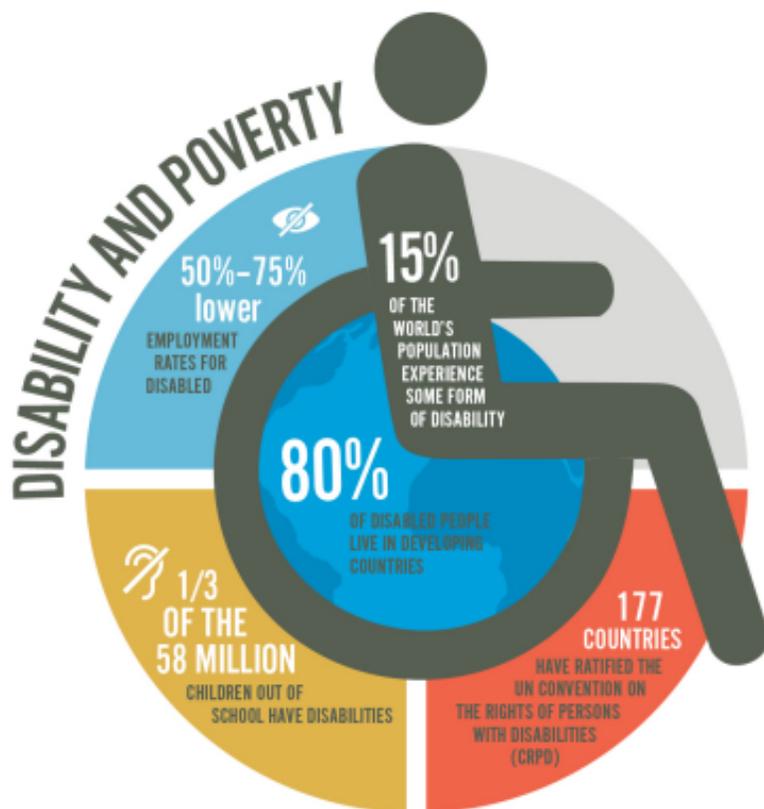


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NEOLIBERAL ASSEMBLAGES OF ECONOMY, BODY AND SOCIETY: POLITICS OF MICROFINANCE AND DISABILITY PENSIONS IN INDIA

DR. VANDANA CHAUDHRY (CUNY)

WHEN: WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 20, 3:00PM - 4:30PM
WHERE: UC BERKELEY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
HAVILAND HALL, COMMONS / ROOM #116
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Abstract: My research investigates the effects of neoliberal governance on disability and development policies in the context of postcolonial India. Through the ethnographic study of disability-oriented microfinance self-help group projects of the World Bank and digitally regulated state disability pension programs in rural districts of the South Indian state of Telangana, I analyze the changing dialectics of autonomy and dependence that characterize experiences of disability in rural worlds. I critically examine changing landscapes of disability policies and programs in light of the shrinking welfare state, and how these changes shape notions of the state, disability and community, and impact material, relational and affective possibilities for people with disabilities. Drawing on Foucault's (1978, 1980) interrelated concepts of 'biopower' and 'governmentality,' I explore how disabled bodies, rural socialities and subjectivities get financialized in line with market principles through community surveillance in microfinance self-help groups, and through the use of digital technologies that determine eligibility for disability pensions. Simultaneously, I explore modes of resistance and cultural articulations of disability politics that redeem radical dependency as a fundamental category of empowerment and emancipation.

Bio: Vandana Chaudhry is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at the City University of New York - College of Staten Island. Grounded in an interdisciplinary approach that combines transnational disability studies, critical social work, postcolonial theory and performance ethnography, her research focuses on disability in the Global South, neoliberal governance, culturally and structurally competent practices, and disability justice. Her multi-year ethnographic work explores disability at the nexus of development, globalization and the politics of subject-formation in rural South India, through the examination of microfinance, community based approaches and disability pensions. She theorizes rural disability within the framework of capacity and debility produced through transnational processes of collective precarity, rural underdevelopment, and structural violence, along the intersecting lines of caste, class, gender, location, and the state.

Access Notes: The event is open to the public and the venue is wheelchair accessible. CART has been requested and ASL interpretation can be provided with advance request to Karen Nakamura (knak@berkeley.edu.) Please refrain from wearing any scented products, including essential oils.