

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCI 3060A/DBST 3060A
Fall 2026
Critical Disability Studies

Instructor: Alexis Shotwell

Office Hours: Reserve an appointment for my regularly scheduled through <https://calendly.com/alexis-shotwell>, or email me if the times listed there don't work for you and we'll find a time that does.

Email: alexis.shotwell@carleton.ca

Time: Mondays, 11:35-2:25

Pre-requisites: SOCI 1001 and SOCI 1002, or SOCI 1003 [1.0], or ANTH 1001, or ANTH 1002, and third year standing

Method of Delivery: In person

Course Description and Objectives:

Course engages contemporary disability theory, culture, and activism to consider bodily difference and its relation to the workings of power and social control, accessibility, normalization, ableism, and medicalization. Students will gain an understanding of the contemporary debates, theories, and methodologies of critical disability studies.

In this class, we will theorize disability as a social relation entangling material, conceptual, cultural, political, and affective matters. Our approach begins from and returns to variation and deviance among our bodies and minds, but rejects the idea that disability is a durable individual, physical, medical problem. Rather, we will investigate how disability is made and how it is lived always in co-production with place, history, race, class, citizenship status, age, sexuality, and more. And we'll look at the shifting formations of disability as it includes neurodivergence, madness, illness, health, and flourishing into the future. We'll include theory, poetry, art and cultural praxis, activist work, and memoir. We'll ask: What might disability justice mean, and how can critical theory help us manifest it?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will leave this course with an improved understanding of disability methods, increased capacity to engage key concepts and debates in critical disability studies, and a solid grounding in the applicability of disability frameworks to their broader studies.

Readings:

All course readings will be available electronically through the university library and Brightspace (students are not required to purchase textbooks or other material for this class)

The book *Brilliant Imperfection* is also available to purchase through the University Bookstore for \$32.95; it is fine to have an earlier edition.