

**Western University**  
**Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research**

WS 2162B The Body  
(January – April 2019)

**Instructor:** Rachael Pack, rpack@uwo.ca

**Office hours:** Thursdays 3 – 4pm or by appointment

**Class times:** Thursdays 4:30 – 7:30 pm

**Location:** TBD

**Description:**

How we understand the body matters; it shapes people's lives and experiences. In this course we will explore the following questions:

- What is a body, and what is its relationship to the self and to society?
- How are the categories of "woman," "man" and "other" constructed and embodied?
- What contemporary and historical body politics shape how different bodies are perceived, valued and controlled?
- Why do we spend so much money, time, and energy trying to "improve" our bodies?
- Which bodies are perceived to be "normal," which are not, and why?
- Which bodies are perceived to be dangerous, which are not, and why?
- How is all of this shaped by society and culture?

This course invites you to apply a critical framework and consider how bodies are shaped by social, cultural and ideological norms. In this class we will pay particular attention to the ways in which cultural ideas about the body shape our everyday, lived experiences. This course will study the body as the vessel and expression of the self, as the object and subject of shifting race, gender, class and sexual meanings and struggles, and as the product of complex social processes, including culture, science, medicalization, objectification, commodification and mass media.

All assigned readings for the course will be available on OWL Sakai.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Describe the ways in which sex, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, social class, sexuality, age, ability and other factors shape embodied experiences.

- Identify different ways of understanding how bodies are socially constructed and how different disciplines, such as science, medicine and art, shape 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
- Reflect upon and communicate the multiple ways that we experience embodiment.

The course will also facilitate the development of students’:

- Critical and analytical thinking skills
- Oral and written communication skills; and
- Ability to assess and synthesize information

**Prerequisites:**

None. All are welcome.

**Assessments and Instructions:**

Quizzes (2 x 15%)	30%
Critical Media Review	15%
Autobiographical Reflection	15%
Final Exam	40%

Quizzes:

We will have 2 quizzes throughout the term. Quizzes will include short answer and short essay questions. Each will take approximately one hour and will cover material from readings, lecture and in-class films. Quizzes will be given at the start of class. Once all students have completed the quiz, we will continue with a lecture.

Critical Media Review:

For this assignment, students will be required to select and analyze a cultural product related to the representation or construction of the body. You may choose to analyze a magazine article, Instagram hashtag, a print or video advertising campaign, a television show, YouTube video, blog post or other media product. Your analysis should be 3 - 4

pages in length and make clear connections to concepts covered in the course. You are required to submit a copy (hyperlink, photo, print out etc.,) of your chosen cultural product along with your analysis.

#### Autobiographical Reflection:

Students will write their own 2 - 3-page narrative drawing on their own embodied, social experiences. Students will be provided in-class with examples of this type of writing from which to draw inspiration. Students are encouraged to be creative in their approach to this assignment. You may choose to write about any experience that explores how your body not just a biological “given” but a socially constructed and dynamic entity. Students are expected to integrate relevant readings to extend their personal discussion and to make connections between their story and the content we are encountering in our texts and class discussion.

#### Final Exam

The final exam will bring together the main concepts, themes and theoretical ideas from the entire course. Students will engage with the central themes/concepts/ideas in both short and long answer format. 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. Dates and locations of the exam are TBA. All material covered in class (including regular and guest lectures, films and other learning materials) are testable.

#### **Course Policies:**

##### Accommodation for students with disabilities:

Please contact [ws-ugrad@uwo.ca](mailto:ws-ugrad@uwo.ca) if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you. You can also contact Services for Students with Disabilities at [ssd@uwo.ca](mailto:ssd@uwo.ca) or by phone at (519) 661-2147.

##### Policy on Assignment and Paper Submission:

All assignments and papers should be submitted online via OWL by the due date. Students are not required to submit hard copies of their assignments.

##### Turnitin:

Required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review by the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>) (see <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/crsout.pdf>)

### Policy on Missed/Late Assignments:

It is the expectation that students in Women's Studies classes will submit assignments by the assigned dates. Late assignments will only be accepted without penalty if a prior agreement with the Instructor has been made. Students who submit assignments late without making a prior agreement with the Instructor, or without a valid medical certificate, will be penalized **3% for every 24-hour period past the assignment deadline.**

An absence during a quiz or an exam will earn a "0" on the assignment, unless you have medical or compassionate grounds for accommodation.

UWO Senate requires that 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.

### Attendance policy:

Persistent absenteeism may be rendered grounds for failure in the course, in accordance with the policy of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research. Circumstances requiring academic accommodation should be addressed with the Academic Counselor in the student's faculty of registration.

### **Scholastic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offense. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words, and must acknowledge others' ideas using citations and quotation marks where appropriate.

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>

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>

### **Email Etiquette**

Please contact the course instructor through email (rpack@uwo.ca). If you do not receive a response from the instructor within 48 hours, a second email is acceptable as a polite reminder of the student's question or concern.

### **Reading Schedule**

TBA