Disability and mental illness provoke weighty questions—theological and practical—that the church cannot ignore. What does it mean to possess beauty and humanity in the midst of profound, unchanging disability? Is an intellectual understanding of Jesus necessary in order to follow him? How does mental illness interact with spiritual experience? Grow in understanding of these issues to make your caring practices more faithful and authentic.

There is reading due on the first day of class and each day during the course week. Students are encouraged to read ahead as much as possible.

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:
1. develop a theological understanding of human disability;
2. develop a theological understanding of mental health and ill health;
3. understand what unique things the church brings to these conversations;
4. learn and reflect upon new forms of practice and fresh ways of looking at both disability and mental health.

Day 1 Who is the God we Worship?: Disability and the question of question of “normality
Day 2 Jean Vanier and the L’Arche communities
Day 3 A theology of mental health and ill-health
Day 4 Going deeper: Understanding the Experience of Serious mental health challenges
Day 5 Re-imagining dementia, brain damage and humanness: Why we are not our brains

REQUIRED TEXTS
Nancy Eiesland ‘Encountering the disabled God’
Ben Ryan (2017) Christianity and Mental Health: Theology, activities, potential. London Theos publications. [pages TBD]
Jean Vanier (2004) Drawn into the mystery of Jesus through the gospel of John Paulist Press. (Chapter 1)