

## DISCUSSION AID #3: SIEBERS ON DISABILITY

*This information will serve us both in discussion as reminders and reference, and later (potentially), in your subsequent writing and projects.*

### Terms, Concepts, Topics

- ✓ **New realism of the body:** Siebers posits a new understanding of disability grounded in a "new realism" that succeeds the social model (which criticizes the moral and medical models), taking on board the concerns and advances won from the cultural and critical theory that informed the social model but recovering the lost materiality and specificity ("bodily reality") of the body.
- ✓ **Medical model (173):** situates disability in individual bodies, cures by treatment, isolating the patients as diseased/defective
- ✓ **Social constructionism + Social model (173):** situated disability as an effect of an environment hostile to some bodies and not others, requiring social justice
- ✓ **Weak & Strong forms of social constructionism (174):** weak forms account for prejudice (e.g. racism, ableism, etc.) as being based on ignorance or misunderstanding; strong forms are grounded in linguistic models of the body (sign precedes body), accounting for prejudice as effect of ideological nature of representation
- ✓ **Models of pain; regulatory & resistant (177):** regulatory pain is pain as tool for enforcement of norms, resistant pain is pain as a repressive effect that is also productive of an "unmanageable supplement of suffering that marks out the individual as a site of resistance to social regulation"

### New Realism: Benefits

- ✓ **Community building (179):** people with disabilities build communities through a more transparent political process (grounded in references to bodily realities) because they cannot use more natural or associations (race, age, gender, geo.origin)
- ✓ **Political urgency (179):** their commitment to political struggle is obvious and has the urgency of immediate consequences for bodily reality in ways that are hard to dismiss on abstract philosophical grounds
- ✓ **New perspectives (179-80):** key moral and political issues are transformed under the perspective of disability studies (e.g. assisted suicide, abortion, genetic research)

### New Realism: Risks

- ✓ **"More real" problem (180):** Siebers notes a possible temptation to consider disability and pain as 'more real' than their opposites. "The disabled body is no more real than the able body--and no less"
- ✓ **Disabled body as weapon (180):** Siebers also warns against temptations to use the disabled body as a political or philosophical weapon of resistance "useful only to pierce ... modern ideologies"