





# Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 658

## Critical Disability Studies: The Making of Normal Bodies (Revision 3)

**Status:** Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

**Delivery mode:** [Grouped study](#) 

**Credits:** 3

**Area of study:** Arts

**Prerequisite:** None

**Precluded:** None

**Faculty:** [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

**Notes:** Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

## Overview

Critical Disability Studies: The Making of Normal Bodies examines the constructed processes by which what we think of as “normal” has been produced both historically and in the present, through both specific representations of disability and degeneracy, and institutional and non-institutional technologies of power.

What we think of as “normal”—in lay language, as well as in its statistical sense—has long been a justification for oppressive and ableist legislation, habits, and attitudes. This course takes up the methods of Foucauldian genealogy to interrogate the historical development of discourses of disability, degeneracy, and abnormality in order to shed light on contemporary relations of power.

The course enables students to engage in critical discussions about the links among normality, abnormality, disability, madness, and their articulations through sexuality and racialization. Students work both independently and in collaboration, with the final project of the course developing an OER (open educational resource) that communicates course concepts in an accessible way.

By working through the history of “normal” in relation to disability, sexuality, and racialization, students will be encouraged to

- think through disabled people’s production of subjugated knowledges.
- link Blackness, fatness, and discourses of degeneracy.
- challenge pathologizations of sexual deviance.
- connect legal, institutional, and formal framings of disability with everyday habits, attitudes, and lived experience.

This course provides opportunities to reflect on and build a conceptual vocabulary in critical disability studies. For example, at the beginning of the course, students will create a glossary of important terms that they will use throughout the course, and in their final assignment they will reflect on how those definitions have evolved as the course has progressed. Students will also take part in discussions and build projects with peers, communally reflecting on disability concepts and applying them to new situations.

## Objectives


After completing this course, students should be able to

- identify and explain foundational concepts in critical disability studies such as eugenics, normalization, scientific racism, and cripepistemology.
- historicize and critique culturally embedded understandings of normal and abnormal capacity, ability, and skills, especially in relation to embodied experiences, particularly racialization, gender, and sexuality.
- critically examine categories of disability through normative considerations such as justice and equity.
- historicize normality and abnormality in the context of projects of nation-building, colonization, and imperialism.
- question, challenge and respond to ideas in online discussions, clarifying concepts, organizing thoughts, and critically analyzing ideas with peers.
- articulate and co-create an open educational resource on critical disability studies for a general audience.
- reflect critically on their understandings of “normal” and “abnormal” bodies.

## Evaluation

Students should be prepared to devote the time necessary to complete the various activities in this course, which include reading, watching, and listening actively and critically; writing succinct, critical answers to study questions and discussion posts from other students; working on projects, including a group project, and giving feedback on other group projects; and researching and writing a reflective paper that is critical and integrative.

Students will be assessed on their participation in the online discussions (e-conferencing and peer feedback), a glossary assignment, a group open educational resource (OER) project, and a reflection paper on what they have learned in the course.

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 per cent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies [grading system](#) . Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.

Activity	Weight
Participation in Weekly Online Discussions and Feedback on Peers' Group Projects	25%
Glossary Assignment	10%
OER Project—Part A (Individual Work)	15%
OER Project—Part B (Group Work)	30%
Reflection Paper	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>





## Materials

McWhorter, Ladelle. *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A*

*Genealogy*. 2009. Indiana University Press.  (Print)

All other course materials, including readings, videos, and podcasts, and a detailed study guide, are available online.

## Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

*Opened in Revision 3, February 14, 2024*

*Updated September 12, 2024*

View **previous revision** 

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