

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Sociology 5401F/ WGST 5901D/ ACCS 5001F
Critical Disability Studies
Fall 2026

Instructor: Kelly Fritsch

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Course meets: In person, Tuesday, 8:35-11:25 am

Office Hours: By appointment in person or on Zoom

Course Description & Objectives

Drawing on contemporary disability theory, culture, and activism, this seminar engages bodily difference and variation to consider competing definitions, conceptions, and social relations of disability, impairment, madness, neurodivergence, debilitation, chronic illness and episodic conditions, as well as health and wellness. Drawing on critical academic scholarship as well as cultural and activist contributions, we will investigate the workings of power and social control, access and accessibility, norms and normalization, ableism, sanism, and medicalization, as well as explore crip, mad, and disabled identity formation, art and culture, and political agency. We will approach disability not as a fixed or singular category but rather as a shifting culturally specific formation that is entangled with intersecting categories such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, and more.

Students in this seminar will gain an understanding of the current debates, concepts, theories, and methodologies within the field of critical disability studies, and will engage with this broad understanding through class discussion, presentations, and written work. Together we will work to disrupt contemporary ableist relations of disability and raise questions about the limitations, contradictions, and directions of future critical disability studies research and disability justice.

Course Requirements and Method of Evaluation

Class Facilitation	25%	Choose from options
Book Review	25%	Choose from options
Four P's / NQA's	25%	Weekly
Design the Syllabus	25%	Due December 11

Full details to be discussed in class and posted to Brightspace.

Course Readings

All readings for this course are available on Brightspace or through the library. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.