the Media, and the Information Age*. Pp. 1-17.
- Longmore, Paul K. "Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures." Gartner, Alan and Tom Joe, Ed. *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*. Pp. 65-78.

VIDEO EXCERPT: *I AM SAM*

Class 10: February 6

Media and Linguistics

Reading(s):

- Riley, Charles A., II. "I'd Like to Thank the Academy: Losing Focus on Disability in Movies and Television." *Disability and the Media: Prescriptions for Change*. Pp. 69-108.
- Bicklen, Douglas. "Framed: Print Journalism's Treatment of Disability Issues." Gartner, Alan and Tom Joe, Ed. *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*. Pp. 79-95.
- Byrne, Peter. *Philosophical and Ethical Problems in Mental Handicap*. Pp. 108-121.
- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 21-24, 91-95.
- Shorter, Edward. *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation*. Pp. 168-185.

CLASS DEBATE: How are specific media representations of intellectual disabilities helpful? Harmful? Accurate? Inaccurate?

Class 11: February 8

The Minority Perspective

DUE: Coaching write-up #5

Reading(s):

- Kunjufu, Jawanza. *Keeping Black Boys Out of Special Education*. Pp. 1-36.
- Henshel, Anne-Marie. *The Forgotten Ones: A Sociological Study of Anglo and Chicano Retardates*. Pp. 100-135.
- Siegel, Dr. Bryna and Dr. Stuart Silverstein. *What About Me? Growing Up with a Developmentally Disabled Sibling*. Pp. 71-92.
- Jenkins, Richard, Ed. *Questions of Competence: Culture, Classification and Intellectual Disability*. Pp. 58-60, 125-152.
- Salzman, Avi. "Special Education and Minorities." *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 2005.

Speaker(s):

- Equip for Equality
- Proyecto Visión

Class 12: February 13

Special Education

Reading(s):

- Gleason, John Joseph. *Special Education in Context*. Pp. 1-36.
- Wilmschurst, Linda, Ph.D., ABPP and Alan W. Brue, Ph.D., NCSP. *A Parent's Guide to Special Education*. Pp. 1-24, 121-128.
- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 97-101.
- Shorter, Edward. *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation*. Pp. 27-30.

Speaker(s):

- Marion Platt, Evanston Township High School Special Education
- Kimberly Fisher, Glenbrook North Special Education
- Ariel Schwartz, SESP Student

Part III: The Effectiveness of Organizations That Intend to Help

Class 13: February 15

Special Olympics: Helping or Hurting?

DUE: Coaching write-up #6

Reading(s):

- Shorter, Edward. *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation*. Pp. 106-142.

Speaker(s):

- Global Messenger (Special Olympics Athlete)
- Katie Grisham, Special Olympics Illinois
- Lew Goldstein, coordinator of Special Olympics Program at New Trier
- Leonard Woodson, coordinator of Special Olympics Program at Evanston Special Recreation

Class 14: February 20

Special Olympics: Helping or Hurting?

Reading(s):

Speaker(s)

- Katie Keeline, Illinois Area 5 Special Olympics Coordinator

CLASS DEBATE: What's your final verdict on Special Olympics as an organization?

Class 15: February 22

Assisted vs. Independent Living

DUE: Coaching write-up #7

Reading(s):

- Pancsofar, Ernest and Robert Blackwell. *A User's Guide to Community Entry*. Pp. 1-40.
- Baker, Bruce L., Gary B. Seltzer, and Marsha Mailick Seltzer. *As Close As Possible: Community Residences for Retarded Adults*. P. 2.
- Heal, Dr. Laird W., Janell I. Haney, and Dr. Angela R. Novak Amado. *Integration of Developmentally Disabled Individuals Into the Community*. Pp. 19-58.
- Kaufman, Sandra Z. *Retarded Isn't Stupid, Mom!* Pp. 42-47, 70-75.
- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 185-194, 129-133.

Speaker(s):

- Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois

Class 16: February 27*The State and Intellectual Disabilities***Reading(s):**

- Miller, Paul Steven. "The Evolving ADA." Blanck, Peter, ed. *Employment, Disability, and the American with Disabilities Act*. Pp. 3-12.
- Wilkinson, Wendy and Lex Frieden. "Glass-Ceiling Issues in Employment of People with Disabilities." Blanck, Peter, ed. *Employment, Disability, and the American with Disabilities Act*. Pp. 68-93.
- Trainer, Marilyn. *Differences in Common: Straight Talk on Mental Retardation, Down Syndrome, and Life*. Pp. 115-124.
- Heal, Dr. Laird W., Janell I. Haney, and Dr. Angela R. Novak Amado. *Integration of Developmentally Disabled Individuals Into the Community*. Pp. 245-271.

Speaker(s):

- Access Living (A Center for Service, Advocacy and Social Change)
- Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (Job Placement)
- Community Alternatives Unlimited, Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

Class 17: March 1*The Justice System and Intellectual Disabilities*DUE: Coaching write-up #8**Reading(s):**

- The National Research Council. *Crime Victims with Developmental Disabilities*. Pp. 1-31, 41-56.
- Byrne, Peter. *Philosophical and Ethical Problems in Mental Handicap*. Pp. 74-78.
- Heal, Dr. Laird W., Janell I. Haney, and Dr. Angela R. Novak Amado. *Integration of Developmentally Disabled Individuals Into the Community*. Pp. 273-282.

Speaker(s):

- Wallace C. Winter, Disability Law Project Supervisor (Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago)
- Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission
- Legal Advocacy Service

Class 18: March 6*Student Presentations*

CLASS DEBATE: Which organization is the most beneficial to individuals with intellectual disabilities? Which needs the most improvement?

Reading Week

Class 19: March 8
Student Presentations

Finals Week

FINAL PAPERS DUE