**Title: Questioning What Counts as Normal**

**First-Year Seminar: One Credit**

ARTSCI xxx

Day Wednesday

Time and Place 2pm-

Professor Amy Shuman

Department of English

Office Hours: TBA

566 Denney Hall

with guest presentations by Olivia Caldeira, PhD

Visiting Community Scholar

**Course Goals**

When people think about diversity, they often think about race, class, and gender. But ability is equally important. Even if we consider ourselves to be “normal,” our ability is temporary. If we’re lucky enough to live a long life, we’re likely to have some compromised abilities, whether sight, hearing, mobility, memory, or thinking. What does it mean to be normal in a world in which we have such different abilities? What does it take to have everyone at the table in our democratic society? What are the ways that we hide our differences; what stories are better known; how are people with disabilities absent or present in cultural representations?

**Course Content**

In addition to reading about normality, we’ll also look at representations of people with intellectual disabilities in film and on television. For example: A spoof of an American Apparel ad asks, “Can Disability be Sexy?” and profiles photographs of a woman with a non-typical body dressed provocatively. In the 1980’s *Sesame Street* included Jason Kingsley, a boy with Down Syndrome was just one of the regular kids on the show. The new television show *Speechless* has a child who uses an augmented communication device. *Breaking Bad* has a young adult with Cerebral Palsy. Some people say that Sheldon Cooper on *Big Bang Theory* has autism. In this class, in addition to reading scholarship about normalcy and difference, we will view films and television shows and pay special attention to how other differences (race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc.) are represented.

**Outcomes**

One of the outcomes of this class could be a potential team of undergraduates from many fields who could work together on a brainstorming team. The university currently offers many opportunities for such brainstorming, for example the upcoming IDEAFEST organized by arts and sciences. Disability studies students typically come from across the university, including a majority who are interested in pursuing health related fields. thus it provides an opportunity for the kind of collaboration the IDEAFEST and other opportunities have in mind. we are hoping that a freshman seminar might be the place to identify members of future research teams, especially students who don't enroll in our regular disability studies courses. I envision bringing together a student interested in film, a student interested in engineering and access, a political science student interested in public policy, and a student interested in public health who might find shared interest in addressing a contemporary social problem through the lens of different abilities. Of course, for many students, the freshman seminar is an end in itself, but I hope that the interdisciplinary approaches introduced in this seminar will encourage student to think beyond their disciplines and take advantage of the opportunities OSU offers undergraduates.

**Course Requirements:**

The films will be available through the OSU Secured Media Library for students to view at home. (resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/secured-media-library)

Some of the films will be viewed in class.

Students are expected to view the assigned films in preparation for our class meetings. You are expected to attend each class and to write

**Course requirements** **and Assignments**: You are expected to attend each class, have all the assigned materials done, and participate in class discussions. At the start of each class you should have written down at least three questions on the readings or assigned films. These questions will form the basis for our discussions. At the end of the course, you will compile all of your weekly questions along with your answers to one of the questions (not necessarily yours) raised each week. This final project is your opportunity to think critically through the issues of the seminar. In the eighth week you present your oral reports. For this report you will divide into group of four and chose either a couple of episodes from a television program or a movie and present your findings for 15 minutes to the class along with clips from your program. Each group will demonstrate how the television episode or film addresses questions about disability. You will be evaluated (as a group) on the clarity of your presentation and your ability to connect it to our readings and discussions.

Academic Misconduct It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/. Students with Disabilities Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292- 3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.

**Grading**: Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory

Class participation: 30%

Oral presentation: 20%

Compilation of Questions with answers: 50%

**Course Objectives:**

1. To get a better understanding of disability/ability/normalcy as a dimension of diversity
2. To learn about representations of stigmatized practices
3. To develop skills in oral presentation
4. To enhance critical skills in writing

**Biographical Statement**

Amy Shuman is a Distinguished OSU Professor and Teacher. She is a professor of folklore, narrative, and disability studies and direct the program on Diversity and Identity Studies (of which disability studies is a part). She also co-coordinates the undergraduate minor in human rights. Dr. Olivia Caldeira, a local scholar who has created a curriculum for individuals with intellectual disabilities to learn about sexuality and sexual abuse will be joining Professor Shuman for several class sessions.

**Weekly Readings and Film Viewings:**

1. Introduction to Disability and Representation
2. View *Yo Tambien*
3. View *The Eighth Day*
4. Read “Girls and Sex” from *Count Us In: Growing Up with Down Syndrome* by Jason Kingsley and Mitchell Levitz (on Carmen)
5. View an episode of *Breaking Bad*
6. Read Curriculum from “Speak-Up /Stay Safe” by Olivia Caldeira (on Carmen)
7. View an episode of *Speechless*
8. Two Chapters from Michael Gill *Already Doing It* (on Carmen)
9. Read selections from Andrew Solomon’s *Far from the Tree* on Sex and Sexual Abuse among people with disabilities (on Carmen)
10. Inspiration Porn read Alison Kafer “A Future for Whom? Passing on Billboard Liberation” (On Carmen)
11. Discussion of student projects
12. Discussion of student projects

Required readings will be available on Carmen. Required films will be available through the OSU Secured Media Library