



# **Social Media - Racialization of Disability Lesson Plan**



# Lesson title: Racialization of disability

Subject and topic:  
equity and history

Grade level:  
10th-12th and college

Duration:  
45 minutes

## Lesson summary:

In this lesson, students will read and discuss Douglas Baynton's *Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History*. Students will participate in a discussion about the racialization of disability and the intersections of ableism and racism.

## Standards:

- CC.1.5.7.D Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- CC.1.5.8.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CC.8.6.9-10.H Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## Objectives:

### SWBAT

- think critically about the intersections of race and disability by engaging in conversation
- investigate how ableism and racism inform and interact with each other. Students will reflect on the American history of racialized ableism and how that legacy manifests today.



## Essential Questions:

- EQ1: How do ableism and racism interact with each other? Consider parallels.
- EQ2: Describe defining moments in history and compare them to today.

## Vocabulary:

- Ableism
- Racism
- Intersectionality
- Disability

## Lesson procedures

1. Lesson Preparation: Please have students read Douglas Baynton's Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History prior to class. If you are using the powerpoint, make sure to test your technology beforehand.
2. Begin the class by reviewing group ground rules such as respect, confidentiality, etc. Sample ground rules can be found on [www.disabilityequalityeducation.org](http://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org).
3. It is also important before the discussion to do a language check. Talk about what language is acceptable to identify people with disabilities (disabled person, person with a disability, intellectual disability, psychiatric disability, mental illness), and what is not (retarded, special, crazy/insane). Note that the article uses the phrase "mentally retarded"; explain that at the time of the writing of this article, it was an acceptable term, but is now considered a slur.
4. Then, organize the group for a class discussion. If your class is larger than 20 people, it may be a good idea to break up into small groups.



You may use the powerpoint provided to guide discussion, but it is not required.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- ❖ How is disability racialized?
- ❖ Banyton writes, “Differential and unequal treatment has continued, of course, but it has been considered incumbent on modern societies to produce a rational explanation for such treatment.” (p.33) What are the rational explanations for racism? Ableism? What about homophobia, transphobia, sexism, or classism?
- ❖ How have anti-oppression advocates played into ableism in their arguments for freedom? Do you see this still happening today?
  - *Quote: “Rather than challenging the basic assumptions behind the hierarchy, they instead work to remove themselves from the negatively marked categories- that is to disassociate themselves from those people who ‘really are’ disabled” (p.51)*
  - *Prompt: LGBTQ+ people claiming that they are not mentally ill, POC using proof of intelligence as reason for respect, Neurotypical people with physical disabilities using “my mind is fine” rhetoric to distance themselves from people with mental disabilities.*
- ❖ How has scientific rhetoric been used to rationalize oppression? Do you see this still happening in any way today?
  - *Prompt: Page 37-39 of article, genetic inferiority, eugenics and rhetoric of evolution*
  - *Prompt: Medical model of disability,*
- ❖ How has psychology been weaponized against people of color in the past? The present?
  - *Prompt: Pathologization of desire to be free, eugenics*
  - *Prompt: Lack of access to mental health care, Disproportionate labelling and involuntary commitment of*



*people of color,*

- ❖ How was non-compliance pathologized during the slavery era?  
What does this say about psychology as a field?
  - *Prompt: Drapetomania and Dysaesthesia Aethiopsis.*
  - *Prompt: Psychology is meant to uphold the status quo and punish deviance. Examples of this: Pathologization and the need to “fix” neurodivergent people (resource: Mind Fixers), Conversion Therapy, Compliance Based Therapies such as ABA.*

\*Note: Not all questions need to be used; select the questions that speak to you most and then allow the conversation to flow naturally. If your class is particularly talkative, the discussion can be extended into a second class period.

5. Next, play the Rooted in Rights video ([Proposed Immigration Changes will Make It Harder for People With Disabilities](#)). Make sure captions are turned on.

6. After the video is over, distribute the handouts (Rooted in Rights Public Charge article). Make sure to explain that the Rooted in Rights resources are from a year ago and the new public charge rule has since been struck down by the courts. Allow students a few minutes to read the articles. Then, bring the students back together for a concluding discussion.

### Related materials:

Douglas Baynton’s *Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History*, which can be located at this link:

<https://courses.washington.edu/intro2ds/Readings/Baynton.pdf>.

Handouts of Rooted In Right’s Public Charge article, which can be found at this link:

<https://rootedinrights.org/how-proposed-changes-to-public-charge-will-ma>



[ke-it-hard-to-immigrate-with-a-disability/](#). Powerpoint and access to a projector (Optional).

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated based on discussion.

Ask your students this question related to this lesson to gauge how much they learned. **Did this lesson help you understand the intersection of race and disability ?**

Thank you for bringing the conversation about disability into your classroom.

Help us evaluate this lesson plan by visiting [our evaluation page to assess this lesson](#). You will find an evaluation both for you and your students to complete there.



## **Appendix A: Readings**

Douglas Baynton's [\*Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History\*](#).

Rooted In Right's [\*How Proposed Changes to Public Charge Will Make It Hard to Immigrate with a Disability\*](#) by Alaina Leary

## **Appendix B: Powerpoint**

A powerpoint for this lesson can be found here:  
[The Racialization of Disability](#)

