

**Enabled with the Winning Vision:  
The Undervalued, Underserved, and Underestimated in American Literature**

**Led by Dr. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory**

“I once felt that I would rather die than go blind. Now I feel the opposite. Daily life has a renewed delight and vigor. I am learning new things constantly.... In terms of everyday life, I feel that I am finally in there, more mindful and alert, more fully present. I have chosen curiosity over despair.”

—Edward Hirsch

This seminar will study the politics of care and will focus on the relationships and the points of connection between physically and/or mentally disabled and non-disabled persons. It is likely that we will someday become caregivers to our children, parents, life partners, friends, students, etc. To be ready for the challenge, we need to increase our empathy and strive to create public communal spaces of caring and healing. In our time together, we will explore the strong desire to be seen and heard in a society that oftentimes attempts to place restrictions on people who are different. We want to encourage a winning vision, one in which both the abled and disabled can see themselves as useful/necessary in the world we inhabit. The poetry, fiction, drama, essays, films we will discuss suggest that the vicissitudes of life are a part of searching for self and can be used as a lens through which to examine the tumultuous journey to wholeness for the physically and/or mentally challenged. When Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* shoots Tea Cake in the heart to save her own life, we see evidence of empathy between the disabled and the non-disabled. In *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda’s view of her limp poses roadblocks to her ability to connect with her family and community, but Tennessee Williams forces us to see and feel beyond the limp into the hole/whole person. While not all of the texts offer healing balm, the struggle to carve out a satisfactory and sustainable identity in restrictive societies is a major thread that runs through the selected works. Our group will perform excerpts from fiction, plays and poems, bond over viewing films, share our own experiences of developing a “winning vision” as caregivers/educators, and visit skilled nursing facilities to bring cheer by performing our creative pieces to residents who struggle daily to remain vital and connected.

**Texts**

Edward Hirsch’s “I am Going Blind, and I Now Find It Strangely Exhilarating” and *Gabriel, A Poem*

Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*

Dominique Morisseau’s *Paradise Blue*

Martyna Majok’s *Cost of Living*

Sylvia Malloy’s *Dislocations*

**Films**

[\*Their Eyes Were Watching God\*](#)

(starring Halle Berry in 2005)

[\*The Glass Menagerie\*](#)

(starring Joanne Woodward in 1987)

**On-site Visits to Selected Skilled Nursing Facilities**

TBD