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Critical Disability Studies

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### Reflection on Disability Studies Learning

The course Critical Disability Studies has taught me so much and given me so much to continue reflecting upon throughout my life. I think that taking this course a year after taking Portraits of Disability and Difference was greatly beneficial for my learning. I know that I sometimes have a hard time being able to remember certain concepts in the long-term when my brain is constantly learning and working in school. Revisiting similar material was great for resurfacing that knowledge as well as allowing me to think about the content in ways that I might not have been able to think of last year because of the various changes in my own life, changes in the world as well as just having the additional time to reflect. Though I was able to enter the course with some background in disability studies, I still feel much more aware and educated because of Critical Disability Studies and feel like there is so much more that I have yet to learn and do as well.

I will definitely take this knowledge with me in my long-term memory and I have also noticed myself applying disability studies perspectives more often to certain scenarios in my own life. I think it was Rafa who said she has been able to see and look for red flags in ways she never would have noticed before and I have been doing the same more and more often as the course progressed. This applies to detecting problems in my own language or perceptions as well, such as leaning into the medical model of disability at times without realizing it. This is

one way this course has challenged me and my preconceived notions in a really great and important way.

After concentrating my mid semester project on ableist language and narratives surrounding adventure culture in the outdoors, I have become more aware of how I have embodied certain parts of it without realizing it and will try to help others learn about it as well in my outdoor internship this summer. I also have been actively wondering how certain concepts in my other courses, such as environmental justice and sex work, relate to disability studies. I think that how often I think about aspects of Critical Disability Studies outside of just academic purposes, even without directly realizing it at times, really speaks to how much this course and all of the people involved in it have resonated with me and how much I will take with me into the future.

One theme that I have been thinking about recently is how basing our society around principles of disability studies could create a better world for all of us. Even though I am nondisabled, interdependence really resonated with me because I have always felt burdensome when asking for the help and support of others even though I often greatly benefit from it when I do, whether it is requesting help with homework or calling a friend when I am upset about something. However, I know that when I am asked to support someone in the same way I never hesitate and even appreciate being asked and they probably actually feel the same. I think that internalizing narratives about independence as inherently tied to strength can be very harmful, and were we to build a world around collective care and support, it would be a much better one. I remember watching Crip Camp in which all of the campers took care of one another with joy and thinking about what an amazing community they had built. This care relates to access intimacy and could move us past accessibility as checking requirements and towards a more

liberatory form. We have also discussed how access benefits everybody, taking forms such as subtitles, wide walkways, oval classroom arrangements, large print and so much more. Placing disability at the forefront of our thinking and decision making brings with it liberation for people with disabilities and improves well-being for all us.

Thank you all for making this class so amazing!