



Critical Disability Theory: Essays in Philosophy, Politics, Policy, and Law (Law and Society)

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People with disabilities in Canada experience and inhabit a system of deep structural, economic, social, political, legal, and cultural inequality – a regime of dis-citizenship. Despite the widespread belief that Canada is a country of liberty, equality, and inclusion, many persons with disabilities experience social exclusion and marginalization. They are socially constructed as second-class citizens.

Critical Disability Theory inquires into the possibilities and parameters of a critical theory of disability. Its essays argue that accommodating equality for the disabled is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity or compassion. Rather, it is a question of politics, of power and powerlessness. Conventional understandings of disability are dependent upon assumptions that characterize disability as misfortune and by implication privilege the “normal” over the “abnormal.” Consequently, it is presumed that societal organization based upon able-bodied and -minded norms is inevitable and the best we can do is show sympathy or pity. This book argues that we need new ways to think about the nature of disability, a new understanding of participatory citizenship that encompasses the disabled, new policies to respond to their needs, and a new vision of their entitlements.

Twenty-four scholars from a variety of disciplines come together here to identify the problems with traditional approaches to disability and to provide new directions. The essays range from focused empirical and experiential studies of different disabilities, to policy analyses, legal interrogations, and philosophical reconsiderations. The result will be of interest to policy makers, professionals, academics, non-governmental organizations, and grass-roots activists.

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