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Critical Disability Studies

**Self Reflection and Evaluation**

 Throughout my time at Haverford my class schedule has always been dominated by natural science courses. As a declared biology major on the pre-med tract, I’ve been limited in my ability to take humanities and social science courses. Coming into this class I had no idea what disability studies was, and how it is an interdisciplinary section of academia. I was also completely unaware that there was both a medical and social model to disability, and I’ve realized throughout the semester that most of what I thought I knew pertaining to disability was based off of the medical model. Under the medical model of disability, disabled people’s inability to do certain things is seen as a direct result of having some form of impairment and not as the result of features of our society, which can be changed. By examining work in disability studies across a wide range of humanistic disciplines, my old viewpoints were challenged and my eyes were opened to a whole new way of thinking.

 Although this course was very reading intensive, I found majority of the readings interesting and very thought provoking. Some of my favorites include *Good Kings, Bad Kings* by Susan Nussbaum, “Unspeakable Conversations” by Harriet McBryde Johnson, "Tomorrow's Children: What would genome editing really mean for future generations?" by Erika Check Hayden and “Designing Deaf Babies” by H-Dirksen L. Bauman. I was always excited to come to class and discuss the readings, eager to hear what others thought and what I might have missed from the readings. Although a good portion of the class consisted of natural science majors, we all brought a very different perspective to the readings, which I found to be very cool, and there was never a lack of conversation.

 From the moment I was first introduced to Peter Singer in Harriet McBryde Johnson’s article, “Unspeakable Conversations”, I couldn’t contain my outrage. I had a hard time understanding how Peter Singer had the audacity to justify the killing of disabled infants on the basis of “personhood”. Here is man who does not identify as disabled and has no connection to the disabled community, yet he thinks he is in a position to determine who does and doesn’t count as a person based on a small checklist of characteristics. The viewpoints of people like Peter Singer terrify me because they gain such popularity and support, and their ideas can actually manifest into reality. Having total freedom on the topics of our midterm and final reports, I went on to develop my thoughts on Peter Singer. One of the major themes of this class that also grabbed my attention was bioethics. Our conversations and readings on bioethics challenged what I’ve always known and thought of scientific development by bringing in the social model of disability. I’ve really seen growth in the way I both view and think about topics that take on perspectives of all sections of academia. As well, the partnership we had with CCW was such an amazing experience. Working with artists who have intellectual and developmental disabilities gave me exposure to a small section of the disability community.

Disability studies seek’s to change the conventional notions of disabled people in all areas of life, and I’ve left this class a better person because of that exact reason. Having courses such as Critical Disability Studies in a college curriculum should be mandatory because changing public attitudes toward disabilities is imperative. Thank you Kristin for introducing to me disability studies, and I will forever me grateful for you giving me the opportunity to meet some amazing people along the way.