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Critical Disability Studies

Due: 5/7/16

Reflection on a Rewarding and Informative Semester

It was very rewarding to look back over the evolving syllabus and realize once again how much our class has accomplished in just a single semester. We have come so far since the day that Stephanie Petro came to (virtually) introduce some of the Center of Creative Works participants to us. We have also come a long way in the manner in which we interact with one another in class: I recognized a few people in our class at the beginning of the semester, but I didn’t know anyone particularly well. I also had never taken a class with Professor Lindgren, which I am regretting quite a lot now since I am graduating next week. Still, I am grateful that I got to grow and learn from so many different individuals, and this class will always hold a special place in both my heart and memory.

Even though I have been well-acquainted with disability throughout my upbringing (and now everyone in our class is well-acquainted with this upbringing as well as who Joel is), I had not studied much disability theory. Scholars such as Georgina Kleese made me think more deeply about the ways in which our society commonly uses certain phrases that marginalize individuals of different abilities. Kim Nielson provided me with a more thorough framework through which to consider the history of disability. And films such as Simi Linton’s *Invitation to Dance* opened my mind to unique, beautiful modes of expression. We read quite a bit of theory in my Junior Seminar class for the English major last year, and there were definitely articles that we read that I did not enjoy. However, I always looked forward to doing the disability theory readings for this class, partially, I think, because it invited me to think, question, and respond in a different way than I have done in the past for other classes while at Haverford.

I also enjoyed the opportunity to interact with and learn from both individuals with disabilities and people who have close relationships with people with disabilities. Rachel Simon’s talk at Bryn Mawr was informative, eloquently delivered, and unique in that some of the information was presented through pictures (which the audience later learned were drawn almost exclusively by individuals with disabilities). I’m really bummed that I couldn’t attend *A Fierce Kind of Love*, but perhaps there will be some way I can see it—or at least a recording of it—in the future. Having both Lindsey’s brother attend class as well as my brother and father was also a treat. I was most surprised by how calm Chris was when we were watching his short film: even though everyone else seemed to be freaking out about how the plot was turning, Chris acted if—and mentioned—that he hadn’t been nervous at all while making it.

Visiting the Center for Creative Works as well as interacting with the participants on campus was something that I looked forward to every week. This is the only class that I took at Haverford in which there was a regular off-campus component, and it provided a fun break in my routine. I feel very fortunate to have gotten to know people like Olu, Venetta, Julian, and Clyde, as well as other participants and the staff that work there. I still can’t believe that I helped make such a huge wooden box with legs. I smile every time I walk past it—and the exhibition in general—in Zubrow. I’m also very happy to have such an exquisite catalog, as well as my own lab notebook, to remember the exhibition and this course in general by.

Thanks to everyone who helped make this class so multidimensional and fascinating. Even though I did not participate a ton in class, I participated a lot more than I usually do in class due to the comfortable and accepting environment we created. I am looking forward to continuing to explore disability theory as well as other texts and sources that were mentioned or referenced during the semester. Taking this class has helped me expand the way in which I view the world, and I hope to take this knowledge and keep applying it after I graduate.