

Research Project Assignment

Choose a text (or a small group of related texts) that represents some kind of neurological difference. Make an argument about how the genre or form of your chosen texts shapes its contribution to public conversations about neurodiversity. Most projects will take the form of a 3,000 – 4,000-word essay (roughly 12 – 15 pages). You may also consider working in another medium (for example, a podcast, video, or website). Whatever medium you choose, your argument should be a clear contribution to ongoing intellectual or scholarly conversations or debates.

Advice

- 1.) Focus on particular texts that interest, excite, or intrigue you—for their forms or the questions they address—and build your project around them. The texts you choose are likely to include fiction, memoir, graphic narrative, poetry, film, or video. You might also consider less likely texts—for example, an online forum for neurodiversity activists, an organization’s website, medical or scientific writing, or music.
- 2.) In order to conceive and develop your argument, you will need to gather additional sources that explore the questions it raises. These are likely to be academic book and articles, political or medical writing, or the publications of advocacy groups—but you are by no means limited to these genres in your research.
- 3.) As you conceive and develop your project, consider the following questions.

BIG Questions

- Is anybody neurotypical?
- How do names, labels, and diagnoses shape understanding of phenomenological experience?
- What roles do brain, body, and world play in the making of self or mind?
- How do various writers and thinkers deal with what we don’t or can’t know about relations between physiology and phenomenology? How do they deal with hypothetical or speculative knowledge?

Questions about Form and Genre

- Why are hybrid forms so common when it comes to representing neurodivergence? (Think Sacks’s mixing of literary and scientific writing; Farinella and Ros’s integration of fairytale and textbook techniques in *Neurocomic*; or Higashida’s use of fiction in his memoir.)
- What aims do writers bring to the genres they work in? What does a graphic memoirist like Ellen Forney hope to accomplish through her medium? How might this differ from the a more traditional memoirist like Kay Redfield Jamison? Or a fiction writer like Maud Casey, Jonathan Lethem, or Richard Powers?
- How do writers use the techniques of their genres to portray phenomenology?

Due Dates:

March 15: A reflection on possible ideas (on your comonplace books).

March 24: Project proposals (on your commonplace books); I'll provide guidelines for these.

March 31: A reflection on new or emerging ideas about your project.

April 7: Annotated bibliography + ballroom diagram (to me and your writing group).

May 1: Draft of two paragraphs introducing your topic, explaining your motive, and articulating a hypothesis (to me

May 14: Draft due (to me and your writing group, via email), along with a cover letter and a revised ballroom diagram.

May 17 and 19: In-class draft workshops

May 26: Finished projects due (via email)

Formatting Guidelines

Use MLA style guidelines. Your essay should be in a standard 12 point font, with 1" margins.

Citations should be parenthetical. Include page numbers and either a cover page or header that includes your name, the course number and title, my name, and the date. Be sure to give your essay a title. Include a "Works Cited" page at the end—again, formatted using MLA guidelines.