

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG



Wits Centre for Diversity Studies

Conference

First Call for Abstracts

Disabling Normativities

1-3 October 2019, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

The Wits Centre for Diversity Studies (WiCDS) will host an international conference on 1, 2 and 3 October 2019 at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg on the theme, *Disabling Normativities*.

For people who fit comfortably within the normative orders of society, it may be difficult to recognize that there is any problem with the status quo. Globally, however, people in bodies, places, histories and experiences that do not afford the power and the privilege of the normative find their life conditions and opportunities constrained, limited and subject to dehumanization, abjection, violence, exclusion and marginalisation. The field of Critical Disability Studies has recognized the *disabling dynamics* that the norm performs on those it renders non-normative, the *abnormal*, in order to keep the prevailing order in place.

This conference wishes to take the notion of the disabling effects of normative orders seriously and engage how these dynamics may be discerned in operation across and within dimensions of difference. In another sense of the theme, *Disabling Normativities*, we also seek to ask questions on how we may reduce the debilitating effects of normative social relations. It may be correct to assume that social relations will always tend to establish norms but how may such power be relativized, contained or rendered permeable?

Our conference seeks to understand what we can learn if we use the concept of *disabling* as a *template* to explore all aspects of the normative. We are interested in conceptual questions but also in quotidian experiences that illustrate abling and disabling in relation to normative orders. We hope to receive abstracts covering a wide range of diversity axes, including the most researched such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, nation, and of course disability, but also relations of unequal power less often scrutinized.

This Sixth Annual International Conference hosted by WiCDS invites proposals for 15-minute presentations which will be followed by open discussions with conference delegates. Proposals may concern issues such as:

- The roles of belief systems, cultural and artistic practices, and religious orders in disabling others;
- The roles of money, economic relations, technologies;
- Medicalization of bodies and other forms of governmentality;
- Epistemological effects;
- Physical/psychosocial pain created by such dynamics, and the implications of other affective factors, including the discovery of personal strengths;
- Disabling effects of the normative on those oppressed, but perhaps also within privileged spaces of normativity;
- Disabling effects of certain accounts of the past, present and future;
- Intersections of multiple disablings;
- Spaces and environments that may be disabling;
- Disabling effects of laws, policies etc, even possibly those that are seen to be protective against abuse, such a Human Rights discourses;
- Interventions in norming processes; subversions; reframings;
- Reproduction, reinvention, bolstering of norming processes;
- Different theoretical angles – feminist, decolonial, postcolonial, postpolitical, posthuman, postnature?
- The impact of artificial intelligence and the Fourth Industrial Revolution on understandings of the normative

The field is wide open

This is the first call for abstracts, which are due on 28 June 2019. Abstracts should be between 250 and 300 words. Send to conference.wicds@wits.ac.za accompanied by a single paragraph bio.