THE DISABILITY STUDIES READER
Preface to the Third Edition

✓ = new to this edition

Part 1  Historical Perspectives

1. Constructing Normalcy       Lennard Davis

Arguing that the concept of normalcy was invented during the nineteenth-century, this essay explores how both eugenic science and the literary structures of the novel emerged as ways to construct and promote the notion of the “average man.”

2. A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People ✓  Colin Barnes

An overall history of disability from biblical times to the present-day emphasizing social, cultural, and political issues with special reference to the United Kingdom.

3. “A Silent Exile on This Earth”: The Metaphorical Construction of Deafness in the Nineteenth Century  Douglas Baynton

This essay provides a history of deafness in the United States in the 1800’s, particularly focusing on the debates about American Sign Language versus oral education and the way these connect up with gender, class, and religious positions.

4. Disability and the Human Genome ✓  James C. Wilson

Because genetic research has led to the notion of the body as a genetic text and disability as a flawed edition of that text, Wilson considers the implications of this new form of enforcing normality.

5. Medieval Constructions of Blindness in France and England ✓  Edward Wheatley

An exploration of some of the cultural forces in medieval England and France that gave varied meanings to blindness, both for blind people and for the societies in which they lived.

Part II  The Politics of Disability

1. Construction of Deafness       Harlan Lane

Lane argues that the way Deaf people were treated by the dominant culture parallels the way that colonized people were treated by the colonizers.
2. (Post)colonising Disability

Mark Sherry

This essay argues that the equation between people with disabilities and colonized peoples does not provide the best way to understand the social and political aspects of disability.

3. Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Should Not Inhabit the World?

Ruth Hubbard

This essay presents the problem of prenatal testing in relationship to disability and, while not opposing testing, raises concerns about the discrimination inherent in such interventions.

4. Disability Rights and Selective Abortion

Marsha Saxton

Saxton alerts readers to the possible conflict between the goals of the abortion rights movement and that of the disability rights movement, and she proposes goals for both that might bring their aspirations in line with one another.

5. Universal Design: The work of Disability in an Age of Globalization

Michael Davidson

Discusses the importance of seeing disability in a global perspective including issues around poverty in developing countries and uses film to illustrate major points.

6. The Dimensions of Disability Oppression

James Charlton

Using a Marxist approach, this essay looks at disability oppression as an economic, cultural, sociological phenomenon.

7. A Mad Fight: Psychiatry and Disability Activism

Bradley Lewis

Locates disability activism in the Mad Pride movement that fight for the rights of psychiatric survivors and consumers of mental health services.

Part III Stigma and Illness

1. Stigma: An Enigma Demystified

Lerita M. Coleman Brown

Examines Erving Goffman’s key concept of “stigma” from a disability studies perspective.
2. AIDS and Its Metaphors

Susan Sontag

Sontag sees AIDS as not only the physical disease but also as part of a web of metaphors that contribute to the social construction of chronic illness.

3. Beholding

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson

By considering “staring” as a key element of the encounter between “normates” and disabled people, the essay offers the visual alternative of “beholding” as a better way of interacting.

4. On (Almost) Passing

Brenda Brueggemann

Explores the liminal position held by hard-of-hearing people who attempt to negotiate the complex intersection between hearing and deafness.

Part IV Theorizing Disability

1. Reassigning Meaning

Simi Linton

This essay analyzes how language can oppress people with disabilities by creating social, cultural and linguistic expectations and meanings for an ableist society.

2. Enabling Kinship

Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp

Anthropologists propose a new notion of kinship to see how cultures claim or reject disabled fetuses, newborns and young children.

4. Aesthetic Nervousness

Ato Quayson

Coining a new term—“aesthetic nervousness”—the Ghanaian scholar theorizes the crisis resulting from the inclusion of disability in literary or dramatic works.

5. The Social Model of Disability

Tom Shakespeare

A description of the social model and a criticism of some aspects of that paradigm.

6. Narrative Prosthesis

David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder

The authors develop the idea that narrative requires disability as an essential component of storytelling, particularly so the plot can fix or cure the impairment.
7. The Unexceptional Schizophrenic: A Post-Postmodern Introduction
    Catherine Prendergast

Argues that postmodernism has failed to deconstruct the schizophrenic, keeping a monolithic view based on some canonical writings rather than seeing the schizophrenic as part of a new emerging group that is active, multivocal, and seeking to fight for their rights.

Part V Identities and Intersectionalities

1. The End of Identity Politics: On Disability as an Unstable Category
    Lennard Davis

Argues that postmodern ideas of identity challenge the existent models in disability studies and argues that since disability is a shifting identity that newer paradigms are needed to explain it.

2. Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment—For Identity Politics in a New Register
    Tobin Siebers

Using the ideas of post-positivist realism, Siebers argues that disability is a valid and actual identity as opposed to a deconstructive-driven model.

3. Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability
    Susan Wendell

A philosopher considers how the insights of feminist theory might impact on disability theory.

4. Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory
    Rosemarie Garland-Thomson

This essay applies the insights of disability studies to feminist theory.

5. Is Disability Studies Actually White Disability Studies?
    Chris Bell

Bell proposes in a Swiftian “modest proposal” that disability studies is in fact white disability studies, pointing out that the major scholars in the field are white and that the issues they deal do not address the concerns of people of color.

6. Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence
    Robert McRuer

This essay points to the mutually reinforcing nature of heterosexuality and able-bodiedness, arguing that disability studies might benefit by adopting some of the strategies of queer theory.
7. Deaf People: A Different Center  Carol Padden and Tom Humphries

Examines the different types of Deaf identity and how Deaf people think about those categories.

8. “Hearing Aids Are Not Deaf”: A Historical Perspective on Technology in the Deaf World ✓  R. A. R. Edwards

A history of hearing devices and the development of cochlear implants as well as how they are regarded by Deaf people and others.

9. Minority Politics in Korea: Disability, Interaciality, and Gender ✓  Eunjung Kim

Focusing on rape law, interracial children, and the recent visibility of the international marriage market, this essay explores the complicated intersections of gender, disability and ethnicity in Korea.

10. This Is What We Think ✓  Daniel Docherty, Richard Hughes, Patricia Phillips, David Corbett, Brendan Regan, Andrew Barber, Michael Adams, Kathy Boxall, Ian Kaplan, Shayma Izzidien

This article has been written by learning disabled researchers and university researchers. It explains what the learning disabled researchers think about the social model of disability and the disabled people’s movement and what they think should be done to make things better for learning disabled people.

Part VI  Disability and Culture

1. Crippling Heterosexuality, Queering Able-Bodiedness: Murderball, Brokeback Mountain and the Contested Masculine Body ✓  Cynthia Barounis

Using the two films as examples, the essay argues that disability in one is normalized by depicting disabled athletes as hyper-masculine while homosexuality in the other is invested with values of able-bodiedness.

2. The Vulnerable Articulate: James Gillingham, Aimee Mullins, and Matthew Barney Marquard Smith

Focusing on invisibility, exposure and eroticism, the author uses two key examples to explore the complex and dynamic meanings given to prostheses over the last two centuries.
3. Sculpting Body Ideals: Alison Lapper Pregnant and the Public Display of Disability
   Ann Millett-Gallant

   How does Alison Lapper’s monumental self-portrait statue of her pregnant, non-nomative, nude body fit into the history and culture of public art?

4. “When Black Women Start Going on Prozac....” The Politics of Race, Gender, and Emotional Distress in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah’s Willow Weep for Me
   Anna Mollow

   In what way should readers of Danquah’s work think about depression in black women, particularly how does intersectionality affect the idea of mental impairment in the social model of disability?

5. The Enfreakment of Photography
   David Hevey

   The essay reveals that disabled people are used as metaphors of being marginalized, isolated, freakish, and weird in high-culture photography.

6. Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account
   Georgina Kleege

   Kleege critiques philosophers and critics who have exploited the concept of blindness as a convenient conceptual device, erasing the nuances and complexities of blind experience.

7. Disability, Life Narrative, and Representation
   G. Thomas Couser

   Disability has become a major theme in memoirs and other forms of life-writing, opening up that experience to readers and taking control of the representation.

8. Autism as Culture
   Joseph N. Straus

   Can we think of autism not simply a cognitive disorder but as a culture and part of culture?

**Part VII  Fiction, Memoir, and Poetry**

1. Stones in my Pockets, Stones in my Heart
   Eli Clare

   A memoir that explores the way the author’s disability, queer identity, and memories of childhood sexual abuse intersect with and thread though one another.
2. Unspeakable Conversations ✅ Harriet McBryde Johnson

An account by the late disabled writer who meets and argues with utilitarian
philosopher Peter Singer, himself an advocate for withdrawing life support from
severely disabled people.

3. Helen and Frida Anne Finger

A dreamlike account of being disabled as a child and imagining a romantic movie
starring Helen Keller and Frieda Kahlo.

4. “I Am Not One of the” and “Cripple Lullaby” ✅ Cheryl Marie Wade

Poems that explore issues of identity and self-definition from a disabled perspective.

5. “Beauty and Variations” Kenny Fries

Poem that explores the nature and meanings of beauty.

6. Selections from Cripple Poetics ✅ Petra Kuppers and Neil Marcus

A portrait of the two authors’ political perspectives as well as their developing
sensual relationship with one another, represented through poetry and internet
dialogue.

7. Selections from The Cry of the Gull Emanuelle Laborit

Autobiographical memoir of growing up Deaf in France.

8. Selections from Planet of the Blind ✅ Steve Kuusisto

Memoir by the poet/writer of being a teenage boy with limited eyesight and an
expansive imagination.