Disability is a feminist issue. Most women will be disabled at some time in their lives. Over 16 per cent of women in Canada have disabilities now. In addition, most women will spend part of their lives giving care to people with disabilities. We will explore disability issues by focussing on the thoughts and experiences of women with disabilities and of women who provide care to people with disabilities.

Topics covered in the course will include: Defining disability; how disability is socially constructed from difference; cultural attitudes towards the body, including the quest for perfection and control; the “Otherness” of people with disabilities and its consequences; violence against women with disabilities; the cognitive and social authority of medicine over our experiences of our bodies; how disability and gender affect education, training and employment; sexuality and friendship for women with disabilities; reproductive issues; mothers with disabilities; women’s experiences of caring for people with disabilities, including disabled children; dependency/independence/interdependence; and disability cultures and politics.

Required readings:


An additional package of readings will be available for purchase from the bookstore.

Course requirements:
All students will be required to write two short (500 words each) discussion papers on assigned readings, one paper proposal (500 words), one take-home mid-term exam (1200 words) on the lectures and readings, and one research/analysis papers (approximately 2500 words for undergraduates and 5000 for graduate students), and to attend class, present a discussion paper and participate in class discussions. Graduate students will meet together with the instructor for one additional hour per week. Distributions of the marks will be as follows:

Undergraduates: Discussion papers 20%, paper proposal 5%, mid-term 30%, paper 35%, participation 10%.
Graduates: Discussion papers 20%, paper proposal 5%, mid-term 20%, paper 45%, participation 10%.

Prerequisites for undergraduates: six credits in Women’s Studies, including WS 101 and/or 102.