

Washington State University

College of Education

Jenne Schmidt

Will defend the dissertation

Date: December 2, 2020

Time: 9:00 A.M.

Location: Zoom by request

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

**(De)constructing Nature and Disability through Place:
Towards an Eco-Crip Politic**

Chair: John Lupinacci

This dissertation project, comprised of five distinct and standalone chapters, is positioned within the creative tension between environmental and critical disability studies. Examining their intersections in an effort to imagine new ways of understanding disability and environmentalism as coalitional, it advances an eco-crip politic. Chapter two illuminates the ways that environmental education has and has not engaged critical disability politics, and calls for a crippling of the field in order to shift away from disability as defect and toward disrupting the structures and environments that operate as normalizing technologies. In chapter three, I build upon critical place inquiry to consider place as the central site of research and as agential, thereby offering a way to disrupt the anthropocentric framing of place. I use "place as research" as the methodological approach within the three subsequent chapters. Chapter four considers how place is an entity or being that one might directly listen to. By listening to place, this chapter reveals that the nature/culture binary is a myth, which has implications for how we understand disability access in places designated as "wilderness." Chapter five examines the Hanford Site, in order to demonstrate the need for wild pedagogies to engage not just inspiring wildness places, but also with sites of ruin, because they can illuminate how the social, historical, and political are intertwined with the ecological. In chapter six, I deconstruct notions of damaged, diseased, contaminated more-than-human species often exhibited as freaknature. Operating from a crip politic that rejects notions of corporeal differences

as abnormal and unnatural, and instead seeks to claim such difference as just that—difference, I consider how we can embrace freak nature, not as embodied disaster nor as a repulsive warning sign of ecological disaster, but as having inherent value, while also not dismissing ongoing environmental disruption. By turning toward place as research to center the land, waterways, and more-than-human, these separate manuscripts together articulate an eco-crip politic.