

SYLLABUS

Neurodiversity: Science, Politics, Culture

Cogut Center for the Humanities, Brown University
HMAN 1973P Section S01, CRN 25749, Spring 2019
Thursdays 4:00-6:50PM
Classroom: Pembroke Hall 003

Professor Leon J. Hilton
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Office Hours: Weds 1:00-3:00 P.M. or by appointment
Office: Lyman Hall 010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary seminar will investigate the emerging concepts of neurodiversity and neurodivergence—terms originally developed by autistic activists and self-advocates seeking to depathologize autism and other forms of neurological, mental, and cognitive difference. Course materials will incorporate perspectives from disability studies, the history of science, cultural studies, and feminist and queer theory. We will consider how neurodivergence enters aesthetic representation by examining cultural texts including novels, memoirs, films, and performance and visual art. We will also ask how social movements such as neurodiversity and mad pride have contested and reformulated dominant representations of mental disability and difference.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books have been placed on order with the Brown Bookstore. Most are also available for purchase via the online book retailer of your choice.

- Hamja Ahsan, *Shy Radicals: The anti-systemic politics of the introvert militant*
- Fernand Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other Texts*
- Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*
- Jackie Orr, *The Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder*
- Steve Silberman, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*
- Karen Nakamura, *A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan*
- Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*
- Melanie Yergeau, *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*
- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Please note that Brown provides some resources for helping to finance costs associated with books and other course materials. For further information, visit <https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/financial-aid/buying-books>

Most of the books have also been placed on reserve via the Brown University Library's OCRA system. Other readings are available in PDF format or URL links in the Course Schedule posted below.

NEURODIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM

In connection with this class, we will be planning a two-day public symposium tentatively entitled 'Neurodiversity and the Practice of World-Making' that will take place Thurs May 2 to Fri May 3, 2019 in Leeds Theatre in Lyman Hall. This event will feature lectures, panel discussions, a poetry reading, and a staged reading by the Spectrum Theatre Ensemble, a neurodiverse theatre company based in Providence. Based on preferences, students in this class will have the opportunity to assist with tasks related to the symposium including publicity; arranging access and accommodation needs; introducing or moderating event; and overall event coordination. Further details will be provided in class.

ASSESSMENT AND ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be assessed based on the completion of the following:

	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
1. Position Paper	30 %
2. Cultural Analysis	25 %
3. Final Reflection	25 %
4. Attendance and Participation	20 %

1. Position Paper

- Each week, 3 to 4 students will be assigned to write Position Papers responding to the week's assigned text(s). Your paper should be 4-5pp. (approx. 1500-1800 words) and must be posted to the Course Blog before class begins on your assigned week. You will deliver your paper out loud during class as part of a panel with the other students assigned to present that day.
- The only stipulation is that your paper must take a **position** on an issue, concept, or topic addressed in that day's assigned reading, and support that position using **evidence** from the text(s) and (optionally) your own outside research.

2. Cultural Analysis Paper+Blurb: Due Monday April 1 at 5pm to Canvas

- One paper of 5-7 pages in length (approx. 1800-2200 words) analyzing a cultural text that represents or in some other way relates to neurodiversity. You may choose to write about a work of literature (novel, memoir); film; television; theater; dance; performance; visual art, etc.
- As part of this assignment, you will also write a brief, paragraph-long 'blurb' about your chosen cultural text that concisely communicates the gist of your analysis. These blurbs will be posted to the Course Blog to create an archive of cultural representations of neurodiversity.

3. Final Reflections: Due Friday May 10 at 5pm to Canvas

A 4-5 page (1500-1800 words) reflection on the course describing your contributions to the Neurodiversity symposium.

4. Attendance and Participation (including Neurodiversity Symposium)

Attendance and participation are critical to fulfilling the requirements of the course. Lateness or more than one unexcused absence will result in deductions from your attendance and

participation grade. Your active participation and engagement with course readings, discussions, and activities is crucial to the success of this course. I recognize that participation and engagement can take different forms for different people. Please speak with me directly if you have questions about this aspect of the course.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is critical to meeting the overall requirements of the course. Lateness or more than one unexcused absence will result in deductions from your attendance and participation grade. More than four absences (excused or unexcused) will automatically result in a failing grade.

Course Time Allotment: This class will meet 14 times over 16 weeks. Over these sessions, you should expect to spend 3 hours per week in class (42 hours total); approximately 10 hours per week reading and reviewing required readings (140 hours total); and 20-25 hours researching, writing, and creating your Position Paper and Cultural Analysis Paper.

Grading: I will use the following scale to assign final grades: A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; NC: 69 and below. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you choose to take this class S/NC, you must earn at least 80/100 to receive the "S." Students who do not meet these requirements may fail to receive credit for the class. Consistent tardiness may be counted as absences in some cases. Please act accordingly.

Academic Integrity: This course invites you to enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's. Students are expected to abide by the academic integrity code as laid out in the Brown academic manual and code of conduct for students. Infractions or violations of these policies (e.g. plagiarism) are serious violations of academic integrity and will be handled in accordance with University procedures.

Communication Media Policy: Cell phones should be switched off or silenced during class meetings. Surfing the Internet, checking email/facebook/twitter/Instagram/etc. or working on anything other than current class content is not acceptable while class is in session. It's distracting to the instructor and to the students around you. Violations will result in deductions in your participation grade. Exceptions will be made on the basis of disability access and accommodation needs.

Disability Resources, Academic Accommodations, and Short-term Adjustment: Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or adjustments regarding any of the course requirements or policies. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. As part of this process, you should be registered with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) and provide me with an academic accommodation letter from them. For more information contact SEAS at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office. Students seeking psychological support services should contact Counseling and Psychological Services at 401-863-3476.

Diversity, Respect, & Inclusion: Diversity is vital in this classroom. Finding our commonalities through our differences without minimizing, ridiculing, or marginalizing those differences is the

foundation of a socially just learning environment. Differences in race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, language, religion, age, ability, educational background, and life experiences are to be respected and valued. Disrespectful or derogatory language or behavior will not be tolerated.

Names and Pronouns: If your name or gender pronoun is different from the one under which you are officially enrolled, please let me know. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other using correct names and pronouns in class.

A Note About Course Content: This semester our objects of study deal with complex issues of embodied social difference involving disability, race, class, gender, and sexuality. At points we may also encounter and discuss disturbing, violent, and/or sexually explicit images and ideas. As a result, this class will be a space to think deeply about issues raised by challenging topics. Beyond the necessary and productive discomfort that comes from encountering unfamiliar and difficult ideas, historical events, and cultural objects, please speak with me directly if there are specific topics or content that will substantially prevent you from fully participating in the course or completing the course requirements.

COURSE SCHEDULE [SUBJECT TO REVISION WITH ADVANCED NOTICE]

Thursday January 24:

Introductions and Key Terms

Thursday January 31: What Should We Do With Our Brain?

- Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* Translated by Sebastian Rand (Fordham University Press, 2008)
- Erin Manning, "Me Lo Dijo un Pajarito: Neurodiversity, Black Life, and the University as We Know It." *Social Text* 136, Vol. 36, No. 3 (September 2018) [[PDF](#)]
- Amanda [Mel] Baggs, "Up in the Clouds and Down in the Valley: My Richness and Yours." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2010) [[link](#)]

Supplemental Reading:

- Articles from "Autism and the Concept of Neurodiversity," a special issue of *Disability Studies Quarterly* edited by Emily Thornton Savarese and Ralph James Savarese, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2010) [[link](#)]
- Fred Moten, "The Turing Machine (Flesh Thought Inside Out)." In *Plastic Materialities: Politics, Legality, and Metamorphosis in the Work of Catherine Malabou*, eds. Brenna Bhandar and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller (Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 265–286 [[PDF](#)]

Thursday February 7: NeuroQueer

- Melanie Yergeau, *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness* (Duke University Press, 2018)

Thursday February 14: Feminist Theory and the Neurodivergent Bodymind

- Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Duke University Press, 2004)
- Lisa Blackman, "Affective Politics, Debility, and Hearing Voices: Towards a Feminist Politics of Ordinary Suffering." *Feminist Review*, Vol. 111, Issue 1, November 2015, pp. 25–41 [[PDF](#)]

Supplemental Reading:

- Mel Y. Chen, "Brain Fog: The Race for Cripistemology." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* Volume 8, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 171-184 [[PDF](#)]

Thursday February 21: NeuroTribes

- Steve Silberman, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (Avery Press, 2016)

Thursday February 28: Alternative Mappings of the Autistic Commons

- Fernand Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other Texts*. Translated by Drew Burk and Catherine Porter (Univocal Publishing, 2015)

Supplemental Reading:

- Leon Hilton, "Mapping the Wander Lines: The Quiet Revelations of Fernand Deligny." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 2015 [[link](#)]

Thursday March 7: The Politic of Therapy/Institutions and Alternatives

- Felix Guattari, selections from *The Guattari Reader* [[PDF](#)]
 - "Franco Basaglia: Guerrilla Psychiatrist"
 - "Mary Barnes's 'Trip'"
 - "The Four Truths of Psychiatry"
 - "The First Positive Task of Schizoanalysis" (with Gilles Deleuze)
- Abram J. Lewis, "We Are Certain of Our Own Insanity: Antipsychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968-1980," *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 25 no. 1 (January 2016) [[PDF](#)]
- Liat Ben-Moshe, "Why Prisons Are Not 'The New Asylums.'" *Punishment & Society* 2017, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 272–289 [[PDF](#)]

Supplemental Reading:

- DL Adams and Nirmala Erevelles, "Unexpected Spaces of Confinement: Aversive Technologies, Intellectual Disability, and 'Bare Life,'" *Punishment & Society* 2017, Vol. 19, No. 3 [[PDF](#)]

Thursday March 14: Alternative Mappings of the Autistic Commons II

- Hamja Ahsan, *Shy Radicals: The Anti-Systemic Politics of the Introvert Militant* (Book Works, 2017)
- Neurodiversity blogs (selections):
 - Autistic Hoya [[link](#)]
 - Radical Neurodivergence Speaking [[link](#)]

Supplemental Reading:

- *All the Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Racialized Autism*, eds. Lydia X. Z. Brown, E. Ashkenazy, Morénike Giwa Onaiwu (DragonBee Press, 2017)

Thursday March 21: Speculative Worlds

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Grand Central Publishing, 2000)
- Sami Schalk, “Whose Reality Is It Anyway? Deconstructing Able-Mindedness,” from *Bodyminds Reimagined* (Duke University Press, 2018) [PDF]

Supplemental Reading:

- Julia Miele Rodas, “Articulating Autism Poetics,” in *Autistic Disturbances: Theorizing Autism Poetics from the DSM to Robinson Crusoe* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), pp. 31–76. [PDF]

Thursday March 28: No Class—Spring Break

Monday, April 1: [Cultural Analysis Paper due to Canvas, 5:00 P.M.](#)

Thursday April 4: Panic

- Jackie Orr, *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (Duke University Press, 2006)

Thursday April 11: Ethnographic Approaches

- Karen Nakamura, *A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan* (Cornell University Press, 2013)
- Meryl Alper, "Inclusive Sensory Ethnography: Studying New Media and Neurodiversity in Everyday Life." *New Media & Society* Vol. 20, No. 10, 2018: pp. 3560–3579 [PDF]

Thursday April 18: Care Work

- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018)
- Park McArthur and Constantina Zavitsanos, “Other Forms of Conviviality.” *Women and Performance* (October 2013) ([link](#))

Thursday April 25:

Wrapping up / preparations for symposium

Thursday May 2:

Neurodiversity & the Practice of Worldmaking Symposium

Thursday May 2 – Friday May 3

Leeds Theatre, Lyman Hall

Friday, May 10: [Final Reflections due to Canvas 5:00 PM](#)