

## New Program Proposal

### Minor in Disability Studies

#### Minor in Disability Studies

The undergraduate minor in Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary program requiring five courses (15 credit hours) that focus on people of all ages with disability. This minor is appropriate for degree-seeking students in all fields. As a field of study, Disability Studies encompasses issues of identity, including gender, age, race, class, etc. Course content includes knowledge and understanding of the subject of disability, independence of people with disability, and public policy that influences improved quality of life for disabled people. The minor includes two foundation courses in Disability Studies, elective courses, and a capstone experience where students will work directly with people with disabilities or participate in extended Disability Studies research. The wide variety of electives provides students the opportunity to customize their study; some electives touch directly on disability issues, while others offer related theoretical perspectives, allowing students to build connections across identities, social justice issues, and policies. Some courses required for the minor have prerequisites.

Core		
INTDSC 1011	Introduction to Disability Studies	3
INTDSC 1012	History of Disability	3
Elective Courses		6
Choose two of the following courses:		
Education		
SPEC ED 3318	Inclusive Classrooms	
SPEC ED 4342	Transition Issues and Planning	
Military and Veterans Studies		
MVS 2100	Veterans in America	
MVS 2130	Gender and the Military	

MVS 3300	Veterans Public Policy and Advocacy	
Gerontology		
GERON 4445	Aging, Chronic Illness & Disability	
Psychology		
PSYCH 2232	Psychology of Trauma	
PSYCH 2245	Abnormal Psychology	
PSYCH 3340	Clinical Problems of Childhood	
PSYCH 4250	Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination	
Sociology		
SOC 1010	Introduction to Sociology	
SOC 2160	Social Psychology	
SOC 2338	Health & Society	
SOC 4360	Sociology of Minority Groups	
Communication		
COMM 3520	Communication Barriers I	
COMM 3521	Communication Barriers II	
COMM 3353	Communication and Advocacy	
Gender Studies		
GS 2102	Introduction To Gender Studies	
GS 2380	Politics of Gender in the United States <sup>1</sup>	
GS 3033	Sexuality And Gender Theory	
GS 3700	Diversity And Social Justice <sup>1</sup>	
GS 4930	Studies In Gender And Literature	

<b>Capstone</b>		<b>3</b>
Choose one of the following:		
MVS 4200	Independent Study in Military and Veterans Issues	
SOC 4350	Special Study	
PSYCH 3390	Directed Studies	
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>15</b>

<sup>1</sup> Prerequisites exist for the course.

Sign-offs from other departments affected by this proposal

Department	Contact Person	Phone #	Objections
S006240	Jim Craig		No
S007050	Michael Griffin		No
S003200	Alice Hall		No
S007250	Rocky Keel		No
S004000	Frank Grady		No
S007400	Aprll Regester		No

## Rationale

Disability Studies (DS) is an interdisciplinary field established about thirty years ago, and it has grown rapidly ever since. A feature that sets DS apart from mainstream approaches to disability is that it advocates a shift from a medical model to a social model. In other words, DS understands disability as more than a “problem” to be “cured.” Instead, disability is a social issue, and the problem is not disability itself, but rather the lack of support, assistive technology, and accessibility. In short, DS is both an academic and activist-oriented field, and scholar-activists in DS aim to remove barriers rather than “fix” disability. It is critical that students who will encounter disabled persons in their career understand disability from a social model perspective. No longer are typical service programs, nursing homes and segregated living acceptable to people with disabilities of any age. The advances of the Disability Rights/Independent Living Movements in the United States have brought about a sea change of opportunities that emancipate people with disabilities and empower them to integrate fully into the communities of their choice to live with dignity, independence and employment options. Seniors are healthier and looking to age in place, even as naturally occurring disability is imminent. Accessible design, public policy change, improved assistive technology, healthcare, transportation options, infrastructure changes and more combine to empower disabled people to live meaningful lives and become engaged citizens. Students must understand DS scholarship and theory (like the social model), disability history, disability rights laws, how to effectively advocate for public policy change, and how to provide services and options that support an individual’s independence and choice. The Minor in Disability Studies is appropriate for many different career tracks where knowledge of the subject of disability, independence of people with disability, and public policy that influences improved quality of life for disabled people is valued. The Minor provides students with both foundational coursework in Disability Studies and a capstone experience where they may work directly with people with disabilities or participate in extended DS research. In addition to the Minor in DS offering wide applicability for various majors and careers, it is also important to note that a Minor in DS makes the campus more welcoming for disabled students. Indeed, Disability Studies is a field that first and foremost privileges the voices and experiences of disabled people, and we anticipate this minor would interest some students that identify as disabled. The ethics of Disability Studies makes this minor an important step toward a more inclusive campus. According to the U.S Department of Education, 11% of undergraduates identify as disabled—these disabilities are both visible and invisible—and this number increases each year. Moreover, 11% is a low estimate, as many disabled students on campuses opt not to report or register with Disability Access Services. Certain groups have a much higher rate of disability; about 21% of veterans, for instance, report having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). As UMSL continues to recruit and

retain a diverse student body, this minor demonstrates commitment to fuller inclusion of disabled students, a group too often marginalized or ignored at universities, despite their increasing presence in classrooms.