

Discipleship and Disability¹

Course Description

Questions of human limitation, impairment, and disability animate both historical and contemporary theological thought. Disability rights and pride movements, as well as the field of disability studies, provide critical conversation partners for Christian disciples. This course will explore materials including disability theology, biblical texts, autobiographies of people with disabilities, poetry, and disability studies literature. This course emphasizes critical reflection on the implications of disability for the liturgical, homiletical, and sacramental contexts of students' diverse ministerial vocations.

Class Structure

We will spend the first 45 minutes learning together, talking about our primary reading and the questions that go with it. We will spend the next 45 minutes working in small groups on our midterm projects. We will spend the last hour in an optional discussion group of the secondary reading/s.

Midterm Assignment

Students will work together in pre-assigned small groups on a collaborative project to be presented during our March 6 meeting. These projects should be 10 minutes long and can be presented live or via video. If you would like to videotape your midterm project, traditional camcorders and DSLR cameras are available to borrow free of charge from Duke Libraries. Examples of collaborative projects could include a creative exegesis on a biblical text regarding disability, a collaborative preaching project, or development of a guided spiritual practice such as a brief prayer service.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

January 30: Getting to Know Each Other

Primary Reading: Luke 24:13-35 (What is your favorite part of this Bible reading? Why?)

Secondary Readings

- Hans Reinders, [The Second Calling](#)
- Madeline Burghardt, "[Brokenness/Transformation: Reflections on Academic Critiques of L'Arche](#)" in *Disability Studies Quarterly*

February 6: Disability and the Old Testament

Primary Reading: 2 Samuel 9:1-13 (Who is your favorite person in this Bible reading? Why? What do you think Mephibosheth felt like when he talked to David? What do you think Mephibosheth's life was like in the beginning of the passage? At the end?)

Secondary Readings

- Nyasha Junior & Jeremy Schipper, "Disability Studies and the Bible" (pgs. 21-37) in [New Meanings for Ancient Texts](#)
- Amos Yong, "Holiness, the Covenant, and Ancient Israel (pgs. 17-48) in [The Bible, Disability, and the Church](#)

¹ This concise syllabus outlines the six course sessions held at the community center. The syllabus has been lightly edited to protect anonymity of participants.

February 13: Disability and the New Testament

Primary Reading: John 9:1-41 (What is your favorite part of this Bible passage? Why? What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us in this Bible passage?)

Secondary Readings

- Jennifer Koosed & Darla Schumm, "[Out of the Darkness: Examining the Rhetoric of Blindness in the Gospel of John](#)" in *Disability Studies Quarterly*
- Colleen Grant, "Reinterpreting the Healing Narratives," (pgs. 72-87) in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*

February 20: Disability and Preaching

Primary Reading: Rev. Matthew Arguin, [Sermon on John 9:1-41](#) (15 minutes); The Church of St. Jude, London, Ontario (What is your favorite part of this sermon? What is one thing Pastor Matt trying to teach us in this sermon? What is one question you would ask Pastor Matt about this sermon?)

Secondary Readings

- Kathy Black, "Healing and Theodicy" (pgs. 19-42), "Hermeneutical Hazards" (pgs. 43-56), "A Healing Homiletic" (pgs. 180-186), and one student chapter choice (chapter 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7), in [A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability](#)
- Julia Watts Belser and Melanie Morrison, "[What No Longer Serves Us: Resisting Ableism and Anti-Judaism in New Testament Healing Narratives](#)" (pgs. 153-170) in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
- William Gaventa, "[Preaching Disability: The Whole of Christ's Body in Word and Practice](#)" (pgs. 225-242), in *Review and Expositor* (on Sakai)

February 27: Disability and Worship

Primary Reading: [An Order for Compline](#) in The Book of Common Prayer (What is your favorite part of this prayer? Why? How does praying this prayer make you feel?)

Secondary Readings

- Don Saliers, "Toward a Spirituality of Inclusiveness" (pgs. 19-31) in *Human Disability and the Service of God*
- Eleanor Liu, et al., "[In Their Own Words: The Place of Faith in the Lives of Young People with Autism and Intellectual Disability.](#)" (pgs. 388-404) in *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*
- Erik Carter, "[Congregational Participation of a National Sample of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.](#)" (pgs. 381-393) in *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

March 6: Midterm Presentations and Celebration

Secondary Readings

- Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier, [Living Gently in a Violent World](#)
- Frances Young, "Arthur's vocation," (pgs. 141-158) in [Arthur's Call](#)