

Title: Developing Disability Studies 19 (Fiat Lux) - Sexual and Reproductive Health Care for People with Disabilities

Inspired by my learning leader from DS172XP, a community member with cerebral palsy, for my capstone for the disability studies minor, I partnered with experts in the School of Nursing, Tarajan Center, and instructional design to create a course that brings part of the lived disabled experience into the classroom. The course centers on the lived experience of disabled people through an unfolding case study. The case study was adapted to follow the reproductive care continuum of contraception, pregnancy, and parenting. The course examines barriers to disability-competent reproductive health care: provider bias, inaccessible services, lack of supported decision-making, and the influence of sexism, ableism, and racism. The UCLA Tarjan Center will host a final presentation in which students will have an opportunity to discuss a specific barrier to disability-competent reproductive healthcare in depth. The presentation will emphasize lived experiences and systemic solutions.

My work focused on course development. Specifically, I created the adapted unfolding case study, which was developed into a video with closed and ASL captioning. I made weekly lesson plans and assignments, helped refine course readings, and helped identify guest speakers.

My capstone extends beyond theoretical discourse; it's about catalyzing tangible change in healthcare practices and policies. By shedding light on these often-neglected issues and equipping future healthcare professionals, policy leaders, and community advocates with the tools to address them, our course endeavors to make an impact on the field of Disability Studies. Through our partnership with the Tarjan Center, we aim to cultivate enduring connections between students and the disability community, fostering a culture of collaboration and solidarity in our shared aspiration for disability and reproductive justice.

Disability Studies has fundamentally reshaped my perspective on difference, illuminating how society constructs and perpetuates notions of disability. Rather than viewing disability as an inherent deficiency, Disability Studies elucidates how social, cultural, and structural factors shape the experiences of individuals with disabilities. Through this lens, I've come to recognize disability not as a personal deficit but as a product of societal barriers and injustices.

My experiences growing up with learning disabilities and having a brother on the autism spectrum fostered a limited understanding of disability, characterized by personal experiences with stigma. However, engaging with Disability Studies has challenged these preconceptions, inviting me to question the systemic inequities that marginalize individuals with disabilities. By deconstructing ableist narratives and exposing me to diverse voices and experiences of disabled individuals, Disability Studies has broadened my understanding of difference beyond traditional frameworks.

My capstone project on Sexual Health and Disability serves as a tangible manifestation of my aspirations to effectuate change and promote inclusivity within healthcare systems. Informed by the principles of Disability Studies, my project seeks to disrupt existing narratives surrounding disability and sexual health, foregrounding the rights and autonomy of individuals with disabilities. My work for my capstone has uniquely prepared me for the next step in my education: medical school.

As a physician, I intend to provide disability-competent care to the patients I treat directly and serve as a leader in health policy, ensuring the entire health system reduces barriers and supports the well-being of people with disabilities. My experience in disability studies has grounded my career with a focus on lived experience. It is the basis for my new research project on universal design and accessibility in the emergency department.