Disability Studies

Chair, Department of Health and Human Physiology
  • Warren G. Darling

Coordinator, Disability Studies
  • Kenneth E. Mobily (Health and Human Physiology)

Undergraduate certificate: disability studies
Website: https://clas.uiowa.edu/hhp/undergraduate/disability-studies-certificate

Disability studies examines disability as a social, cultural, historical, and political phenomenon rather than focusing on its clinical, medical, or therapeutic aspects. It is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field that draws on scholarship from diverse disciplines, including anthropology, architecture, the arts, communication and media studies, cultural studies, economics, gender studies, geography, global studies, history, law, literature, medicine, nursing, philosophy, policy studies, political science, religious studies, social work, and sociology.

The certificate program helps students expand their knowledge and awareness of disability issues and prepare for careers in a variety of fields. Its multidisciplinary nature makes disability studies a good complement to a broad range of undergraduate majors.

Students who complete the certificate develop:
  • understanding of the history of disabilities in America;
  • awareness of how culture and society define disability;
  • the ability to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
  • a personal philosophy of treating people fairly, equitably, and thoughtfully; and
  • greater understanding of and concern for public policy issues and active citizenship.

The certificate program in disability studies is administered by the Department of Health and Human Physiology.

Programs

Undergraduate Program of Study Certificate

• Certificate in Disability Studies

Courses

Disability Studies Courses

DST:1101 Introduction to Disability Studies 3 s.h.
Introduction and overview of important topics and discussions that pertain to the experience of being disabled; contrast between medical and social models of disability; focus on how disability has been constructed historically, socially, and politically in an effort to distinguish myth and stigma from reality; perspective that disability is part of human experience and touches everyone; interdisciplinary with many academic areas that offer narratives about experience of disability. GE: Diversity and Inclusion.

DST:1200 Disabilities and Inclusion in Writing and Film Around the World 3 s.h.
Exploration of human experiences of dis/ability and exclusion/inclusion as represented in recent international film and popular writing from Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; how these experiences contribute to and reflect awareness of the challenges of disabilities as well as public policy; strategies that filmmakers and authors employ to contain, complicate, and challenge cultural preconceptions of the disabled body; how disability intersects with other major identity categories (i.e., sexuality, nationality, race); tools for researching history, policy, and activism. Taught in English. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as GHS:1200, GRMN:1200, WLLC:1200.

DST:3102 Culture and Community in Human Services 2-3 s.h.
Influence of social issues (e.g., diversity, equity) on human services; values, beliefs, lifestyles, and attitudes of individuals and diverse groups found in a pluralistic society; recognition of dehumanizing biases and their impact on interpersonal relations; translation of knowledge of culture into attitudes, skills, and techniques that result in favorable experiences for human services consumers; recognition of ways in which dehumanizing biases may be reflected in everyday encounters and understanding how these interactions may influence populations served by human service practitioners.

DST:3103 Eugenics 3 s.h.
The eugenics movement specifically is part of disability studies to the extent that it was an influential "scientific" approach to determining who was and was not disabled (inferior) during the Progressive Era (1880-1920) although its influence extended through WWII; vestiges of eugenics remain today, though no longer identified as eugenics; how eugenics was quickly adopted by the United States where it found a receptive and well-financed audience of aristocrats, scientists, and philanthropists; many negative eugenic practices resulted—marriage restriction, sterilization, euthanasia, immigration restriction, and segregation/institutionalization.

DST:3200 Bioethics, Health, and Disability arr.
There is always room for learning to think more carefully about any ethical dilemmas that might be encountered in potential future roles as health care or social service professionals; students take a more fundamental look at issues affecting health care and social services access for people with disabilities than presently occurs.