Introduction to Disability Studies


Forschungskolloquium „Disability Studies“

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DAAD-Stipendiatin (2005-2006)
Disability Studies in the US and UK

“Founders”:
- Michael Oliver (UK): social scientist
- Irving K. Zola (US): medical sociologist

Following the Disability Rights Movement in each country, a new form of academic inquiry was established by and for people with disabilities.

Interdisciplinary in nature

Society for Disability Studies founded 1982

PhD Programs: Leeds (UK) and UIC (US)
### Studying Disability vs. Disability Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical/Individual Model</th>
<th>Social/Minority Group Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No difference between impairment/disability</td>
<td>Impairment (biological)</td>
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<td>Impairment as automatically negative</td>
<td>Disability (cultural)</td>
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<td>Disability rooted in the individual (pathology)</td>
<td>Impairment neither positive nor negative, but neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remedy: cure or rehabilitation</td>
<td>Disability rooted in society (attitudinal and physical barriers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability as pathology, unquestioned biomedical truth</td>
<td>Remedy: social change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disability as socially and historically constructed</td>
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Common Characteristics

- Disability is regarded not as pathology, but as a result of social, cultural, and historical factors.
- Challenges the view of disability as individual deficit, and aims to reduce the stigma associated with disability.
- Encourages participation, if not leadership, by disabled scholars and students.
Reformulating Research Questions/Problems

Literature Analysis:
- Disability as Metaphor vs. Disability as Informing Feature of Character (on par with race, gender, etc.)

Medicine:
- Search for a cure vs. Impairment-management
- Disability as problem vs. Impairment as a facet of an individual
- Setting Disability within its cultural and historical frameworks

History:
- Absence of disability as criteria vs. Recognizing impact disability has on historical analysis