

**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Political Science 3810A – The Politics of Disability

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It is estimated by the World Health Organization that 16% of the world's population (more than a billion people) live with a disability. Yet people with disabilities have long been at the margins of communities, societies, economies, and political systems, locally, nationally, and globally. Although disabled people are disproportionately located in the global South, their historic marginalization is virtually universal. How do we explain this deeply rooted pattern? What efforts have been made to change it? How do these efforts vary across political jurisdictions – and what are the ongoing repercussions of failing to address it?

Learning Outcomes: This course introduces you to these issues, and enables you think and write critically about them. It takes a broadly comparative approach, drawing on examples from diverse events and societies. It also draws on interdisciplinary insights from disability studies, sociology, history, gender studies and postcolonialism as well as political science. More specifically, you will gain an understanding of key issues concerning:

- The historic neglect of issues of and people with disabilities in politics and policy;
- Models and theories that have aimed to understand diverse experiences of disability and responses to it;
- The role of human rights and international development in relation to disability;
- Efforts to advance the rights and interests of people with disabilities in “developed” and “developing” countries;
- The ongoing struggle for disability inclusion and equality in Canada;
- The most pressing policy issues affecting equality for disabled peoples.

Structure

The course will be delivered in person, though we will hold open the option of shifting to online delivery should circumstances require it. There will be two weekly meetings. The primary mode of delivery is instructor-led discussion, with all class members expected to come prepared and

to actively participate. In addition, we will draw on periodic guest speakers, audio-visual resources, etc to ensure that the voices and perspectives of people with disabilities are represented in our discussions.

For the final weeks of the semester, the class will collectively decide on which key policy issues they wish to focus on. Small groups (likely 4 in total) will be assigned to each topic, and these groups will be responsible for identifying one academic and one media source each to help focus discussion. They will then be responsible for introducing and leading the discussion (that is, the group seminar assignment).

Evaluation

Assessment will be based on a combination of participation in class discussions, relatively brief written assignments, a research proposal and essay, a mid-term exam, and participation in a group presentation. Assessment will be based approximately as follows:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Autobiographical reflection (approx. 500 words – due 12 September) | 5% |
| Attendance and Participation – continuous) | 10% |
| Essay Proposal (20 October) | 10% |
| Mid-term exam (6 November) | 25% |
| Group Seminar (weeks 12 and 13) | 15% |
| Research essay (2500-3000 words excluding references – due 11 December) | 35% |

You **must** complete all elements of the course to pass.

The course's grading scheme follows the Dalhousie undergraduate academic calendar.
https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/grades-and-student-records/grade-scale-and-definitions.html

Please Note: Generative writing tools like Chat GPT, Google Translate and QuillBot (etc.) are not permitted in this class.

Assignment Descriptions:

Autobiographical Reflection (approximately 500 words): Reflect on how your life has been affected by disability, directly or indirectly, and what your experiences suggest about the obstacles to, and advances toward, disability inclusion in your own community. Evaluation is based on the depth of your analysis, and on how clearly and effectively your ideas are articulated. *Your reflections can be submitted in writing, or alternatively submitted as a video-recording of the same length.*

Attendance and Participation: It is important to come to each class ready to discuss the required readings and the questions for discussion linked to each week's focus. This element of the course will be evaluated on the basis of regular attendance and regular interventions in class discussions drawing on assigned readings. What matters is not primarily the quantity, but the quality (or thoughtfulness) of your contributions to class discussion.

Essay proposal: Your proposal is an important opportunity to begin to think about the focus, argument, content, and structure of your research essay. It is also an opportunity for you to receive early feedback on the design of your essay from the instructor.

Students will be required to submit a research paper at the end of the semester that builds on this proposal. Proposals should be roughly 500 words (**excluding** the annotated bibliography), though there is flexibility on the word-length. As this is ultimately an outline, the proposal does not have to be written in paragraph form though you are free to do so if you wish. Each proposal should include:

- A brief overview of the selected focus and case study
- A tentative thesis statement/argument
- A proposed line of inquiry or roadmap outlining the paper's argument
- An annotated bibliography listing 5 academic, peer-reviewed sources relevant to your topic and a short (3-4 sentence) summary of the article

Research essays: Your essay should provide a response to the following topic:

*Discuss **one** critical issue or challenge in achieving a more just and accessible world for persons with disabilities, and the political obstacles to its achievement. What is/would be required for it to be achieved? Focus on one or more specific case(s) in your response.*

Reference Style: All written assignments must provide full and proper citations, using the style that is most comfortable for you. Style guides are available on the Dal Library website:

<http://libraries.dal.ca/help/style-guides.html>. Please ensure that whichever style you choose, you use it consistently and completely throughout the assignment.

The **Mid-term Exam** will consist of a combination of short answer and essay responses. It will be 75 minutes in length.

Group Seminars will be evaluated on the basis of the clarity of their focus; their command of the subject they have chosen to focus on; the coordination of individual presenters' contributions; the relevance of the questions they pose for further discussion; and their effectiveness in generating class participation and discussion.

Please note: extensions on written assignments will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances, **not including** having too much other work to do! Late papers will be penalized 2% per day.

Please also note: Oct. 4th is the last day to withdraw from a Fall term course without a "W", and Nov. 2nd is the last day to withdraw from a Fall term course with a "W".

Copyright

All materials provided for this course are subject to the copyright of the course instructor and may not be reproduced or copied in whole or in part without the consent of the instructor. Students who are enrolled in the course and who have received course material may reproduce it in order to view it at a more convenient time but must destroy the reproduction within 30 days of receiving the final course evaluation.

Texts, Readings, and Research Sources

There are two required texts for this course. Both are relatively short, accessible, handbook-style publications that serve as excellent 'primers' on disability studies and politics. The first is Tom Shakespeare, *Disability: The Basics* (Routledge, 2018), available from the [Dal bookstore](#) or as an [eBook](#). The second is Deborah Stienstra, *About Canada: Disability Rights, 2nd edition* (Fernwood, 2020), also available from the [bookstore](#) or as an [eBook](#).

All other required readings will be available online from the Killam Library or via weblinks.

In the preparation of written assignments, students will need to keep in mind the relatively limited (though growing) range of Political Science sources on Disability. You will have to reach beyond political science sources to interdisciplinary sources or sources from other disciplines as well as the rich field of Disability Studies.

Topics and Assignments

Week 1 (6 Sept.): Introduction –

Read:

Shakespeare, ch. 1, pp. 1-23; Stienstra, ch. 1, pp. 1-8.

Recommended:

World Health Organization. (2022). [*Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities.*](#)

Personal Reflection: how have you experienced disability? How are these experiences 'political'? Due 12 September.

Week 2 (11 & 13 Sept.): Historical Understandings of Disability

Read:

Shakespeare, ch. 2 & 3, pp. 24-67.

Julie Livingston; [*Insights from an African History of Disability.*](#) *Radical History Review* 1 January 2006; 2006 (94): 111–126. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/10.1215/01636545-2006-94-111>

Watch: *Crip Camp* (Netflix) (Note: we will watch this together, with a discussion to follow).

Recommended:

D. Braddock and S. Parish. (2001). "[*An Institutional History of Disability.*](#)" In G. Albrecht et al. *Handbook of Disability Studies.* Sage.

Questions for Discussion:

- How is disability defined and understood?
- How have these understandings varied across time and place?
- What place has been made for people with disabilities in different social and political systems?

Week 3 (18 & 20 Sept.): Models and Theories of Disability

Read:

Dan Goodley (2013) [*Dis/entangling critical disability studies.*](#) *Disability & Society*, 28:5, 631-644, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2012.717884](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.717884)

Snyder, Sharon L. and David T. Mitchell. "[Introduction: Ablenationalism and the Geo-Politics of Disability.](#)" *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 4 no. 2, 2010, p. 113-125. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/article/390394

Brian Watermeyer & Leslie Swartz (2023) [Disability and the problem of lazy intersectionality](#), *Disability & Society*, 38:2, 362-366, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2022.2130177](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2130177)

Recommended:

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. (2005). "Feminist Disability Studies." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30 (2): 1557–87. <https://doi.org/10.1086/423352>.

Lawson, Anna & Angharad E. Beckett (2021) [The social and human rights models of disability: towards a complementarity thesis](#), *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 25:2, 348-379, DOI: [10.1080/13642987.2020.1783533](https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2020.1783533)

Questions for discussion:

- what defines critical disability studies? What prior currents of thought did it emerge in reaction to?
- What is meant by "ablenationalism", and to what extent can/has it been overcome?
- What is the usefulness, and what are the challenges of, applying an "intersectional lense" to the situation(s) of people with disabilities?

DISABILITY AND WORLD POLITICS

Week 4 (25 & 27 Sept.): Disability and Human Rights – the CRPD and Beyond

Read:

L. Series. (2020). "[Disability and Human Rights.](#)" In R. Watson and S. Vehmas, *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 72-88.

Lord, J. & Stein, M. (2013). "[Prospects and Practices for CRPD Implementation in Africa,](#)" in *African Disability Rights Yearbook 1*, Pretoria University Press.

Soldatic, K. (2013). [The transnational sphere of justice: disability praxis and the politics of impairment](#), *Disability & Society*, 28:6, 744-755, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2013.802218](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.802218)

Guest Speaker: Mr. Steven Estey, former Executive Director of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (TBC)

Questions for Discussion:

- What was distinctive about the process and results of the negotiations for, and adoption of, the CRPD?
- What are the strengths and limitations of international human rights, and the CRPD implementation process, for advancing the situation of PWDs?

Week 5 (4 Oct.): Disability and Development

Note: 2 October is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – university is closed.

Read:

N. Groce and M. Kett. (2013). [“The Disability and Development Gap.”](#) Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, Working Paper No. 21, 1-21

O. Abualghaib et al., [“Making Visible the Invisible: Why Disability-Disaggregated Data is Vital to ‘Leave No One Behind’.”](#) *Sustainability*, 11, 1-11.

Stephen Baranyi, (2023). [“Disabled persons organisations’ advocacy for SDG 16+: Levers for change and/or drops in a neo-liberal bucket?”](#) In K. Van Houten and T. Donais (Eds.). *SDG16 and the Global Governance of Violence*.

Global Affairs Canada (GAC), (2023). [Au Courant: Disability-Inclusive Development](#), July.

Recommended:

Deborah Stienstra & Steve Estey (2016) Canada’s responses to disability and global development, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1:3, 382-395, DOI: [10.1080/23802014.2016.1225513](#)

Questions for discussion:

- How are (under)development and disability inter-connected?
- Why has disability been historically neglected in development theory and practice?
- Does the inclusion of disability in the SDGs hold the promise of a sustained change in development practice?

Week 6 (11 Oct.): Disability, Conflict, and Peacebuilding

Note: 9 October is Thanksgiving Monday – university is closed.

Read:

Janet E. Lord & Michael Ashley Stein (2015). [Peacebuilding and reintegrating ex-combatants with disabilities](#), *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19:3, 277-292, DOI: [10.1080/13642987.2015.1031515](#)

S. Close. (2021). "[Untapped peacebuilders: including Persons with Disabilities in Building Peace.](#)" London: Conciliation Resources.

Dyan Mazurana, Anastasia Marshak, Rachel Gordon, Jimmy Hilton Opiyo, Teddy Atim & Bret McEvoy (2016) [Disability and recovery from war in northern Uganda](#), *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1:3, 353-369, DOI: [10.1080/23802014.2016.1235469](#)

Recommended:

Pons, W., Lord, J., & Stein, M. (2022). [Disability, Human Rights Violations, and Crimes Against Humanity](#). *American Journal of International Law*, 116(1), 58-95. doi:10.1017/ajil.2021.41

Questions for Discussion:

- How are disability and conflict inter-connected?
- How are people with disabilities typically incorporated in humanitarian and peacebuilding operations?
- How would greater inclusion of disabled people in peacebuilding alter prospects for sustainable peace?

DISABILITY, SOCIETY, AND NATIONAL POLITICS

Week 7 (16 & 18 Oct.): the Disability Rights Movement and DPOs; finalizing presentation priorities

16 October: Building a Movement? The politics of self-representation

Read: Shakespeare, chs. 4-8 (pp. 68-163). *Start with ch. 8!*

Recommended:

Dong Chul You & Se Kwang Hwang (2018) Achievements of and challenges facing the Korean Disabled People's Movement, *Disability & Society*, 33:8, 1259-1279, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2018.1488676](#)

David R. Black & Jacqueline de Matos-Ala (2016) Building a more inclusive South Africa: progress and pitfalls in disability rights and inclusion, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1:3, 335-352, DOI: [10.1080/23802014.2016.1252687](#)

Questions for discussion:

- What led to the emergence of the Disability Rights Movement?
- What have been its most important successes and disappointments?

18 October: Group decision-making on foci for key issues in disability politics (final 2 weeks)

The objective of this class is to collectively decide on the themes that our final two weeks will focus on, led by class members.

A non-exhaustive list of options, in no particular order, would include:

- Transportation
- Employment
- Housing/de-institutionalization
- Disability sport
- Gender-based violence
- Sexual and Reproductive health
- Indigenous people and disability
- Intellectual disabilities
- Prenatal diagnosis
- Assisted dying
- Education (basic, secondary, post-secondary)
- Poverty
- Disability and disaster-relief

ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE: 20 OCTOBER

Week 8 (23 & 25 Oct.): Disability and Politics in Western/Northern societies

Read:

Mitzi Waltz & Alice Schippers (2021) Politically disabled: barriers and facilitating factors affecting people with disabilities in political life within the European Union, *Disability & Society*, 36:4, 517-540, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2020.1751075](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1751075)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2020.1751075>

E. Evans and S. Reher, Disability and Political Representation: Analysing obstacles to elected office in the UK. *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 43, No. 5, 2022, 697-712

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192512120947458>

C. Arrington. (2021). "[Disabled People's Fight for Rights in South Korea and Japan.](#)" *Current History*, vol. 120, Issue 827, 230-239.

Media:

Andrew Pulrang. (2021). "[5 Reasons it's Hard for Disabled People to Trust Politics and Activism.](#)" *Forbes*, 18 September.

Recommended:

M. Pristley et al. (2016). "The Political Participation of Disabled People in Europe: Rights, Accessibility, and Activism." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 42, 1-9.

Questions for Discussion:

- Comparing across "Western" cases in Europe and Asia, what similarities and differences do you see in the ability of people with disabilities to participate in political life?
- What advances have been made, and how have they been gained?

Week 9 (30 Oct. & 1 Nov.): Disability in the global South

Read:

Raewyn Connell (2011) [Southern Bodies and Disability: re-thinking concepts](#), *Third World Quarterly*, 32:8, 1369-1381, DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2011.614799](#)

Shaun Grech (2015) [Decolonising Eurocentric disability studies: why colonialism matters in the disability and global South debate](#), *Social Identities*, 21:1, 6-21, DOI: [10.1080/13504630.2014.995347](#)

Emmanuel Sackey (2015) [Disability and political participation in Ghana: an alternative perspective](#), *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 17:4, 366-381, DOI: [10.1080/15017419.2014.941925](#)

Questions for Discussion:

- Recognizing the great variations among countries within the 'global South', how has the widely shared experience of colonization affected perceptions and experiences of Disability?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the primary mechanisms for advancing disability rights discussed in the course thus far (e.g., the CRPD and other human rights instruments; the Disability Rights Movement) in global South contexts?

Week 9 (6 & 8 Nov.): Mid-term Exam; Disability Politics in Canada

MID-TERM EXAM – 6 NOVEMBER

Disability Politics in Canada:

Read: Stienstra, pp. 9-95.

Guest Speaker: Professor Deborah Stienstra, University of Guelph; director of the “Engendering Disability-Inclusive Development” Partnership.

Questions for Discussion:

- How and where have advances for people with disabilities been most significant in Canada, and how have they varied between provincial and regional locations?

READING WEEK

KEY ISSUES IN DISABILITY POLITICS

Week 11 (20 & 22 Nov.): Indigeneity and Disability; higher education

Indigeneity and Disability:

Gilroy, John, Margaretha Uttjek, Lavonna Lovern, and John Ward. (2021). “[Indigenous People with Disability: Intersectionality of Identity from the Experience of Indigenous People in Australia, Sweden, Canada, and the USA.](#)” *Disability and the Global South* 8, 2: 2071–93.

D. Stienstra, G. Blaikie, and S. Manning. (2018). “[“My granddaughter doesn’t know she has disabilities and we are not going to tell her’: Navigating Intersections of Indigeness, Disability, and Gender in Labrador.](#)” *Disability and the Global South*, vol. 5, no. 2.

Recommended:

T. Hahmann, et al. (2019). “[Indigenous people with Disabilities in Canada. First Nations people living off reserve, Métis, and Inuit aged 15 years and older.](#)” Statistics Canada, 12 December.

Question for Discussion:

- How does the experience of Disability vary between Indigenous and settler citizens of Canada and other settler states?

Higher Education/Dalhousie:

[Dalhousie University Accessibility Plan.](#) 2022.

Guest Speakers: Michelle Mahoney (Accessibility Officer, University of King’s College) & Meredith Bullock (Dalhousie alum) (TBC)

Week 12 (27 & 29 Nov.):

1.

Read:

2.

Read:

Week 13 (5 & 6 Dec.):

3.

Read:

4.

Read:

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE: 11 DECEMBER

Academic Integrity and Accessibility

Academic Integrity http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all of our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

Accessibility https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html

The Advising and Access Services Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for student accessibility and accommodation. The advising team works with students who request accommodation as a result of: a disability, religious obligation, or any barrier related to any other characteristic protected under Human Rights legislation (NS, NB, PEI, NFLD).

Student Code of Conduct

https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/student-life-policies/code-of-student-conduct.html

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner—perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2).

(read more: <http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>)

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University acknowledges that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Contact the program at elders@dal.ca.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES, GUIDELINES and RESOURCES for SUPPORT

Dalhousie courses are governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate.

(<https://academiccalendar.dal.ca/catalog/viewcatalog.aspx>)

Important student information, services and resources are available as follows:

University Policies and Programs

- Important Dates in the Academic Year (including add/drop dates)

http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html

- Classroom Recording Protocol
https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/classroom-recording-protocol.html
- Dalhousie Grading Practices Policy
https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practices-policy.html
- Grade Appeal Process

https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/grades-and-student-records/appealing-a-grade.html

- Sexualized Violence Policy

https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/health-and-safety/sexualized-violence-policy.html

- Scent-Free Program

<https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupational-safety/scent-free.html>

Learning and Support Resources

- General Academic Support – Advising
https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/advising.html (Halifax)

<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/ssc/academic-support/advising.html> (Truro)

- Student Health & Wellness Centre: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness.html
- On Track (helps you transition into university, and supports you through your first year at

Dalhousie and beyond) https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/On-track.html

- Indigenous Student Centre
https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html See also:
Indigenous Connection: <https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/indigenous-connection.html>
- Elders-in-Residence (The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit the office in the Indigenous Student Centre or contact the program at elders@dal.ca or 902-494-6803.)
- <https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/academics/UG/indigenous-studies/Elder-Protocol-July2018.pdf>
- Black Student Advising Centre
https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/black-student-advising.html
- International Centre https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/international-centre.html

- South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre <https://southhousehalifax.ca/about/>
- LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative - <https://www.dal.ca/dept/hres/education-campaigns/LGBTQ2SIA-collaborative.html>
- Dalhousie Libraries <http://libraries.dal.ca>
- Copyright Office <https://libraries.dal.ca/services/copyright-office.html>
- Dalhousie Student Advocacy Services <https://www.dsu.ca/dsas?rq=student%20advocacy>
- Dalhousie Ombudsperson https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/where-to-get-help/ombudsperson.html
- Human Rights and Equity Services <https://www.dal.ca/dept/hres.html>
- Writing Centre https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html
- Study Skills/Tutoring http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/study-skills-and-tutoring.html

NB: Faculty or Departmental Advising Support (Note: there is a different link for each faculty, and possibly for different departments or programs)

Safety

- Biosafety <http://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/biosafety.html>
- Chemical Safety <https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/chemical-safety.html>
- Radiation Safety <http://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/radiation-safety.html>
- Laser Safety <https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/radiation-safety/laser-safety.html>