Disability is unlike other “others” (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, etc.). Learning to think historically, critically, intersectionally about this important marker of difference (10-15% of the world’s population is estimated to have some type of disability, even as boundaries and identities are constantly fluid) can enrich research on many geographic and topical themes. This seminar course will introduce students to a variety of conceptual approaches (from history of medicine and history of eugenics to cultural history, histories of care, and anti-ableist social movements and human rights activism to crip theory in its overlap with queer theory), drawing also on adjacent disciplines (e.g., anthropology), and considers disabilities in their broadest sense: from madness to sensory differences to physical and cognitive impairments and chronic illnesses. Students working on any part of the globe, 19th-20th century, are welcome.

In addition to close reading and active discussion, students will be expected to develop an independent research project grounded in primary sources that advances their own ongoing scholarly agenda. Instructor permission required. dherzog@gc.cuny.edu

Aug 29 Introductory Meeting

Sep 5 Classics and Basics
*Nancy Mairs, “On Being a Cripple” (1986),
VIDEO: Stella Young, “I’m not your inspiration” (2014), https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en.
Sep 12 US Policy and Activism

Sep 19 Ravaged Landscapes
*Angela Garcia, “Introduction,” *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Río Grande* (2010), 1-12 only!

Sep 26 Reconsidering Madness

Oct 3 Neurodiversity

Oct 10 No class. FILM: Her Socialist Smile (dir. John Gianvito, 2020) [on Helen Keller]

Oct 17 Eugenics and Euthanasia
*Critic of Eugenics: Rudolf Kraemer” (1929, 1933), in Carol Poore, “Recovering Disability Rights in Weimar Germany,” Radical History Review 94 (Winter 2006), 48-56 only!.
*David Barker, “The Biology of Stupidity: Genetics, Eugenics and Mental Deficiency in the Inter-War Years,” British Journal for the History of Science 22.3 (Sept 1989), 347-375.
Oct 24 Queering Disability

Oct 31 Students bring in their primary sources (in translation).


Nov 14 Student choice 2ndary scholarship: key texts with which you are in conversation.

Nov 21 No class. Work on your final projects.

Nov 28 Student conference-paper presentations with PowerPoint.

Dec 5 Student conference-paper presentations with PowerPoint.