

**WGS 407/507: Gender and Embodiment**  
**University of Oregon**  
**Fall 2013**  
**T/TH 4-5:20 112 Esslinger**

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**Description:**

How is gender embodied and how are bodies gendered? How can we understand gendered bodies in relationship to other categories of difference like sexuality, social class, race/ethnicity, and religion? What are the broader implications of these issues in terms of power and resistance?

We will explore recent scholarship on the cultural and political dimensions of the complicated relationship between gender, bodies and society. The course first examines theoretical perspectives used to understand gender and embodiment. These theories conceptualize the body as a socially constructed phenomenon, which allows us to understand the body as a cultural symbol, site of ideological struggles and force for resistance. The second half of the course applies these theoretical insights to a number of specific case studies such as cosmetic surgery, reproductive politics, veiling and sports. We will contextualize the place of the body in relation to various institutions such as the media, medicine, and the market. The course will end with a discussion of the implications of this field to feminist theorizing.

**Required Texts:**

Davis, Kathy. 2007. *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders*, Duke University Press.

Mears, Ashley. 2011. *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*, University of California Press.

All other readings will be posted on BlackBoard

*Recommended Texts \*\*\*All Recommended Readings are Required for Graduate Students\*\*\**

Edmonds, Alexander. 2010. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*, Duke University Press.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

- Identify and Synthesize key arguments related to the course materials
- Analyze and Evaluate the strengths and limits of different theoretical approaches and empirical evidence
- Apply theoretical concepts to real-life examples

## Course Requirements:

- 25% **Participation, Attendance, and Oral Presentations:** Attendance is *mandatory* at all class meetings. Numerous absences or habitual lateness will ultimately lower students' grades. Students are expected to *actively participate*, for example by raising thoughtful questions, synthesizing new material with past material, noting contradictions, bringing up concrete examples from your experiences or observations, actively listening, voicing your reaction to the content of the course, defining key concepts etc. Enrolled graduate students will sign up in pairs to lead one class discussion over the course of the semester, which will count towards their participation grades.
- 20% **Reading Responses:** Students must submit 500 word memos focused on the week's readings. You will briefly summarize the key points of the reading and then provide your own analytical commentary or reflection on the issues raised by the authors. For instance you may suggest links to previous readings, note contradictions, highlight gaps, and/or discuss the implications of the author's arguments to other relevant issues and current events. Each memo should end with a substantive question or point that will spark discussion. The responses will be turned in every other week on Mondays by 5PM. When you are not submitting a memo, you are expected to write a 100 word comment in response to at least two classmates' reading responses. These comments are due by 12PM on Tuesday. Responses must focus on the readings assigned for that week.
- 20% **Analytical Paper (due October 18<sup>th</sup> by 5PM):** Students must write a 3-5 page analytical paper that synthesizes the key theoretical approaches of understanding gender and the body. Post on BlackBoard via Assignments.
- 15% **Photo Blog (due weeks of November 11<sup>th</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup>):** Students must write a photo blog essay based on at least 6 photographs of real or symbolic ways that gendered is embodied in everyday life and in various institutional settings. These photos must be original and not taken from the Internet. You must read and comment on at least three other blogs by November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Post on BlackBoard Blogs. This assignment is for undergraduate students.

OR

- 15% **Book Review (due November 15<sup>th</sup> by 5PM):** Graduate Students must write a 2-3 page book review that critically engages with a recent book in the field. You will summarize the main contents of the book, note how it connects to themes explored throughout the course, and assess how it contributes to the field. The instructor will supply a list of possible books for review. Students can pick a book outside of this list in consultation with the instructor. You must read and comment on at least two other blog posts by November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Post on BlackBoard Blogs.
- 20% **Final Paper (due December 11<sup>th</sup> by 5PM):** Students must write a 6-8 page final paper. Graduate students must write a 12-20 page paper which could take the form of a research proposal, theoretical piece, or empirical/research paper. Post on BlackBoard Assignments.

## Course Schedule & Readings

### **I. Theoretical Orientations**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Tuesday October 1<sup>st</sup>**

No Assigned Readings

#### **Biological and Medical Perspectives**

#### **Thursday October 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Anne Fausto-Sterling. 1993. "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough" *Sciences*, p. 20-24 and "The Five Sexes, Revisited" *Sciences* 40(4): 18-24

Eric Plemons. 2010. "Envisioning the Body in Relation: Finding Sex, Changing Sex," pp. 317-328 in Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut, eds., *The Body Reader: Essential Social and Cultural Readings*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

\*\*\*\*Meet in 141 Allen Hall for "In the Wrong Body" Film Screening with Director Marilyn Solaya\*\*\*\*

#### *Recommended Readings (Graduate Students Meeting #1)*

Susan Kessler. 1990. "The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants," *Signs* 16(1): 3-26

Judith Lorber. 1993. "Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology," *Gender & Society* 7(4): 568-581.

Laurel Westbrook and Kristin Schilt. 2013 "Doing Gender, Determining Gender Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System" *Gender & Society* (Online First)

#### **Cultural Representation**

#### **Tuesday October 8<sup>th</sup>**

Susan Bordo. 1993. "Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body," pages 1-45 in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jacqueline Urla and Alan C. Swedlund. "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture." Pp. 277-313 in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on*

*Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, edited by Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla.  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

## **Power, Resistance and the Disciplined Body**

### **Thursday October 10<sup>th</sup>**

Michel Foucault, “Docile Bodies” and “The Means of Correct Training”, pages 135-141 and 170-194 in *Discipline and Punish*

Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” pp. 25-45 in Rose Weitz ed., *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### *Recommended Readings (Graduate Students Meeting #2)*

Judith Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” and “Conclusion: From Parody to Politics,” pp. 128-149 in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Judith Butler, “Bodies that Matter” pp. 3-28 in *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of “sex”* New York, NY: Routledge.

Rose Weitz, “Women and their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation,” pp. 135-161 in Rose Weitz ed., *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## **II. Thematic Discussions of Bodily Practices**

### **Body Work**

### **Tuesday October 15<sup>th</sup>**

Miliann Kang, 2003, “The Managed Hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions in Korean Immigrant–Owned Nail Salons” *Gender & Society* 17(6): 820-839.

Kristen Barber, 2008, “The Well-Coifed Man: Class, Race, and Heterosexual Masculinity in the Hair Salon” *Gender & Society* 22(4): 455-476

### **Cosmetic Surgery and Body Modification**

### **Thursday October 17<sup>th</sup>**

Kathy Davis. 1997. “‘My Body is My Art’: Cosmetic Surgery as Feminist Utopia,” pp. 168-181 in Kathy Davis ed., *Embodies Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body*. London: Sage.

Victoria Pitts, 1998. “‘Reclaiming’ the Female Body: Embodied Identity Work, Resistance and the Grotesque” *Body Society* 4(3): 67-84

*Recommended Readings (Graduate Meeting #3)*

Alexander Edmonds. 2010. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*, Duke University Press.

**Modeling and Beauty Pageants**

**Tuesday October 22nd**

Ashley Mears. 2011. *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model* ch. 1, ch. 2, ch. 3,

**Thursday October 24<sup>th</sup>**

Ashley Mears 2011 *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model* ch. 5 ch. 6 ch. 7

*Recommended Readings (Graduate Meeting #4)*

Amanda Czerniawski. 2012. “Disciplining Corpulence: The Case of Plus-Size Fashion Models” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41(2) 127–153

Oluwakemi Balogun. 2012 “Cultural and Cosmopolitan: Idealized Femininity and Embodied Nationalism in Nigerian Beauty Pageants” *Gender & Society* 26(3): 357-381.

Susan Runkle. 2004. “Making ‘Miss India’. Constructing gender, power and the nation” *South Asian Popular Culture* 2(2): 145-159

**Veiling**

**Tuesday October 29<sup>th</sup>**

Homa Hoodfar, “The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women,” pp 420-446 in Elizabeth A. Castelli ed., *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Haideh Moghissi, “The Veil as a Tool of Empowerment?,” pp. 42-47 in *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

Jen’nan G. Read and John P. Bartkowski, 2000. “To Veil or Not to Veil? A Case Study of Identity Negotiation among Muslim Women Living in Austin, Texas.” *Gender & Society* 14(3): 395-417.

## **Dieting, Eating Disorders, and Obesity**

### **Thursday October 31<sup>st</sup>**

Lynne Gerber. 2009. "My Body is a Testimony: Appearance, Health and Sin in an Evangelical Weight Loss Program." *Social Compass* 56(3): 405-418.

Samantha Kwan. 2009. "Framing the Fat Body: Contested Meanings Between Government, Activists, and Industry." *Sociological Inquiry* 79(1): 25-50.

C.J Pascoe and Natalie Boero. 2011, "Pro-Anorexia Communities and Online Interaction: Bringing the Pro-Ana Body Online" *Body and Society* 18(2): 227-257.

Guest Lecture: CJ Pascoe, Professor of Sociology

### *Recommended Readings (Graduate Meeting #5)*

Abigail Saguy, Kjerstin Gruys, and Shanna Gong 2010 " Social Problem Construction and National Context: News Reporting on 'Overweight' and 'Obesity' in the U.S. and France." *Social Problems*. November, 57:4, pp. 586-610

Lee F. Monagan. 2005. "Big Handsome Men, Bears and Others: Virtual Constructions of 'Fat Male Embodiment'" *Body and Society* 11(2):81-111

## **Sports**

### **Tuesday November 5<sup>th</sup>**

Cahn, Susan K. 2003. "From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sports." Pp. 67-81 in Weitz's (ed.) *The Politics of Women's Bodies*.

Michael Messner. 1992. "Embodiment of Masculinity" ch. 4 in *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*. Boston: Beacon Press

## **Dis/ability**

### **Thursday November 7<sup>th</sup>**

Gili Hammer. 2012. "Blind Women's Appearance Management: Negotiating Normalcy between Discipline and Pleasure" *Gender & Society* 26(3): 406-432

Thomas J. Gerschick and Adam Stephen Miller. 1994. "Gender Identities at the Crossroads of Masculinity and Physical Disability." *Masculinities* 2(1): 34-55.

## **The Sex Industry**

### **Tuesday November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Kimberly Hoang. 2011. "She's Not a Low Class Dirty Girl! Sex Work in Ho Chi Minh City" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 40(4): 367–396

Kevin Walby. 2010. "Interviews as encounters: issues of sexuality and reflexivity when men interview men about commercial same sex relations" *Qualitative Research*, 10(6): 639-657

### **Thursday November 14<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Reproductive Politics**

Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Read Chapter 3: "Medical Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause."

Steinem, Gloria. [1983] 1995. "If Men Could Menstruate." Pp. 250-251 in *Men's Lives*, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner. Third Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

### **Tuesday November 19<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Embodied Politics**

Lisa Wade. 2011. "The Politics of Acculturation: Female Genital Cutting and the Challenge of Building Multicultural Democracies" *Social Problems*, 58, (4): 518–537

Elizabeth Reis "The Ethics of American Circumcision in a Globalized World," *The Global Studies Journal* 4, 2 (2012), 45-50

Guest Lecture: Elizabeth Reis, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies

### **Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup>**

Davis, Kathy. 2007. *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders*, Duke University Press. Introduction, Part I

### **Tuesday November 26<sup>th</sup>**

Davis, Kathy. 2007. *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders*, Duke University Press. Part II

### **Thursday November 28<sup>th</sup>**

Thanksgiving - No Class

## **Embodying Feminist Theory**

**Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Denise Riley “Bodies, Identities, and Feminism” in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* edited by Janet Price, Margrit Shildrick Edinburgh University Press

Moira Gatens “Power, Bodies, and Difference” in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* edited by Janet Price, Margrit Shildrick Edinburgh University Press

Trinh T. Min-ha “Write Your Body” and “The Body in Theory” *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* edited by Janet Price, Margrit Shildrick Edinburgh University Press

**Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup>**

In Class Film: Juggling Gender

## **Policies and Expectations**

### ***Attendance:***

Your presence is *mandatory* at all meetings. However, I realize that unforeseen circumstances do arise over the course of the term, so please do contact me in advance (via email is the best) if you expect to miss class. Three or more absences will result in an automatic deduction from your class participation grade. Please note that I will take attendance at the beginning of each class, thus if you are late you run the risk of being marked absent. Habitual lateness will also lower your grade.

### ***Participation:***

This is a seminar course and we will primarily learn from the readings and from each other through our class discussions. You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and you should be prepared to comment extensively on the readings during class discussion. The quality of this course will depend in large part on the effort that each individual student puts into actively engaging and participating during our discussions. Your participation grade will be based on your effort and ability to regularly share your thoughts, observations, and questions about the readings while engaging with the other students in the course. Remember to bring the relevant texts with you. I encourage you to jot down notes, questions, and key passages as you do the reading. I will work hard to ensure that our class is a supportive environment wherein we all feel comfortable sharing our perspectives and build a collective learning environment for all students. This class will often deal with politically and emotionally charged subject matters; I want this class to be a safe and stimulating forum for discussion for all students. We must all work together to foster a *respectful classroom environment* where diverse opinions can be freely shared to create a constructive space for open dialogue. Please be open-minded with your classmates and me.

### ***Missed or Late Assignments:***

Late Assignments will automatically lose points for each day they are late (1/3 of a grade per day). If you anticipate needing an extension please communicate with me as early as possible, but no later than two days before the deadline. *Except in the case of a real and verifiable emergency accompanied by*



*appropriate and official documentation* students will NOT be allowed to make up or complete assignments one week passed the deadline.

***Academic Integrity***

Much of your learning in this class will come from the contributions and ideas of your classmates; in this respect, collaboration is encouraged. However, plagiarism in any form will result in the automatic failure of the assignment. Additionally, an incident report or complaint will be sent to appropriate offices at the University of Oregon. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own (including copying other students' work or using Internet resources without proper citation).

***Accessible Education Program and Special Accommodations***

If you have a documented need for special accommodations in class or on assignments, I will be happy to work out these arrangements with you. If this applies to you, please make arrangements as soon as possible with the Accessible Education Center. Others whose commitments might affect their ability to attend class or complete assignments on time should also speak to me about possible conflicts ahead of time.