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UNIVERSITY OF  
**CALGARY**

FACULTY OF  
**MEDICINE**

*Community Rehabilitation  
and Disability Studies*

**CORE 425 (CALGARY)**

*Half (3-0)*

**Social Constructions of Disability  
& Health**

**Calendar Description**

An inquiry based course on Social Construction, Social Problem Theory and Narrative as foundations for interdisciplinary study, health promotions, health capacity, community practice and personal empowerment.

**Content/Objectives**

This course represents an interprofessional inquiry into socially constructed meanings and practices that impact the experiences of health, chronic illness, and disability. The interdisciplinary inquiry is based on the introduction and application of social construction theory and social problem theory. Students explore the elements of qualitative research through applying discourse analysis and narrative approach.

First, the course introduces the basics of discourse analysis. Health discourse is explored within the context of interdisciplinary approaches and practices. Second, social problem theory is introduced and utilized to explore the impact of power and resources in social policy, health capacity, and inclusive practices. Finally, narrative analysis is applied as a tool for exploring the processes of personal reconstruction of self in the context of chronic illness and disability.

**Outcomes/Competencies**

Through three inquiry-based assignments, the students will demonstrate the following competencies:

- Identify, analyze, and critique dominant and challenging health discourses in disabilities and chronic health conditions, through completing a review of relevant scholarly literature.
- Assess, formulate, and analyze social problems within the chosen health condition.
- Analyze personal narrative presented in an autobiography related to illness and disability.

**Assignments**

1. Health discourse analysis	30%
2. Social problem analysis and a ministerial briefing note	30%
3. Narrative analysis of an autobiography	30%
4. Class participation	10%

**Resources**

Required Textbooks:

1. Gergen, K.J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage Publications.
2. Loseke, D.R. (2003). *Thinking about social problems. An introduction to constructionist perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
3. Lougheed, V. (2008). *Be Still*. Calgary, Alberta: Palabras Press.

*Details for current course offerings are available at: [www.crd.s.org](http://www.crd.s.org)*

## Instructor and Course Information

<b>COURSE:</b> Core 425	<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b> Dr. Svetlana Shklarov
<b>TERM:</b> Fall 2011	<b>TELEPHONE:</b> Email only
<b>SECTION:</b> L01	<b>FAX:</b> 220-6494
<b>TIME/DATE:</b> Tuesday: 3:00pm – 5:50pm	<b>EMAIL:</b> <a href="mailto:Shklarov@ucalgary.ca">Shklarov@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>LOCATION:</b> TRB 101	<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b> By appointment

## Course Content

The course is based on inquiries in the form of labs, which students complete in groups, and in the form of independent research. In addition to required books, for self-directed research students are required to use a combination of resources available on the web, in the University Library, and literature databases (e.g., MEDLINE, PubMed, PsycLit).

### Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic and activities</i>	<i>Assignments due</i>
September 13	Overview of the course. Social construction: Introduction and history. Interdisciplinary study. Introduction to the inquiry area and assigning specific topics.	Complete pre-readings posted on Blackboard
September 20	<b>Computer Lab</b> and a workshop with a librarian. Instruction on access and use of literature search engines and literature databases.	
September 27	Social construction and health. Health discourses. Discourse analysis: definitions, method, and techniques.  Small group work on chosen discourses. Introduction and resources for the first assignment.	Read autobiography <i>Be Still</i>
October 4	Dominant and challenging discourses in disability and health. Deconstruction of health discourse.  <b>Lab # 1:</b> Group work on literature review and discourse analysis (in preparation for presentations for the next class).	Literature search completed
October 11	Transdisciplinary practice and research.  <b>Lab # 2:</b> Working in transdisciplinary teams. Each student will present their findings (based on Lab # 1) in their transdisciplinary team.	<b>Each student prepares a presentation for small group</b>
October 18	Social Problem theory: Introduction.  Small group work: exploring social problems relevant to the assigned disabling condition.	<b>Health discourse paper due</b> Read Loseke's book, Part I
October 25	Social problem theory and political discourse. Introduction and resources for the social problem analysis assignment.	Read Loseke's book, Part II
November 1	Social problem theory continued.  <b>Lab # 3:</b> 'Dry run' of ministerial briefing note.	Read Loseke's book, Part III
November 8	Introduction to narrative theory and narrative research in the context of chronic illness and disability.	<b>Social problem analysis and a briefing note due</b>
November 15	Narrative analysis: method and practices. Workshop on narrative analysis of autobiography.	Bring the autobiography and workbook to all classes

November 22	Narrative theory and narrative analysis. Workshop on narrative analysis continued.	
November 30	Narrative analysis continued: tools and techniques for exploring the processes of personal reconstruction of self in the context of chronic illness and disability.  <b>Lab # 3:</b> Students complete narrative analysis in class using an autobiography and the workbook.	
December 6	Summary, evaluation, and closure. Bridging themes discussed in class.  <b>Lab # 4:</b> In small groups students complete a reflective report on bridging course experiences with practice and future study.	<b>Narrative analysis paper (including the reflective report completed in Lab # 4) due December 9</b>

## Details of Assignments

Each of the following inquiries (assignments) enables the student to approach health and disability from a different perspective. Students are expected to reflect on these different perspectives in writing their assignments.

Students will work in groups during labs and share their resources, so each assignment will have a group component. However, the major part of each assignment will be completed individually. Detailed instructions and marking criteria for each assignment will be posted on Blackboard.

### 1. Health Discourse Analysis

Value: 30%

**DUE: October 18<sup>th</sup>**

You will explore the knowledge debates (scientific, biomedical, social, and other) that shape our understanding of disability and health. The topics and area of inquiry will be based on the experiences described in the autobiography book *Be Still*. The inquiry will include a survey and analysis of a number of academic and professional literature sources, including on-line sources, using the elements of discourse analysis method. This assignment is designed as a combination of group projects and individual self-directed study.

### 2. Social Problem Analysis and a Ministerial Briefing Note

Value: 30%

**DUE: November 8<sup>th</sup>**

This assignment is designed as a combination of group projects and individual self-directed study. Detailed instructions and questions will be posted on Blackboard. The assignment is a three-step process:

- Conduct a historical policy analysis of the service and resource needs analysis related to the condition. You are required to use Loseke's theoretical framework. Size: *maximum 1,000 words*.
- Using Loseke's framework, formulate and analyze the social problem. Size: *maximum 1,000 words*.
- Prepare a *briefing note* addressed to an appropriate Minister, based on your research in sections a) and b). Outline the current political situation as it relates to the social problem you have identified. An example of a Ministerial briefing note will be provided during class. Size: *maximum 900 words (2 pages, single-spaced)*.

### 3. Narrative Analysis of an Autobiography

Value: 30%

**DUE: December 9<sup>th</sup>**

**The Story Analysis Workbook** is included in the assignment section on Blackboard. The Workbook provides clear guidelines for this assignment. You will explore narrative theory and practice related to 'story', 'metaphor' and 'scripts,' which will enable you to understand techniques for working with people to achieve personal meaning of their changing condition. You will analyze the autobiography presented in the book *Be Still*. The assignment includes personal reflection (see the Workbook), which is a summary (5 – 7 pages) of what you have learned from working with the autobiography, and how you may use the techniques in practice. A portion of this assignment will be completed in a group, and another portion will be an individual project.

### 4. Class participation

Value: 10%

This is an inquiry-based course that requires intense group work and participation in the labs. Students will attend classes and participate in interactive discussions. Group collaboration will be essential for the completion of all assignments. A large part of course learning will be based on materials delivered in class. **Class participation will be assessed in the end of the course based on your regular attendance and participation in class discussions.**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- All written assignments must be double-spaced (with one exception – a briefing note will be single-spaced).
- APA format is required for all papers.
- Assignments must be provided to the instructor via e-mail only, in Microsoft Word format.
- Late assignments will be deducted 5% for each day after the assignment due date.

**Marking Scheme**

95 – 100	A+	80 – 84	B+	65 – 69	C+	50 – 54	D+
90 – 94	A	75 – 79	B	60 – 64	C	45 – 49	D
85 – 89	A-	70 – 74	B-	55 – 59	C-	Below 44	F

**IMPORTANT DATES FOR FALL 2011**

The last day to change or drop a course – **September 23, 2011**

The last day to pay balance of fees – **September 30, 2011**

The last day to withdraw – **December 9, 2011**

All assignments will be held at the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies office for only one (1) year after the last day of term.

**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/Others/DRC> MC 295, telephone 220-8237. Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. ***It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.***

**IMPORTANT:** Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. Consequently, plagiarism or cheating on any assignment is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence. Students should examine sections of the University Calendar that present a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with Plagiarism/Cheating/and Other Academic Misconduct.

**Purchasing a Textbook from the University of Calgary Bookstore:**

- Shop On-line [www.calgarybookstore.ca/](http://www.calgarybookstore.ca/) Click on --> Shop On-line; Click on --> Textbooks; Follow the directions.
- Order by Phone: (403) 220-5937; Toll Free: 1-877-220-5937
- In Person: Go to the University of Calgary Bookstore, MacEwan Student Centre, Room 155, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 1N4