

# NEURODIVERSITY: SCHOLARSHIP, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

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SPRING 2025

**Instructor:** Laura Sterponi (she/her)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Over the past 25 years, advocacy, activism, and scholarship have elevated neurological variability as an important dimension of human diversity. This course provides an in-depth exploration of neurodiversity and neurodivergence, examining how these concepts challenge traditional medical and psychological frameworks by promoting a more inclusive understanding of neurological, cognitive, and sensorial differences. We will investigate how neurodiversity seeks to depathologize conditions such as autism, ADHD, and other neurodivergent experiences. From a neurodiversity-affirming perspective, we will discuss the broader implications of this approach for understanding human development, particularly in relation to aging and changes in cognitive and sensorimotor functioning. Course readings draw from a wide array of interdisciplinary perspectives, including neuroscience, disability studies, anthropology, sociology, rhetoric, and critical theory. Additionally, through discussions and Q&A sessions with guest speakers, we will explore how neurodiversity can help foster more equitable and inclusive communities.

## TEXTS

The instructor will provide weekly readings electronically.

## SCHEDULE OF COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

### **Week#1 – Overview of the Course and introduction to Neurodiversity**

### **Week#2 – Neurodiversity: Historical and Conceptual Overview**

Goldberg, H. (2023). Unraveling neurodiversity: Insights from neuroscientific perspectives. *Encyclopedia*, 3(3), 972-980.

Walker, N. (2021). *Neuroqueer heresies* (sel). Forth Worth: Autonomous Press.

### **Week#3 – Autism as Neurodiversity**

Sinclair, J. (1993). Don't mourn for us. *Our Voice*, 1(3). Available at [www.autreat.com](http://www.autreat.com).

Milton, D. (2021). On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem.' *Disability & Society*, 27(6), 883-887.

### **Week#4 – Neurodiversity and the Senses**

Walker, N. (2018). Somatics and autistic embodiment. In D. Johnson (ed.), *Diverse bodies, diverse practices: Toward an inclusive somatics*. New York: North Atlantic Books.

Silverman, G. (2016). Neurodiversity and the revision of book history. *PMLA*, 131(2), 307-323.

### **Week#5 – Cultural Politics of Neurodiversity**

Broderick, A. A. (2010). Autism as enemy: Metaphor and cultural politics. In Z. Leonardo (ed.), *Handbook of cultural politics and education* (pp. 237-268). Boston: Sense Publishers.

Savarese, R. J. (2010). Toward a postcolonial neurology: Autism, Tito Mukhopadhyay, and a new geo-poetics of the body. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 4(3), 273–289.

### **Week#6 – Neurodiversity and Communication**

Heilker, P. & Yergeau, M. (2011). Autism and rhetoric. *College English*, 73(5), 485-497.

Hillary, A. (2020). Neurodiversity and cross-cultural communication. In A. Stenning, N. Chown, & H. Bertilsdotter Rosqvist (eds.). *Neurodiversity Studies: A New Critical Paradigm* (pp. 91-107). London: Routledge.

Sterponi, L. (2019). Language in the senses: On autistic engagement with words. *Human Development*, 63(2), 87-89.