

UB Center for Disability Studies

Disability and Citizenship

Speaker Series Fall 2011

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Professor Leslie J. Reagan

Friday, October 14, 2011, 3:30-6:00 PM, Park 280, UB North Campus

Professor Leslie J. Reagan will speak on her new book, *Dangerous Pregnancies*, which tells the largely forgotten story of the German measles epidemic of the early 1960s and how it created national anxiety about dying, disabled, and “dangerous” babies. This epidemic would ultimately transform abortion politics, produce new science, and help build two of the most enduring social movements of the late twentieth century--the reproductive rights and the disability rights movements. At most a minor rash and fever for women, German measles (also known as rubella), if contracted during pregnancy, could result in miscarriages, infant deaths, and serious birth defects in the newborn. Award-winning writer Leslie J. Reagan chronicles for the first time the discoveries and dilemmas of this disease in a book full of intimate stories--including riveting courtroom testimony, secret investigations of women and doctors for abortion, and startling media portraits of children with disabilities. In exploring a disease that changed America, *Dangerous Pregnancies* powerfully illuminates social movements that still shape individual lives, pregnancy, medicine, law, and politics.

Professor Jim Downs

Friday, November 4, 2011, 3:30-6:00 PM, Park 280, UB North Campus

Professor Jim Downs, Central Connecticut College, will present, “Diagnosing Reconstruction: Disabled and Dependent Freed Slaves in the Age of Emancipation.” During the war, military officials rigorously evaluated freedpeople’s bodies, determining who could work and in what capacity. The military’s formulation of the term “able-bodied” privileged the employment of men. This policy subsequently left thousands of freedwomen, elderly, orphaned, and disabled freed slaves without a formal opportunity to earn a living and thereby to secure the finances to procure shelter, food, clothing or medicine. Living under such uncertain economic conditions left many dependent freedpeople vulnerable to the onslaught of sickness and disease at the moment of freedom.

Professor Martin Norden

Friday, November 11, 2011, 3:30-6:00 PM, Park 280, UB North Campus

Professor Martin Norden, University of Massachusetts, Department of Communications, in a special **Veterans Day Event** will speak about, “Disability, Gender, and Nationhood in Oliver Stone’s *Born on the Fourth of July*.” After a delay of nearly a dozen years, the film adaptation of Ron Kovic’s searing autobiography, the like-titled *Born on the Fourth of July*, finally appeared on the U.S. cultural scene in late December 1989. Since that time, the film has generated considerable discussion over its representation of American history and issues related to disability, gender, and nationhood. One of the most famous films to feature a disabled character, *Born on the Fourth of July* is distinguished by the fact that two wounded Vietnam veterans were its principal creators: director and co-screenwriter Oliver Stone, who was injured in the war but recovered from his wounds; and co-screenwriter Ron Kovic, who was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of a wartime injury and whose book served as the basis for the film. With the awareness that films centering on disabled war veterans tend to be among the most sensitive and compelling of Hollywood’s various narrative constructions that depict people with disabilities, this presentation will examine the ways that the intersecting identity factors of disability and gender play out against, and inform, the powerful sense of U.S. nationhood that permeates *Born on the Fourth of July*.