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**Mallett, R., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2014). *Approaching Disability: Critical Issues and Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN 978-1-408-27906-9.**

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*Approaching Disability: Critical Issues and Perspectives*, by Rachel Mallett and Katherine Runswick-Cole, is meant to be an introductory text for disability studies at the undergraduate and graduate studies levels, and for disabled people and scholars in general. I have taught *Introduction to Disability Studies* at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, so I was interested in determining whether this could be a text applicable to a Canadian context.

The layout of the book is intriguing from a pedagogical point of view. The sections are short and most include an “Action Points” box with questions for the reader. These questions ask the reader to relate what they have read to their own knowledge of the world. For example, an Action Point in Chapter 1 asks:

Look at your definition of disability. How does it stand in relation to the medical, individual, legal and social approaches to disability we have explored? Has your view of disability developed while reading this chapter? If so, in what ways (17)?

This is a very effective way of drawing out meaning for readers no matter their cultural context.

The first chapter, entitled “Foundational Perspectives,” concentrates on definitions of key terms pertaining to disability. This chapter also includes a debate known in the field over the social model of disability, which the editors call the “big idea” in UK Disability Studies. Calling a model a heuristic device, the authors quote

Michael Oliver: “[the social model gives students] a way of using the idea that it was society and not us [people with impairments] that should be the target for professional interventions and their professional practice” (2008, pp. 8-9). I found this chapter to be written in a very clear and concise way with a focus on airing many different ideas found in the UK and in other contexts.

However, I found Chapter 2 on “Global Perspectives” problematic. The authors outline the UK, the Nordic, and the North American models of disability. Unfortunately, the North American model only features American scholarship and their rights orientation to disability studies. Canada is not mentioned here or elsewhere in the text or index for the book. A few Canadian scholars have been cited throughout the text but there is no forum for Canadian perspectives. The Canadian disability rights movement and its own models have had a large impact on international organizations such as Disabled Peoples’ International and on documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our absence from an account of international approaches is thus a disappointing oversight.

The authors go on to discuss important issues in Disability Studies such as culture, identity politics, and history. The last section of the book focuses on the field’s relationship to the body and pain in particular. As the authors explain when discussing impairment:

Pain is often raised as an experience that cannot be theorized away as socially or culturally constructed...During discussion over whether being disabled can be a positive experience, impairments and illnesses that are associated with long term (chronic pain) are often mentioned as a reason

why being impaired should, sometimes, be considered to be undesirable  
(130).

I found this section very well argued, beginning with the social model's denial of the importance of the disabled body, and offering as antidote feminist women with disabilities theorizing the body. The topic of pain is particularly important for women with disabilities, as we are more likely to have disabilities and chronic illnesses where we experience chronic pain: fibromyalgia, depression, chronic fatigue, lupus, multiple sclerosis.

To that end, the book might have benefited from an accounting of the histories women with disabilities, how they have organized from within disability movements, and why the larger disability community has struggled with addressing their concerns over the years. This could include references to important women's organizations such as the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN-RAFH) Canada, the DisAbled Women's Network Trinidad and Tobago, and Women with Disabilities Australia.

Would I use this text in an introductory course on disability? Yes, but only with supplemental texts from the Canadian context. Overall, the book deals with many of the current debates in Disability Studies in a clear and easy to read manner.