



Department of
Special Education & Rehabilitation
2865 Old Main Hill
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**USU-REH 6120 Syllabus
Psychosocial Aspects of Disability (3 credits)
Summer Semester 2026**

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Semester/Year	Summer 2026
Course Prefix & Name	REH 6120 Psychosocial Aspects of Disability
Course Meeting Days/Times	Asynchronous
Credit Hours	3.0

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to educate and personally involve students in the social issues and environmental dimensions of disability by addressing psychological, sociological, and cultural perspectives on coping and adjustment to disability across the lifespan. One of the goals of this course is to increase the student's awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of the individual, social, cultural, political and legal aspects of disability in our society. The class will provide the student with a variety of opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding of disability and explore their own attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities. In addition, students will learn strategies to change societal attitudes and be encouraged to reflect upon their roles as counselors and change agents with an enhanced understanding of the social and environmental impact of rehabilitation.

READINGS

Extensive readings will consist of book chapters from the required and optional texts and supplemental empirical articles (2 to 3 posted weekly in Canvas). Supplemental readings can be downloaded from the course website. Students must complete all readings. Many readings are

technical and somewhat difficult. Students should expect to study the readings as necessary to understand the material. If you are having trouble with CANVAS, contact CANVAS Support at (877) 399 1958.

Required Textbooks:

- Smart, J. (2025). *Disability, society, and the individual: An introduction to disability*. O-ED, An International Publisher.

NOTE: NO OTHER EDITION WILL BE PERMITTED.

Additional References:

- Provided on CANVAS.

STUDENT OUTCOMES & COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through formal lectures, assigned readings, class activities and discussion, the student will:

- Develop an awareness of one's personal values, attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities.
- Develop an understanding of the different models of disability, with a significant emphasis on the biopsychosocial model.
- Learn different models of coping and psychosocial adaptation to disability with a special emphasis on the process of adaptation.
- Learn how attitudes towards disability develop and are maintained, and to delineate strategies through which these attitudes might be modified in a positive direction.
- Examine societal attitudes towards people with disabilities, with a special emphasis on how attitudinal and environmental barriers restrict community integration and participation in society.
- Develop an understanding of the independent living movement and services available through independent living centers for people with disabilities.
- Develop an awareness of the economic impact of disability and the Social Security Administration's program's available for those with significant disabilities.
- Learn the interaction between an individual with disabilities and family and the impact of family on the rehabilitation process and the larger social context within which they live.
- Learn how one's cultural and individual diversity characteristics interact and impact life experiences of persons with disabilities.
- Explore the variety of community resources available to assist persons with disabilities achieve their maximum potential and to participate fully in all aspects of society.
- Gain knowledge about technology, assistive devices and accommodation services.
- Understand the sociological dynamics related to self-identity, self-advocacy, competency, adjustment, and attitude formation of both individuals with disabilities and professional service providers.
- Learn how to integrate psychosocial, economic and environmental factors into practice.

CACREP STANDARDS

Specific CACREP standards addressed in this course from the *eight common core areas* include:

3.A. Foundational Counseling Curriculum – Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

- 4. The role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of and with individuals receiving counseling services to address systemic, institutional, architectural, attitudinal, disability, and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success
- 8. Legislation, regulatory processes, and government/public policy relevant to and impact on service delivery of professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas

3.B. Social & Cultural Diversity

- 5. The effects of stereotypes, overt and covert discrimination, racism, power, oppression, privilege, marginalization, microaggressions, and violence on counselors and clients
- 6. The effects of various socio-cultural influences, including public policies, social movements, and cultural values, on mental and physical health and wellness
- 7. Disproportional effects of poverty, income disparities, and health disparities toward people with marginalized identities
- 8. Principles of independence, inclusion, choice and self-empowerment, and access to services within and outside the counseling relationship
- 9. Strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination
- 10. Guidelines developed by professional counseling organizations related to social justice, advocacy, and working with individuals with diverse cultural identities
- 11. The role of religion and spirituality in clients' and counselors' psychological functioning

3.C. Lifespan Development

- 6. Structures for affective relationships, bonds, couples, marriages, and families
- 11. systemic, cultural, and environmental factors that affect lifespan development, functioning, behavior, resilience, and overall wellness

3.D. Career Development

- 8. strategies for advocating for employment support for individuals facing barriers in the workplace

Specific CACREP standards from the *Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling* specialty include:

5.D. Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling

- 2. Environmental, attitudinal, and individual barriers for people with disabilities
- 4. Rehabilitation service delivery systems, including housing, independent living, case management, public benefits programs, educational programs, and public/proprietary vocational rehabilitation programs
- 7. Role of family, social networks, and community in the provision of services for and treatment of people with disabilities
- 10. Strategies to advocate for people with disabilities related to accessibility, accommodations, and disability law adherence

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Learning Environment

Proper decorum is to be observed in the classroom, as outlined in the student code (<http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=581>). This is particularly important given the large volume of material necessary to be covered in this class. Students are expected to engage in reasonable and substantial preparation for their coursework, to follow course and class guidelines as set forth in syllabi and as enunciated by their instructors, and to complete all academic exercises with integrity. All interactions with faculty members, staff members, and other students shall be conducted with courtesy, civility, decency, and a concern for personal dignity.

Classroom Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program." If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). In cooperation with the DRC, course material may be provided in alternative formats – large print, audio, diskette, or Braille upon request. The DRC is located in the University Inn, room 104, or call (435) 727-2444 for assistance. Their website can be found at: <https://www.usu.edu/drc/>

Recognizing the demands of graduate school can be very intense, there are supports in place for those who are experiencing mental health needs. Should you feel this is something you would like to explore, Justin Barker (justin.barker@usu.edu) is the single point of contact for all distance education students. He works in the Utah State University CAPS... He can provide referrals for providers throughout the state of Utah and will also work with you in the event you are from another state to find an appropriate local provider of mental health services.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined by the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as any "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." If you feel you are a victim of sexual harassment, you may talk to or file a complaint with the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Office located in Old Main, Room 161, or call the AA/EEO Office at 797-1266.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

You are expected to do your own work in this course. All University policies regarding academic honesty as defined in the *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University* will be enforced. To view the entire *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University*, visit the following website: <http://www.usu.edu/student-services/student-code/>

Plagiarism includes knowingly "representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment,

probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling. Students guilty of plagiarism or cheating will receive a failing grade on the appropriate assignment, may receive a failing grade in the course, and may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the University.

Appropriate Use of AI

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for all assignments, but only according to specific guidelines. Students may use AI for the following purposes:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Outlining concepts
- Textual comparison
- Textual analysis
- Generating accompanying graphs and images

The final assignment submission must be significantly edited by the student and demonstrate the student's own ideas, interpretation, effort, understanding, and input. AI should be cited as a reference when used for research and images or other artistic representations. Submissions that appear to be entirely or more than 20% generated by AI may be subject to reduced grades and/or a requirement to resubmit.

Students are also expected to include a statement with each assignment submission stating 1) which AI tool(s) they used, 2) for what purposes, and 3) how they used and modified the AI's output with their own contributions.

Grievance Process (Student Code)

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated [in matters other than (i) discipline or (ii) admission, residency, employment, traffic, and parking - which are addressed by procedures separate and independent from the Student Code] may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the Student Code: Article VII Section 1-Grievances (Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State: <https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/> visit the site to review further).

Assignments:

- Course Reflections: 20 pts (10 pre and 10 post)
- History of Disability: 25 pts
- Implicit Association Test: 25 pts
- Models of Disability: 25 pts
- Book Review: 50 pts
- Movie Analysis: 25 pts
- Module Quizzes (8 at 10 pts each): 80 pts
- Final Project: 150 pts total (broken into sections)

Total Points: 400 points

Grade Range

A: 94-100% C+: 77-79%

A-:	90-93%	C:	74-76%
B+:	87-89%	C-:	70-73%
B:	84-86%	D:	60-69%
B-:	80-83%	F:	Below 59%

- **Pre/Post Course Reflections (10 pts each)**
 - Students will reflect on gaps in their knowledge about disability (pre-course) and what they have learned over the course of the semester (post-course).
 - Details will be listed on Canvas.
- **Module Quizzes (8 quizzes at 10 pts each): 80 pts**
 - Quizzes are on the content for the week they are assigned and are designed to mirror questions you will find on a licensure or certification exam.
 - Quizzes are open book, open note, without a time limit, but you will only be allowed to take them once.
- **History of Disability: Parallels in time: 25 pts**
 - You will go to the History of Disability Website (also in CANVAS): <http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels/>.
 - Review the modules.
 - Then, prepare a presentation (PowerPoint) **OR** an infographic you would use to teach a community organization about the history of disability.
 - If you do a presentation, you must record yourself giving the presentation (use PowerPoint, Canva, or a screen recorder) and submit the recording. (No more than 10 minutes.)
 - If you decide to do an infographic, please submit the infographic and a brief (no more than 2 pages, single spaced, no cover page) description of how you would use it to teach a community group about the history of disability.
- **Models of Disability: 25 pts**
 - This assignment gives you an opportunity to synthesize what you have learned so far about the models of disability. You will be given 3 brief case studies and asked to create a chart where you identify the “problem” through the lens of 5 different models of disability. Details can be found in Canvas.
- **Implicit Association Test (IAT) – Disability: 25 pts**
 - You will read about and take the IAT on Disability (works best with a computer with a keyboard)
 - Go to this website and read the Overview <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>, then About the IAT <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html>, then Ethical Considerations <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/ethics.html>.
 - Next go to this website and read the preliminary information before clicking I wish to proceed: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
 - Next, click the Disability IAT link, and then Continue; Complete the Questionnaire and the IAT.

- Read the Pruett & Chan (2006) article posted in Canvas; then read this article: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/07-08/psychometric.aspx>
 - Write a 3 to 4-page response paper (double-spaced, 12-pt, Times New Roman font, title page abstract are NOT necessary), that includes:
 - A record of your results
 - What you learned from this activity, and
 - Information integrated from the textbook/class regarding the topic.
- **Book Review: 50 pts**
 - You will choose a first-person account of life with a disability and read that account. A list of approved books are in the Canvas module.
 - You will write a 3-5 page paper connecting the book to concepts you have learned in class. Reference page is required. You will use the Deep Dives feature in Packback to turn in your paper.
- **Movie Analysis: 25 pts**
 - Students will submit a written analysis of the psychosocial aspects of one film (approved titles provided) based on disability issues.
 - Students should view and analyze the film based on these three broad categories:
 - depiction of the main character(s) experiences and reactions to disability;
 - discuss the portrayal of attitudes, as manifested by family members, professionals, and society at large toward the main character(s) using support from our texts, other course readings, or other resources to support your assertions; and
 - discuss your reaction to the issues confronting the character and discuss specific areas you feel would be necessary to address as a counselor.
- **Disability Advocacy Project: 150 points**
 - As counselors, we are responsible to our clients and their environments. This project is designed to get you thinking about advocacy not as “another thing to do” but as problem-solving in your immediate sphere. At the end of the project, I hope you will feel more confident going to key decision-makers to suggest solutions to problems you encounter. The project itself is divided into four parts:
 - Topic Selection (10 points)
 - Problem Analysis (20 points)
 - Solution Plan (20 points)
 - Final Product (100 points)
 - A word to the wise: The more tightly you define the problem (e.g. lack of training among Logan City Police on recognizing the signs of autism and how to interact with autistic citizens) the easier it will be to solve.
 - Your final product should consist of the following:
 - A 5-7 page **academic paper** AND
 - A **recorded presentation** where you talk about the problem and potential solution.

Late Work Policy

Work will be accepted 24 hours after the posted due date without a late work penalty. No work will be accepted after the 24-hour period has elapsed.

Course Calendar

Please Note: This schedule is an estimate and I reserve the right to adjust the schedule to meet the learning needs of the class. Also, additional readings may be assigned as the class progresses. If that is the case, you will be given adequate warning, and the readings will be posted in CANVAS.

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1	Defining Disability	Smart Chapters 1 & 2	Module 1 Quiz Pre-Course Reflection
Week 2	Onset & Diagnosis	Smart Chapters 4 & 11	Module 2 Quiz Book Review Title
Week 3	Models of Disability	Smart Chapter 3	Module 3 Quiz Models of Disability Case Studies
Week 4	History of Disability I	Canvas Readings	Module 4 Quiz
Week 5	History of Disability II	Smart Chapter 9 Canvas Readings	History of Disability: Parallels in Time
Week 6	Stigma, Prejudice, & Discrimination	Smart Chapter 5 & 7	Implicit Association Test & Reflection
Week 7	Ableism	Smart Chapters 6 & 8	Book Review
Week 8	Disability & The Media	Canvas Readings	Movie Analysis
Week 9	Advocacy	Canvas Readings	Module 9 Quiz Disability Advocacy Project - Topic Selection
Week 10	Individual Response to Disability	Smart Chapters 10 & 12	Module 10 Quiz Disability Advocacy Project - Problem Analysis
Week 11	Theories of Adjustment & Adaptation	Smart Chapter 13	Module 11 Quiz
Week 12	Relationships, Sexuality, and Parenting with a Disability	Canvas Readings	Module 12 Quiz Disability Advocacy Project – Plan
Week 13	Aging & Caregiving for PWDs	Canvas Readings	Post-Course Reflection
DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROJECT DUE			

Disclaimer

Adjustments in syllabi are often necessary to best achieve the purpose and objectives of the course. I reserve the right to change readings, assignments, and the relative importance of the assignments for the final grade. If changes are necessary, students will be given reasonable advanced notice and rationale for changes.