

---

# Now You See It, Now You Don't: Disability Studies in a Disciplinary World

Jan Grue\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Oslo – Norway

## Abstract

Disability studies is partly a sovereign field, partly one that is colonized by other disciplines. Historians, philosophers, sociologists, and anthropologists all study phenomena that are to do with disability, as do researchers and practitioners in the health sciences, the welfare professions, and education. The concept of disability is always in danger of being carved up and subsumed by other disciplinary categories, e.g. deviance, abnormality, marginalization, or special needs.

One strategic option, necessary but not sufficient, is the defense of the sovereign field through conferences, journals, courses, degree programs, and academic positions that are chiefly dedicated to disability studies. A complementary, perhaps more postcolonial strategy, relies on the opportunistic infection of disciplinary knowledge with disability studies perspectives.

This talk will discuss the second strategy in terms of disability discourse analysis, i.e. on how the concept of disability and disability as a category are produced in different knowledge contexts, and on the corresponding social and political effects. Disability is a very different conceptual animal in varying discourse habitats, and knowledge of these habitats may prove crucial to its continuing survival.

---

\*Speaker