



**The University of Western Ontario  
HISTORY 9832B**

**Interactive Exhibits, Disability and Design Justice  
Winter 2026**

**Instructor: Professor William J. Turkel**

Office Hours: **Online, by appointment**  
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**Course Description:**

History 9832B combines a studio course on interactive exhibit design with seminar discussions on disability history, disability studies, and design justice. The course is intended primarily for public historians but is open to other graduate students, space permitting, with permission of the instructor. Students learn how to create accessible interactive exhibits through a series of hands-on projects that teach the basics of interaction design, physical computing, and fabrication.

**Graduate Course Level Learning Outcomes/Objectives**

At the conclusion of the course, students should

- Be familiar with the fields of disability history and disability studies at an introductory level and be able to relate them to public history practice;
- Understand the concepts of design justice and how they apply to the creation of historical exhibits;
- Have worked through the process of designing, documenting, and presenting an interactive exhibit by themselves or in a small team.

**Course Timeline and Format**

This course alternates between seminar discussions and hands-on studio explorations. Both are face-to-face. The timeline is detailed below under Course Schedule and Readings.

**Enrollment Restrictions**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Public History, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

**Course Syllabus:**

No prior experience is necessary. Attendance and participation at all class sessions is expected.

## Course Materials:

### Required Books

- Hendren, Sara. *What Can a Body Do? How We Meet the Built World*. Riverhead Books, 2020.  
[https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045743919605163](https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045743919605163)
- Williamson, Bess. *Accessible America: A History of Disability and Design*. NYU, 2019.  
[https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045142606005163](https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045142606005163)

## Methods of Evaluation:

- Seminar reflections and discussions (5 \* 8% = 40%)
- Guided explorations (4 \* 8% = 32%)
- Final project, including proposal (28%)

See the Course Schedule and Readings for assignment dates.

## Course Schedule and Readings:

All readings are in the Resources section of OWL except chapters from the required books.

### *Jan 08. SEMINAR. Introduction (and discussion of Gen AI for seminar use)*

#### Readings

Everyone needs to do these readings for the seminar discussion.

- Hendren, *What Can a Body Do?* "Introduction: Who is the Built World Built For?"
- Williamson, *Accessible America*, "Introduction: Disability, Design and Rights in the Twentieth Century".

#### Reflection

Choose one of these readings and write a short reflection on it to submit to OWL by midnight the day before class—max one page.

- Costanza-Chock, Sasha. "Introduction: #TravelingWhileTrans, Design Justice, and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" from *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. MIT Press, 2020.
- Kudlick, Catherine J. "Why We Need Another 'Other'." *American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (2003): 763-793.

**Jan 15. STUDIO. Guided exploration 1 (storyboards; Makedo; MaKey MaKey) and discussion of Gen AI for studio use**

- Diane Borsato, *Artifacts in My Mouth* (2003)
  - <https://www.dianeborsato.net/artifacts-in-my-mouth>
  - <https://collections.mnbaq.org/fr/oeuvre/600031195>

**Jan 22. SEMINAR. Prosthesis and Disability Things**

Readings

- Hendren, *What Can a Body Do?* "Limb".
- Williamson, *Accessible America*, "Ch 1. Progress Through Prosthetics: Limbs, Cars, Houses, and the American Dream" and "Ch 2. Disability in the Century of the Gadget: Rehabilitation and Access in Postwar America".

Reflection

(As before, choose one and submit reflection to OWL the day before class.)

- Haiken, Elizabeth. "Modern Miracles: The Development of Cosmetic Prosthetics." In Ott, Serlin, and Mihm, eds. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives*. NYU, 2002.
- Ott, Katherine. "Disability Things: Material Culture and American Disability History, 1700-2010." In Burch & Rembis, eds. *Disability Histories*. University of Illinois, 2014.
- Srinivasan, Raman. "Technology Sits Cross-Legged: Developing the Jaipur Foot Prosthesis." In Ott, Serlin, and Mihm, eds. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives*. NYU, 2002.

**Jan 29. STUDIO. Guided exploration 2 (designing in 2D; laser cutting demo; packaging and popup books; hi-low technology)**

**Feb 05. SEMINAR. DIY, Differences and Disaffordances**

## Readings

- Hendren, *What Can a Body Do?* "Chair" and "Room".
- Williamson, *Accessible America*, "Ch 3. Electric Moms and Quad Drivers: Do-It-Yourself Access at Home in Postwar America" and "Ch 4. Berkeley, California: An Independent Style of Access".

## Reflection

- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory". In Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed. Routledge, 2017.
- Kon, Rebecca & Kate Zankowicz. "Building Anti-Ableist Museum Education Practices: A Reflection and Facilitation Toolkit" *Journal of Museum Education* 47, no. 2 (2022): 206-22.
- McRuer, Robert. "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence." In Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed. Routledge, 2017.
- Nario-Redmond, Michelle R., Dobrimir Gospodinov & Angela Cobb. "Crip for a Day: The Unintended Negative Consequences of Disability Simulations" *Rehabilitation Psychology* 62, no. 3 (2017):324-33.

### ***Feb 12. INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS. Proposal***

Instead of meeting as a group this week, you will be able to drop in to the studio to discuss your final project proposals. The proposal is **due** on OWL before midnight **Feb 27**.

Your final project proposal should be about 750-1500 words. If you have a vague idea, or one that may not be feasible, or one that is completely speculative, that is fine. If you know exactly what you want to do, that is fine, too. If you are not sure, just ask me.

### ***Feb 19. NO MEETING. Spring Reading Week***

### ***Feb 26. STUDIO. Guided exploration 3 (designing in 3D; 3D printing demo; mechanical design; VEX)***

### ***Mar 05. SEMINAR. Resistance is Fertile***

## Readings

- Hendren, *What Can a Body Do?* "Street".
- Williamson, *Accessible America*, "Ch 5. Kneeling to the Disabled: Access and Backlash" and "Ch 6. From Accessible to Universal: Design in the Late Twentieth Century".

#### Reflection

- Bell, Chris. "Is Disability Studies Actually White Disability Studies?" In Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed. Routledge, 2017.
- Hicks, Mar. "Hacking the Cis-tem" *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* (Jan-Mar 2019):20-33.
- Law, John. "What's Wrong with a One-World World?" *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2015): 126-139.
- Moser, Ingunn. "On Becoming Disabled and Articulating Alternatives: The Multiple Modes of Ordering Disability and Their Interferences." *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 6 (2005): 667-700.

#### **Mar 12. STUDIO. Guided exploration 4 (intro electronics; littleBits)**

#### **Mar 19. SEMINAR. Crippling Design and Futures**

#### Readings

- Hendren, *What Can a Body Do?* "Clock" and "Epilogue: Making Assistance Visible".
- Williamson, *Accessible America*, "Ch 7. Beyond Ramps: Crippling Design".

#### Reflection

- Bauman, H-Dirksen L. and Joseph J. Murray. "Deaf Studies in the 21st Century: 'Deaf-Gain' and the Future of Human Diversity." In Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed. Routledge, 2017.
- Hamraie, Aimi and Kelly Fritsch. "Crip Technoscience Manifesto." *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1-34.
- Kafer, Alison. "Introduction: Imagined Futures" and "Time for Disability Studies and a Future for Crips." In *Feminist Queer Crip*. Indiana University, 2013.
- Wu, Di. "Crippling the History of Computing" *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* (Jul-Sep 2021): 68-72.

***Mar 26. STUDIO. Work on final project***

***Apr 02. STUDIO. Work on final project***

***Apr 09. STUDIO. FINAL PROJECT DEMONSTRATIONS***

### **Additional Statements**

#### ***Health/Wellness Services:***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html)

#### ***Accessibility Options:***

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. Request for Accommodations/Medical Issues

Students are entitled to their privacy and consequently they do not need to disclose personal information to their course professors. In the event that students feel the need to discuss personal information, they should see the graduate chair. Unlike undergraduate students, graduate students cannot be referred to Social Science Academic Counselling to have their medical or non-medical circumstances evaluated and to receive a recommendation for accommodation. Those facilities are for undergraduates only, and there is no process beyond the department to secure recommendations for accommodation. Our process is that faculty should deal with routine requests for extensions. However, a student's request for

accommodation (on medical, non-medical, compassionate grounds) should go to the graduate chair, Prof. Francine McKenzie ([historygradchair@uwo.ca](mailto:historygradchair@uwo.ca)) who will consult and communicate with faculty. Additionally, faculty and students should communicate with the grad chair about any case in which work is not submitted before grades are due. In the event that the graduate chair is also the course professor, then a request for accommodation can be taken to the department chair.

### ***Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):***

I use Generative AI extensively in my own research and teaching and it is acceptable for you to use it in this course, too. We will discuss strategies for both seminar and studio sessions in class.

### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual Course Outlines similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> ).

NOTE: See Policies and Statements on the Graduate section of the History Department Website, [https://history.uwo.ca/graduate/program\\_information/graduate\\_policies\\_and\\_statements.html](https://history.uwo.ca/graduate/program_information/graduate_policies_and_statements.html). This includes additional information on academic support services for health and wellness and gender based sexual violence. You can also find information on other academic policies, including copyright, plagiarism, and accessibility.

### ***Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:***

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca)