



EDUC/PSYC 354 - Critical Disabilities Studies

Course Syllabus

2026 Summer Session 1

Instructors: Natascia Petringa, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: One

Class Meeting Days & Time: Mon and Wed 9:15-12:15

Office Hours: One hour before or after class. Please email the professor to schedule an appointment.

Course Type: Standard type

Course Fee: USD 80

Course Description

The course intends to give a multicultural view on differently-abled persons and how societies respond and handle the issue of critical disability. Focus is posed on the different forms of disability (acquired vs. inborn), how to empower a differently-abled person in order to reinforce resilience and how to assist people to reach as much independence as possible. Students will gain insight on how different countries respond to disabilities and which policies of integration are adopted.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Analyze* and critique different models of disability and explain how these models shape societal attitudes, policies, and personal experiences.
2. *Evaluate* the historical treatment of disabled individuals and the impact of key disability rights legislation.
3. *Examine* the systemic barriers to accessibility in education, community sports programs, and other areas of society and propose strategies for implementing inclusive practices.
4. *Reflect* on the diversity of disability experiences, including those related to invisible disabilities, chronic illnesses, and mental health, and articulate the importance of including disabled voices in all realms of critical disabilities.

Course Materials

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

10 % Attendance

10% Weekly Moodle Quizzes

5% Course Journal (2.5% x 2 submissions)

5% One-to-One Meeting

5% Photovoice

20% Infographic on a cognitive, intellectual or socio-emotional disability

5% Attendance on field trip visit to VIVA Sports

15% Group-activity

25% Final Exam

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero.

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A A-	93% - 100% 90% - 92%	Exceptional Excellent
B+ B B-	87% - 89% 83% - 86% 80% - 82%	Superior
C+ C C-	77% - 79% 73% - 76% 70% - 72%	Satisfactory
D+ D D-	67% - 69% 63% - 66% 60% - 62%	Low Pass
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Moodle Quizzes (10%)

Students will be assigned short quizzes throughout the semester, which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *content*, *technical*, and *methodological questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the week's teachings and readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

Course Journal (5%)

Students will keep a notebook at the start of the semester, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. In-class assignments (e.g., summaries of assigned readings, analyses of primary sources, mental maps, reflections, predictive exercises) will be regularly scheduled and graded two times throughout the course, i.e. early in the semester (Week 3), and towards the end of the course (Week 5). Each of these checks is worth 2.5% of your grade, for a total of 5%. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

One-to-One Meeting (5%)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help for you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 5% of your grade for coming to see me **once** BEFORE Week 5. Please email me at natasciaatumbra@gmail.com for an appointment. I am also available one hour before or after class.

Photovoice (5%)

Students will take a picture of their choice that best reflects an aspect of critical disability. They will then write a personal reflection on the photograph and discuss ways to create greater awareness and social justice (250-300 words, 12-point Garamond font).

Infographic on a Cognitive, Intellectual or Socio-Emotional Disability (20%)

Each student will make a one-page A4-size infographic on a disability of their choice. This can be a cognitive, intellectual or socio-emotional disability. Detailed requirements for the infographic will be available on Moodle.

Attendance on Field Trip to VIVA Sports 5%

All students are expected to attend a mandatory field trip to VIVA Sports.

Group-Activity (15%)

Depending on class size, students will work in small groups (2 or 3) to make either a game or poster to create greater awareness of cognitive, physical, intellectual or socio-emotional disabilities. An example will be provided to you by your professor.

Final Exam (25%)

Students will sit for a written exam of 60-90 minutes, consisting of a mixture of short answers, fill-in-the-blank, and case-study questions covering all of the course materials. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment except the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused "sick days" and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness. Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Participation in practicum sessions is imperative to the course. Failure to attend a practicum session will be regarded as an absence.

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to

the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times/dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices (for example, earbuds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions for anything other than note-taking, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

Laptop Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have a vision or other accommodation; 2) if you are using a tablet to take notes, one which is not connected to the internet; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools; or 4) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss a need.

Moodle

Please note that Moodle, not this syllabus, is the ultimate reference for due dates, assignment prompts, and course announcements. It is *the student's responsibility* to check the site regularly to be aware of announcements as well as to see and record all due dates for assignments.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Week 1
(May 18-22, 2026)

MONDAY MAY 18

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Introduction to critical disabilities

Introduction to the course and its main assessments

Goals and expectations of the course

What is VIVA Sport?

Introduction to VIVA Sport by Gabriele Bartolucci (founder of VIVA) at **9:30am**

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

A framework to study critical disabilities

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

World Health Organisation (2001) *The ICF and Overview* pp.1-10.

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/icd/icfoverview_finalforwho10sept.pdf

World Health Organization. *World Report on Disability 2011*. World Health Organization (2011): 3-10 and 261-263.

WEDNESDAY MAY 20

No morning class.

Field trip to VIVA Sports (in the afternoon). Time to be confirmed.

Visit to VIVA and meet Gabriele Bartolucci (founder of VIVA). Students will take a taxi both ways. This is included in your course fees. **Presence is mandatory.**

Week 2
(May 25-29, 2026)

MONDAY MAY 25

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Definitions of critical disabilities

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Ferguson, Philip M., and Emily Nusbaum. "Disability studies: What is it and what difference does it make?." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 37, no. 2 (2012): 70-80.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/154079691203700202>

World Health Organisation (2001) *The ICF and Overview* pp.1-10.

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/icd/icfoverview_finalforwho10sept.pdf

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Different types of disabilities: Inborn and acquired disabilities

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Bogart, Kathleen R. "The role of disability self-concept in adaptation to congenital or acquired disability." *Rehabilitation Psychology* 59, no. 1 (2014): 107-115.

World Health Organisation. (27 February 2023) Factsheet on Congenital Disorders.
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/birth-defects>

WEDNESDAY MAY 27

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Stereotypes, bias, and stigma

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Bogart, Kathleen R., Nicole M. Rosa, and Michael L. Slepian. "Born that way or became that way: Stigma toward congenital versus acquired disability." *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 22, no. 4 (2019): 594-612.

Henley, Ariel. "There is a Mathematical Equation That Proves I'm Ugly". In *Disability visibility: First-person stories from the twenty-first century*, edited by Wong, Alice, 39-46. (Scanned Book Chapter)

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Representation of disabilities in advertising and media

Reading:

Timke, Edward. "Disability and advertising." *Advertising & Society Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2019).
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/asr.2019.0024> (Website).

Assignments:

Weekly Moodle Quiz
Submission of Photovoice

Week 3 (June 1-5, 2026)

MONDAY JUNE 1

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Physical Disabilities: Sports for socialization and inclusion of children with disabilities

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Shields, N., Anneliese, J.S., Barr, M. "Perceived barriers and facilitators to physical activity for children with disability: A systematic review." *Br J Sports Med* 46 (2012): 989-997.

Specht, Jacqueline, Gillian King, Elizabeth Brown, and Carey Foris. "The importance of leisure in the lives of persons with congenital physical disabilities." *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 56, no. 4 (2002): 436-445.

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Physical disabilities and practitioners

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Magnanini, Angela, and Giulio Morelli. "Primary school pre-service teachers' attitudes on the value of inclusive motor activity and physical education lessons." *Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*, 6. no. 1 (2022): 1-12.

Scarpa, Stefano. "Exploring psychological well-being and bodily identities formation of youth sports adapted practitioners. Comparison of people with congenital and acquired disabilities." *Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*, 5, no. 2 (2021): 127-138.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 3

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Empathy and disabilities

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Mirete, Ana B., Ma Luisa Belmonte, Lucía Mirete, and Ma Paz García-Sanz. "Predictors of attitudes about people with intellectual disabilities: empathy for a change towards inclusion." *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities* 68, no. 5 (2022): 615-623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2020.1851122>

Moudatsou, Maria, Areti Stavropoulou, Anastas Philalithis, and Sofia Koukouli. "The role of empathy in health and social care professionals." *Healthcare*, vol. 8, no. 1: 26 (2020): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare8010026>

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Laptop session in class

Assignments:

Weekly Moodle Quiz

Hand in course journal. This is your first submission.

Week 4
(June 8-12, 2026)

MONDAY JUNE 8

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Intellectual (or cognitive) disabilities: Children and adults with Down Syndrome

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Cuskelly, Monica, Penny Hauser-Cram, and Marcia Van Riper. "Families of children with Down syndrome: What we know and what we need to know." (2008).

Menear, Kristi. "Parents' perceptions of health and physical activity needs of children with Down syndrome." *Down Syndrome Research and Practice* 12, no. 1 (2007): 60-68.

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Intellectual (or cognitive) disabilities and sports

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Bechara, Inbal, and Emilia Florina Grosu. "Physical activity and intellectual disabilities." *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* 18 (2016): 225-234.

Borland, Ross Lewis, N. Hu, B. Tonge, S. Einfeld, and K. M. Gray. "Participation in sport and physical activity in adults with intellectual disabilities." *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 64, no. 12 (2020): 908-922.

Assignments:

Weekly Moodle Quiz
Submission of infographic

WEDNESDAY JUNE 10

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Physical Disability and Well-Being in Daily Life

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Egilson, Snaefridur Thora, and Rannveig Traustadottir. "Participation of students with physical disabilities in the school environment." *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 63, no. 3 (2009): 264-272.

Gastaldi, Luca, Antonio Ghezzi, Riccardo Mangiaracina, Andrea Rangone, Marcelo N. Cortimiglia, Mateus Zanatta, and Fernando G. Amaral. "Mapping ICT access and disability in the workplace: An empirical study in Italy." *Work* 51, no. 2 (2015): 293-300.

Holt, Nicholas L., and Kacey C. Neely. "Positive youth development through sport: A review." *Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología del Ejercicio y el Deporte* 6, no. 2 (2011): 299-316.

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Being Differently-Able: Resilience

Please read **ONE** of these readings.

Readings:

Mannino, Jennifer Emilie. "Resilience and transitioning to adulthood among emerging adults with disabilities." *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* 30, no. 5 (2015): 131-145.

Runswick-Cole, Katherine, and Dan Goodley. "Resilience: A disability studies and community psychology approach." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 7, no. 2 (2013): 67-78.

Stuntzner, Susan, and Michael Hartley. "Resilience, coping, & disability: The development of a resilience intervention." *Vistas Online* (2014): 1-11.

Class dinner at Numero Zero (inclusive restaurant) at 7:30 pm on Wednesday June 10th.

Assignments:

Weekly Moodle Quiz

**Week 5
(June 15-19, 2026)**

MONDAY JUNE 15

Session 1: 9:15-10:45

Social or emotional disabilities: Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)

Reading:

Schneier, Franklin R. "Social anxiety disorder." *New England Journal of Medicine* 355, no. 10 (2006): 1029-1036.

Break

Session 2: 11:15-12:45

Social and emotional disorders: The positive impacts of sports

Reading:

Sancassiani, Federica, Sergio Machado, and Antonio Preti. "Physical activity, exercise and sport programs as effective therapeutic tools in psychosocial rehabilitation." *Clinical practice and epidemiology in mental health: CP & EMH* 14 (2018): 6-10. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1745017901814010006>.

Start **Group Activity** for our last class.

Assignment:

Weekly Moodle Quiz

Hand in course journal. This is your second submission.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 17

Final Exam (in class) for 60 minutes. Students can have extra time (if they wish to stay longer). Students will be provided with an **exam format** (NOT a review sheet) on Moodle.

Session 1: 9:15-10:15 Take **final exam** in class (60 minutes).

15 minute break.

Session 2: 10:30-12:45: **Group Activity** (mandatory activity).