Disability Across Media

DHD 102
Professor Azadeh Safaein

Fall 2026

# Disability Across Media

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the representations of disability in a wide range of cinematic and literary texts from around the world. Through close readings of these texts, we will consider the ways through which disability intersects with gender, race, nationality, and class and ask why disability is so ubiquitous? What is the relationship between disability and narrative? How does media shape or challenge our understanding of being "normal"? To respond to these questions, the lectures bring together cultural products and critical texts across time, languages, and geographies. Ultimately, our objective is to think critically about how ideas of “normality” and “disability” are culturally constructed, curated, and represented.

## LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, we will:

- Understand disability as a conceptual, socially constructed, and historically contingent category
- Become familiar with historical and contemporary representations of disability in popular culture
- Develop an introductory-level vocabulary for analyzing these representations’ possible meanings
- Explore how disability intersects with race, class, gender, and sexuality in creating meaning.
- Gain critical thinking frameworks (genre, medium, form, aesthetics) through which to understand, analyze, critique, discuss, and write about representations of disabled people.

# Integration with Hull-House Materials

*(Content adapted from original course syllabus by Hull-House educators to reflect how materials were used for in-class instruction and assignments)*

## TOPIC: ARCHIVES, REPRESENTATIONS & HOW EXCLUSIVE IS DISABILITY HISTORY?

Three days of class will be dedicated to reading and discussing the topic alongside a visit to the Hull-House museum and Daley Library archives to consult the Mary Crane Nursery collection and the Bertha Schlotter papers on the final class of the week.

Students are encouraged to think about how Hull-House relates to ideas of curating, caring, and representing disability.

## READINGS & OTHER MATERIALS

- Mary Crane Nursery collection
- Bertha E. Schlotter papers
- Tronto, Joan C. "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* vol. 12, no. 4, Summer 1987, pp. 644-663

## RELATED PROJECT: CURATING/CARE ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, students explore the etymological, cultural, and embodied relations between curating and caring. They should refer to their observation and notes that they took during their visit to the Daly library's archive of Mary Crane Nursery School and Bertha Schlotter Papers and Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.

# Sample Assignment

CURATING/CARE ASSIGNMENT

Refer to your observations and notes that you took during your visits to the Daley library's archive of the Mary Crane Nursery School, the Bertha Schlotter Papers and the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.

You should think about curating and caring in relation to disability and ask:

- What bodies worth preserving, curating, and caring?
- Why certain bodies remain outside the network of care? Who gets to be part of an archive?
- Did you find any trace of preserving, registering, representing, or curating disability during your visits?

Support your answer with examples. You can also attach photos if you took any during your visits.

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