

Disclosure dances: disabled, chronically ill and/or neurodivergence in academia

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Nicole Brown

Monday, 3 November 2025, 12:00–13:30

Lecture Hall 1, Sensengasse 3a

and via Zoom: <https://univienne.zoom.us/j/64725339475?pwd=9CLNOANXyvMZHMLhr22t0BqWuqDlyC.1>

Meeting passcode: 624449

Where are all the disabled academics? From statistics we know that disclosure of (dis)ability rates amongst academic staff and postgraduate research students are much lower than in the general population or amongst undergraduate students. However, there is no evidence that invisible disabilities are less prevalent in higher education. In this presentation, Nicole Brown draws on her extensive research into the lived experience of ableism in academia to explore disclosure. Brown commences with a brief introduction to Embodied Inquiry and her use of creative research methods for data collection. She then discusses how individuals are struggling to reconcile working and studying in what appears to be an inclusive environment with the realities of negotiating structural barriers, attitudinal challenges and managing symptoms of their conditions. Brown concludes with some suggestions on what we can do as individuals to improve practices within academia and thereby support those with disabilities, chronic illnesses and/or neurodivergences.

Ableism in Academia—

Being Disabled, Chronically Ill and/or Neurodivergent in Higher Education

Workshop by Prof. Dr. Nicole Brown

Monday, 3 November 2025, 14.00-16.00

Lecture Hall 1, Sensengasse 3a

In a subsequent workshop, participants are invited to explore the topic in more depth and engage in further exchange. **Please note that the workshop is offered exclusively on-site, and due to limited space, the number of participants is restricted; therefore, registration is required. To participate, please send an informal email to Adrijana Novakovic (adrijana.novakovic@univie.ac.at) by 30 October 2025.** No registration is required for attending the lecture.

Academia as an environment is often difficult to navigate for staff and students who have disabilities, chronic illnesses and/or neurodivergence. In this workshop, attendees will take an autoethnographic, reflexive approach to exploring disabilities, chronic illnesses and neurodivergence in academia. Delegates engage with theoretical approaches from disability studies, sociology and education, and connect these with representations of academics and academia in popular culture, film, media, and literature. Through these conceptualisations along with practical examples, strategies, and an emphasis on developing action points, attendees develop insight into the reality and lived experience of those in academia with disabilities, chronic illnesses and/or neurodivergence, and how to make academia more accessible.

Dr Nicole Brown is Associate Professor at the UCL Institute of Education. A leading voice in embodied research, she draws on creative, arts-based methods to challenge conventional approaches to researching ableism, disability, chronic illness, and neurodivergence in higher education. Her research foregrounds lived experience and advocates for new ways of listening, speaking, and representing experience that drive cultural, institutional, and structural change. Nicole's publications include *Lived Experiences of Ableism in Academia: Strategies for Inclusion in Higher Education* and *Ableism in Academia: Theorising Experiences of Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses in Higher Education*. Her next book will be the creative anthology *Exceptionally Able*.

We warmly invite you to this event of the Division of Inclusive Education, organized by Sabine Weiß and Michaela Joch, and look forward to your participation and lively exchange. Both the lecture and workshop will be held in English, and discussions will take place in English and German.