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Class meets: TTh 11:30-1:18  
Office hours [insert here]

## Course description and objectives.

### Our course topic.

Public discourse on autism has reached critical mass. It's hard to open a newspaper, change a TV channel, or browse a Facebook profile without catching *something* about autism—the epidemic, the puzzles, the children, the charities, the discrimination. The CDC currently touts a 1 in 110 autism incidence rate; former Playboy bunnies claim that our government is poisoning children

with heavy metals and dairy products; popular TV shows feature unemotional autistic characters with savant-like super powers; and college programs are molding the most autism-centric cohort of disability service professionals our country has seen to date. If we're to believe anything we encounter in the media or popular literature, we can certainly believe that autism is everywhere and has the potential to touch anyone at any time.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Mark Haddon, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*
- Readings from Carmen (print and bring to class)
- An external hard drive or large flash drive (16 GB or more)
- 5 blank DVDs

One of the following:

- Ralph Savarese, *Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption*
- Dawn Prince-Hughes, *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism*
- Rupert Isaacson, *The Horse Boy: A Father's Quest to Heal His Son*

With this supposed increase in autism has come an increase in texts about autism (across media, across genre), much of it volatile and emotionally charged. Our main objective in this class, then, is to consider the rhetorical import of these texts, to develop an understanding of autism as a complex and crucial part of the human experience, to examine the ways in which able-bodiedness (or neurotypicality) has become an invisible default. We'll work together in exploring how the authors of these various texts aim to persuade an audience that their view is *the* most emotionally, ethically, or logically sound view. To that end, we'll also investigate the many important issues—legal, social, cultural, medical, political—currently at stake in the autism world. Throughout the term, we'll continually engage popular, literary, and scholarly representations of autism in print, film, and the blogosphere in light of the following questions: What does it mean to be an autistic person? What does it mean to be an autism parent, professional, or advocate? What does it mean to author autism?

## Assignments.

### **Rhetorical analysis (3-4pages) .....20%**

A paper that analyzes the rhetorical choices of *Autism: The Musical*. In this assignment, you'll consider the ways in which this documentary imparts a message to its audience(s). You'll receive further guidelines during Week 2.

### **Autism blog carnival (3-4 pages + visual or aural map) .....25%**

Though we won't be blogging in this class, we will spend some time reading and reviewing and engaging autism-related blogs. A blog carnival involves writing short summaries on several blog entries, plus a summative analysis, all pertaining to a particular theme—and we'll be doing just that. For this assignment, you will need to choose a theme related to autism—perhaps neurodiversity, or media, or vaccines, or education, or parenting, or—the potential themes and topics are endless, really. Once you've chosen a theme, you'll need to find 10 to 12 blog entries that somehow relate. (These blog entries can be as long or as short as you desire. And I'll also direct you to some really good resources for finding disability blogs, so no worries there.)

Your task will be to summarize each entry very briefly and then show us how it relates to your theme. We'll spend nearly two class periods, in groups, discussing your findings as well as blog-related issues. You'll hand in your final blog carnival write-up via Carmen, and you'll also include one more piece: either a visual (e.g., a diagram, a photo) or aural (e.g., a brief audio description, a song) map that represents what you've learned about this topic, as well as a brief description/transcription of your visual or aural representation. We'll discuss this in more detail as the time approaches. You'll receive further guidelines during Week 4.

### **Carmen posts (5 posts) .....15%**

Throughout the quarter, I will pose a question or two in the "discussion" section of our Carmen site and ask you to post your responses prior to class. You'll find the due dates and topics/readings below on the schedule. Additionally, I'll also expect you to look over one another's posts as part of your preparation for class. These posts will enliven and supplement our time together and thus be an important part of making this class matter.

**A note about technology**

You do not need previous knowledge or experience with video editing technologies in order to complete class projects; you will receive necessary instruction and practice during the course of the quarter. Please do note, however, that we will only use Windows Movie Maker in this course. Though you're certainly free to explore and use alternative video editing programs, I will not be able to assist you in using other programs—the responsibility for learning and troubleshooting will fall on you.

**Public Service Announcement (3 components)..... 30%**

- 1. Proposal (2 pages) (10%)
- 2. Video PSA (60-90 seconds) (10%)
- 3. Presentation/installation (10%)

This project offers an opportunity to translate your growing understanding of autism/autistic discourses from criticism into practice. You will propose, compose, analyze, and present a PSA of your own creation and then share your project with the class. This will be your opportunity to author autism, as it were, in your own way.

There are several important components to this project. First, on Day 10, we'll have several visitors from the autism/autistic community in our class. In order to keep the discussion active and on-point, you will be responsible for asking our guests questions. Moreover, this discussion will be videotaped and you will have access to the video materials for use in your PSA project, should you choose to use it. Additionally, your two final Carmen posts will be tied to this project: post #4 will ask you to gather and analyze 5 sources relating to your topic, sources that you can eventually put to use in your PSA; post #5 will serve as an analytical reflection of your project. You'll receive further guidelines during Week 6.

**Participation..... 10%**

Good participation includes coming to class on time, active listening, completing in-class activities, being prepared to contribute your views on the assigned reading, showing a positive attitude, collaborating appropriately, and showing respect to your classmates and to me.

**Course policies.**

**Final versions of assignments must be turned in on time.** Late projects are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each day late. Missing class or encountering technological misfortunes *are not* acceptable excuses for failing to meet a deadline.

**Academic misconduct.** Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own.

**Attendance & tardiness.** Attendance is essential to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. Therefore, each unexcused absence after two will result in the lowering of your final grade by a third of a grade. Excused absences, such as those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade. It is program policy that 5 unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.

Whether you are excused or not, if you miss a class, you are expected to make up the work. This means, if you miss on a day when a film is shown, you must make arrangements to view it on your own time. Additionally, I will count you as absent if you are more than 15 minutes late to class, sleeping, texting, emailing, and most especially, if you come to class unprepared to discuss the day's assigned readings. I reserve the right to hold pop quizzes to spot check for preparedness.

**Class cancellation policy.** In the unlikely event of an emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

**Changes to the schedule.** At any point throughout the quarter, I reserve the right to make changes to our daily schedule. Any such rearranging most typically happens when we get behind as a class.

## Resources.

**The Ombudsman of the Writing Programs,** Matthew M. Cariello, mediates conflicts between instructors and students in English 110 and 367. His Winter 2010 walk-in office hours in Denney Hall 412 are Tuesday and Thursday 11.30-1.00 and Wednesday 1-3. Other times are available by appointment: please email [cariello.1@osu.edu](mailto:cariello.1@osu.edu). All conversations with the Ombudsman are confidential.

The **OSU Writing Center** is available to provide free, professional writing tutoring and consultation during any stage of the writing process:

- ◆ Face-to-face tutorials by appointment at their main location in 475 Mendenhall Lab
- ◆ Online tutorials via the chat function on Carmen

- ◆ Walk-in tutorials at our satellite location at the Science and Engineering Library
- ◆ Online appointment scheduling, available 24/7

The Writing Center provides an incredibly valuable service for all writers (from undergrads to faculty)—I strongly recommend you take advantage of it! You may set up an appointment by calling 688-4291 or online at <http://cstw.osu.edu>.

The **Office for Disability Services**, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. If you need any particular accommodations in order to make the class more accessible, please let me know right away, either after class or during office hours. Contact the ODS at 292-3307 or <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

The **Digital Media Project** (DMP) is the division of the English department that manages, troubleshoots, and supports our classroom and equipment. You will be using the DMP's resources extensively throughout the quarter. The DMP general office is located in Denney 324, and offers equipment borrowing and program support from friendly, expert staff. The DMP Mac lab is located in Denney 343, and is available for use during designated lab hours (see "DMP Studio Hours" at <http://dmp.osu.edu>).

**OIT Classroom Services**, located in Central Classrooms 25 (the basement), will also check out media equipment to students. You will need the "Student Equipment Loan Permission Form," the last page of this syllabus, to access these resources. Check out <http://oit.osu.edu> for more info.

The **Digital Union**, located in the Science and Engineering Library (SEL 370), is a place for faculty, students, and staff to explore emerging technology. The Digital Union has technology, space to work, and a knowledgeable staff to guide users to thoughtful solutions and provide a supportive environment for low risk trial and error with technology. Visit <http://digitalunion.osu.edu> to check out their hours and resources.



## SCHEDULE

	Topics/Activities	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Week 1</b>			
Day 1	Introductions Course overview	DSM-IV entries	
Day 2	What is autism? <i>Begin Autism: The Musical</i>	<a href="#">Chew &amp; Raymaker, "10 Autism Controversies"</a> Barnbaum, "A Philosophical Introduction to Autism" <a href="#">View Autism Reality (10-minute video documentary)</a>	Carmen post #1 due
<b>Week 2</b>			
Day 3	Finish <i>Autism: The Musical</i> What is/are disability studies? Introduce rhetorical analysis assignment	Linton, "Reassigning Meaning" <a href="#">Smith, "The Right to Autistic Existence"</a>	
Day 4	Autism controversies Cure & anti-cure movements	Carley, "GRASP and the Word 'Cure'" Singer, "Cure Is Not a Four-Letter Word" <a href="#">ABFH, "Articles of Tasty Prey"</a>	Carmen post #2 due
<b>Week 3</b>			
Day 5	Autism controversies Vaccines & diet	<a href="#">Wallace, "An Epidemic of Fear"</a> Selections from McCarthy's <i>Mother Warriors</i>	Draft of rhetorical analysis paper due

Day 6	Rhetoric & representation	Garland-Thomson, "The Politics of Staring" <a href="#">Montgomery, "Defining Autistic Lives"</a>	
<b>Week 4</b>			
Day 7	Autism & representation	Osteen, Introduction (from <i>Autism and Representation</i> )	
Day 8	Neurodiversity Introduce blog carnival assignment	<a href="#">Stanton, "What Is Neurodiversity?"</a> <a href="#">Armstrong, "Special Education and the Concept of Neurodiversity"</a>	<b>Rhetorical analysis paper due to Carmen dropbox</b>
<b>Week 5</b>			
Day 9	Gender	Bumiller, "Quirky Citizens" Baron-Cohen, "Essential Difference: The Male and Female Brain" <a href="#">Cat in a Dog's World, "Diagnostic Criteria, Stereotypes, and Invisibility"</a>	
Day 10	Advocacy & self-advocacy <b>Panel discussion</b> (tentative)	<a href="#">Listen to episode six of PrismVox</a>	Carmen post #3
<b>Week 6</b>			
Day 11	The carnival begins!	Selections from the Autism Hub (or other autism-related blogs)	First 5 entries of blog carnival due
Day 12	The carnival continues Introduce PSA assignment	<a href="#">View Baggs, "In My Language" (9-minute video)</a>	Last 5 entries of blog carnival due
<b>Week 7</b>			
Day 13	A/autistic Autistic culture View <i>Positively Autistic</i>	<a href="#">Svoboda, "I Am Not a Puzzle, I am a Person"</a> <a href="#">View "Rethinking Autism" (2-minute video PSA)</a>	<b>Final blog carnival due to Carmen discussion board</b>

Day 14	Autism and parenting Using iMovie	Selections from Senator, <i>Making Peace with Autism</i> <a href="#">Sinclair, "Don't Mourn for Us"</a> <a href="#">View Autism Everyday (7-minute video documentary)</a> <a href="#">View Neurotypicalism Everyday (2-minute video parody)</a>	<b>PSA proposal due to Carmen dropbox</b>
<b>Week 8</b>			
Day 15	Autism in/and literature	<i>Curious Incident</i> , first half	Carmen post #4
Day 16	Autism in/and literature Studio time	<i>Curious Incident</i> , second half	
<b>Week 9</b>			
Day 17	Autism & education, public policy Small group discussion of memoirs (Savarese, Prince-Hughes, and Isaacson)	<a href="#">Robertson &amp; Ne'eman, "Autistic Acceptance"</a> Jurecic, "Neurodiversity"	
Day 18	Memoirs, continued Studio time		
<b>Week 10</b>			
Day 19	Studio time		
Day 20	Poster presentations		<b>Video PSA due on DVD</b> Carmen post #5