The University of Western Ontario  
London  
Canada  
Women’s Studies and Feminist Research  

WS 2162B: The Body  

Time and location: Mondays 4:30 - 7:30 pm; Room TBA  
Instructor: Wendy Pearson and guest lecturers  
Office hours: TBA  

Course Description:  
How we understand the body, whether through scientific investigation or through its representation in media, literature or art, has material effects on how people’s lives and experiences are shaped. We will examine social and scientific constructions of the body, including concepts of beauty, health, fitness, race, sexuality, and questions of representation.  

The course will also consider how our relationship -- both personal and cultural -- to our bodies shapes our sense of self and both prescribes and proscribes certain possibilities for how we may live our lives. We will look, for example, at the way in which only certain very fit bodies qualify as athletic or at the ways in which the relationship between musculature and class identity has changed since the early 20th century. We will look at how we think about the body in relationship to health and disease. We will examine particular social problems, potentially including our society’s difficulty with understanding the disabled body as sexual, the current cultural obsession with children’s body size, and the psychiatric and medical response to people who feel that their bodily sex does not match their gender. We will consider changing definitions of beauty and how those affect the ways in which different people understand themselves. We may also look at questions of representation, the various ways in which bodies and body parts are represented in the media and the issue of why some forms of representation of the nude body count as art while others are considered pornographic.  

Course Objectives:  
By the end of the course, students will be able to:  

- Reflect upon and communicate the multiple ways that we experience embodiment.  
- Identify different ways of understanding the social construction of the body and the impact of different disciplines, such as science, medicine and art, on our sense of what bodies mean and how and why they matter.  
- Consider the body in relation to history, philosophy, health, society, literature, and popular culture.  
- Critically reflect upon the significance of the way bodies are represented in different media.  
- Compare and appreciate multiple theoretical and disciplinary perspectives and viewpoints concerning the body.  

Figure 1: Leonardo da Vinci, “Rotated views of the musculature of the right arm and shoulder”
In addition, students will develop their written, oral, and critical skills in these ways:

- By posting in on-line discussions through the term, students will develop skills of critical analysis, critical writing, and interactive engagement with others concerning course material.
- By participating weekly in in-class discussions (in both large and small groups), students will become stronger and more confident speakers.
- Through tests and examinations designed to promote the synthesizing and consolidating of course material, students will sharpen their critical writing and critical thinking skills.

**Required Readings:**
Course pack, available from UWO bookstore.

**Recommended Readings:**

**Evaluation Details:**

1. **Participation in on-line discussions (20%).** You will be expected to post comments or questions about the readings ten times during the course. You may, of course, feel free to continue posting even after you have completed your minimum. Please put some thought into your contributions to on-line discussion. Postings must engage intelligently and respectfully with course material and with students and TAs. A grading rubric is provided in the Online Discussion FAQ on Owl Sakai.

2. **In-class tests (20% each).** Each test will be 75 minutes in length; there will be a 15 minute break, followed by a one-hour lecture. Test format may include multiple choice, T/F, fill in the blanks, very short answer, and short essay questions.

3. **Final Examination (40%)** to be scheduled during the official examination period. The final examination will be 2 ½ hours in length. The test format will be similar to the in-class tests, but will include a longer essay question. Three essay questions will be given out two weeks before the end of term; one of these questions will appear on the exam.

**Course Website:**
All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to [https://owl.uwo.ca/portal](https://owl.uwo.ca/portal)

**Course Policies**

**Prerequisites:** This course has no prerequisite.

**Scholastic Offences:** “Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf (see http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/crsout.pdf )

Simply put: do not cheat. It is unfair to other students who work hard to do assignments on their own and you will almost certainly be caught at some point.

**Electronic devices in tests and exams:** No electronic devices will be permitted during the in-class tests or the final exam. If you wish to check the time during a test or exam, please wear a watch.
Medical Policy: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf. Requests for accommodation must be made within 28 calendar days of the missed assignment.

Appeals: Discussions about graded assignments may not take place within 24 hours after the grade is posted or the assignment returned. Questions about grades will be entertained for the following three weeks. No appeals or other grade requests will be considered outside of this period.

Class Schedule

TBA

Figure 2: Body Painting Optical Illusion (14) from Prafulla.net
This course outline may be subject to change prior to the first class.