
Disability Studies (MA)

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR: Mariette Bates

CUNY School of Professional Studies
119 West 31st Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10001

Email Contact: Mariette Bates, mariette.bates@cuny.edu

URL: http://sps.cuny.edu/programs/ma_disabilitystudies

THE PROGRAM

The Master's Degree in Disability Studies (M.A.), the first stand-alone program of its kind in the country, offers students a unique opportunity to examine disability from an interdisciplinary perspective, including the social sciences, humanities, science, social policy and the law. The program utilizes a 'person centered' approach to the study of disability, incorporating overlapping lenses through which students realize disability as a social construction as opposed to a deficit inherent in an individual.

The degree provides students with the intellectual and methodological tools to assume greater responsibility and leadership in the future as service providers, advocates, researchers, or policy makers. Students study with renowned faculty from CUNY as well as expert practitioners from public and private organizations.

Graduates of the Master's Degree in Disability Studies program are reflective, knowledgeable and flexible professionals, researchers, educators and advocates in their chosen disability-related field. Graduates think, write and speak critically about:

- Disability experience, both individual and social;
- Disability and the arts/creativity in disability culture;
- Improvement in quality of life and justice for people with disabilities;
- Field based applications to disability-related practice; and
- Research for ongoing learning and writing in disability studies.

Career Prospects

The Master's Degree in Disability Studies prepares a new generation of leaders in community-based or governmental agencies as they evolve in the 21st century. It prepares students to begin or further a career working with and for people with a wide range of disabilities and is ideal for administrators, social service professionals, educators, scholars who wish a specialization in Disability Studies, people with disabilities or family members, and advocates.

Admission Criteria

In addition to the admission criteria for graduate degree programs, background as a human services professional, advocate, researcher or policy maker is an advantage, but not essential. Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

CURRICULUM

Students of the Master's Degree in Disability Studies (M.A.) are introduced to the social model of disability and are challenged to think critically about disability in relation to a variety of academic disciplines and society. Through intense coursework and fieldwork, students explore the phenomenon of disability in depth, gain new insights and skills, and become part of a growing community in this exciting field.

Program Requirements

Thirty credits are required for the degree.

Required Courses - Students must complete 18 credits in the following courses:

- DSAB 601 - Psychosocial, Cultural and Political Aspects of Disability
- DSAB 602 - Embodiment and Disability
- DSAB 605 - Disability and Diversity
- DSAB 611 - Research Methods
- DSAB 626 - Disability Law and Policy
- DSAB 699 - Capstone Course

Elective Courses - Students must also complete 12 credits from among the following courses:

- DSAB 603 - Disability and the Family Life Cycle

health changes associated with aging adults with intellectual disabilities; and using person-centered planning and self-advocacy to improve the quality of life of aging individuals with disabilities.

DSAB 605 Disability and Diversity 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on disability as a category of diversity and identity in comparison with other categories of diversity and identity, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity, as well as on diversity within disability. It also critically examines different strategies that may be used to increase the freedom or liberty of people with disabilities. Disability as culture will be explored, as will systems of exclusion or disadvantage as they intersect with disability and other categories of diversity.

DSAB 611 Research Methods 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will provide an overview of research methods including participant observation, in-depth interviewing, the use of personal narratives and other personal documents, and participatory action research. Students will be introduced to data analysis in disability research. The course will feature theoretical approaches and practical techniques. The application of these research methodologies to people with disabilities will be illustrated. The book for the course will be the classic disability research text *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* by Stephen Taylor and Robert Bogdan; additional readings will be utilized as well to complement the text. Students who complete the course will be able to: discuss the ethics of studying people and the special protections required when studying vulnerable populations; describe situations where approval is needed from the Institutional Review Board and the steps to secure IRB approval; contrast and compare quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and describe research scenarios where each would be appropriate; discuss various methodologies utilized to conduct qualitative research and describe the attributes of each; describe his or her experience in practicing various qualitative research methods and what he or she learned; participate in participant observation and write field notes describing it; describe the benefits of reflexive journaling while conducting research and issues around the biases we bring to research; conduct interviews with individuals and code them for content; analyze the results of participant observation and interviews research; develop a structured questionnaire; describe issues related to writing about research; contrast and compare several qualitative research studies; describe an area of investigation and develop a research question which addresses it; conduct a literature review and identify gaps in research; formulate a research proposal and present it to peers.

DSAB 620 Disability History 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on some of the Western, pre-modern notions of disability, such as the sacred and the profane and the ugly and grotesque, inherited from classical antiquity and Christianity. The course also constructs a history of persons with disabilities in the U.S. by concentrating primarily on the modern era beginning with institutionalization in the Jacksonian and Civil War eras. The course reviews the history of persons with disabilities, highlighting the so-called hierarchy of disabilities. The course also examines why social history, the history of everyday lives that is the dominant methodology among historians, has scarcely been applied to people with disabilities until the advent of Disability Studies.

DSAB 621 Disability Studies and the Humanities 3 Credits

This course will provide an introduction to disability studies and the humanities. Over the last twenty years disability scholars have analyzed representations of people with disabilities as they appear in literature, myth, art, film, photography, music and theater. These fields reflect and shape the meaning and reality of disability. Poetic and other artistic modes of discourse can deepen our understanding of the lived experience of disability. However, these shared representations of disability are, for the most part, taken for granted. Yet they have a powerful effect on popular culture, influence the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and play a part in the formation of public policies related to disability. The course will provide in-depth analysis of: the image of the cripple in literature; women with disabilities in fiction and drama; the idiot figure in modern fiction and film; the roles and stereotypes of disabled figures in cinema; theorizing disability in music; the history of photography and psychiatry; images of madness in literature; people with disabilities as artists and performers; representations of people with disabilities in journalism, media and popular culture.

DSAB 622 Disability in Mass Media 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on issues related to disability and mass media representation, including journalism, TV, film, advertising, photography, documentary, comic art and the Internet. Topics covered will include:

- The relationship between disability studies and media studies;

- The various models of media representation of disability;
- The impact of stigma in mass media imagery;
- Mediated bodies – the impact of cultural and media representations on the experiences of people with disabilities;
- Disability media, i.e. content created by and for people with disabilities;
- Content and textual analysis – researching the prevalence and meaning of mediated disability representation;
- News about disability rights in U.S. society, what is and isn't covered; and
- “Hidden” disabilities and how they do or don't get onto the media's radar.

DSAB 623 Disability Studies and the Health Professions 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will focus on health disparities experienced by people with disabilities. Many health professionals have the same misconceptions and fears about persons with disabilities that are found in the general public and physical barriers still exist in many, if not most, health delivery settings. The course will review the Declaration on Health Parity for Persons with Disabilities issued by the AAIDD. It will review the research on health disparities documented by the Baylor College of Medicine's Center for Research on Women with Disabilities and other sources. We will look at ongoing efforts to address these problems. Both the 2005 Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities* and the Institute of Medicine's 2007 report on the *Future of Disability in America*, stress the importance of strengthening the education of health professionals in this area. Indeed many health professionals still equate disability and illness. The strengths and weaknesses of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of the World Health Organization as a conceptual framework for disability will be discussed in detail. The relationship between disability studies and the emerging patient-centered approach will be highlighted. The role of disability studies in the education of health professionals will also be discussed including the integration of narrative medicine into the curriculum of medical schools and the practice of physicians. We will also look at the challenges faced by health professionals with disabilities.

DSAB 624 Disability Services Administration 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course looks at the role that Disability Studies is playing in the formulation of public policies to insure the delivery of quality services and supports to people with disabilities. The course analyzes the costs of these services and the economics of the disability industry. It focuses also on organizational factors involved in the management of public and private agencies that deliver services to people with disabilities. The active participation of people with disabilities and family members in the design, delivery and evaluation of community-based services is emphasized.

DSAB 626 Disability Law and Policy 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course examines how the federal government treats discrimination against persons with disabilities in three areas: public life (public accommodations, such as transportation and housing), education, and private life in terms of employment. Divided into three parts, the course first examines the origins of the disability rights movement and the ways this movement contributed to the drafting of these anti-discrimination disability laws. Second, it reviews the statutes themselves-Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as how federal courts have interpreted them. The course will also analyze how these laws are enforced. It will pay special attention to how these laws compose a public policy. Finally, the course concludes by reviewing how the ADA has influenced the United Nations which recently passed its own disability rights laws.

DSAB 627 Disability and Narrative 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on the individual, cultural, social and political meanings of disability as seen through the eyes of people with disabilities themselves. It does so by studying powerfully and elegantly written memoirs and narratives by authors with different disabilities or those that have been intimately involved with those with disabilities. The course is divided into two parts. First, it explores some conceptual issues to help place “life writing” in a Disability Studies context. For instance, how do people with disabilities identify themselves? How is their identity perceived by society? What is “normal?” What types of discrimination do people with disabilities face? And second, this course reviews a number of narratives, focusing on these specific questions.

DSAB 628 **Disability Studies in Education** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

This course provides an overview of dis/ability within education. We will foreground historical, social, cultural and interpretive understandings of dis/ability, contrasting them with the medical, scientific, and psychological understandings of dis/ability within the context of schooling practices. Using personal narratives, media representations, contemporary research, historical accounts, legal and policy issues, we will analyze competing claims of what dis/ability is. By analyzing multiple and interdisciplinary understandings of dis/ability from a wide variety of sources, we are able to deepen our understanding of dis/ability issues within education, and by extension, society. Students will: be introduced to, or extend their knowledge of a dis/ability studies perspective; explore various ways of understanding dis/ability (medical model, social model, charity model, civil rights model, etc.); explain the value of understanding school and classroom practices through a DSE lens; examine the history of schooling for students with and without dis/abilities; describe the differences between traditional special education and a DSE approach to understanding dis/ability; debate the validity and/or usefulness of dis/ability categories that have been constructed within the education field, such as "learning disabilities," and "emotional disturbance"; analyze complex issues involved in inclusive education; discuss negative social perceptions, ableism, stigma, and discrimination experienced by people with dis/abilities within an education context; explain discrepancies in educational opportunities when dis/ability intersects with race, class, and gender; evaluate the experience(s) of dis/ability for urban students; consider schools as work environments for educators with dis/abilities; discuss major longitudinal and outcome studies and examine factors related to successful transitions for students with dis/abilities; discuss ways to advocate for, and with, students with dis/abilities and their parents.

DSAB 629 **Students with Disabilities in Higher Education** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

According to HEATH, a national clearinghouse of data on the experiences of students with disabilities, students with disabilities are one of the fastest growing segments of the American college population. They contribute to the diversity of the campus and have used the higher education setting to ready themselves for independent living and competitive employment. In some cases, the college experience has also helped students forge a cross-disability collective identity as part of a distinctive disability culture. This course examines the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education and key issues related to their full and equal participation in all aspects of college life, including: the historical experiences of students with disabilities in U.S. postsecondary education including demographic trends; key transition issues of students with disabilities from K-12 to postsecondary education; the legal and legislative context framing access and opportunity for college students with disabilities; understanding different disabilities and the reasonable accommodations they typically require in higher education settings; the deliberative and collaborative process through which reasonable accommodations are determined; implementing the principles of universal design in postsecondary curricula; the role of assistive technology in enhancing access; issues in the retention of college students with disabilities; challenges of college students with hidden disabilities; emerging populations of college students with disabilities; promoting the participation of students with disabilities in co-curricular and residential life; facilitating successful transitions to employment; faculty and staff development around postsecondary disability issues.

DSAB 630 **Ageing and Disability: Multiple Perspectives and Emerging Issues** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

This course is intended to explore aging and disability from multiple theoretical and applied perspectives utilizing an interdisciplinary approach. Students will be encouraged to explore the dynamics of aging and disability from a person-centered, lifespan and systems perspective. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to apply the knowledge to enhance service delivery to a specialized population, assume leadership in the aging and disability fields and support advocacy efforts as professionals and citizens.

DSAB 639 **Fieldwork in Disability Services** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

Disability Studies can play a valuable role in the education and daily practice of human services professionals. This course provides opportunities for students to embody the values and principles and test the knowledge and skills they have learned in the classroom in an applied setting. Their fieldwork activities will support the goals of inclusion, integration, and independence of people with disabilities consistent with the legal mandates contained in IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA. Students will receive guidance from exemplary professionals at agencies that provide services to people with disabilities. Students who complete the course will: be knowledgeable about professional careers and educational opportunities in the disability field; participate in a person-centered planning process with an individual with a disability to

