

The University of Western Ontario London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
Winter 2022
GSWS2162B: "The Body" *Tentative Syllabus*

Class: Tuesdays, 4:30-7:30pm

Location: Spencer Engineering Building, Room 1200

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Blanchette (she/her)

Virtual Office Hours: TBA

Office Number: Zoom Meeting ID (975 967 1981)

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Teaching Assistant: Liam Macdonald (he/him)

Virtual Office Hours: Wed. 10:30-11:30am

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Teaching Assistant: Nisa Akdemir Genc (she/her)

Office Hours: Thurs. 10-11am

Email: nakdemir@uwo.ca

Land Acknowledgement:

Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are 3 local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.

Course Description:

This course examines the body from multiple critical perspectives by exploring some of the following key lines of inquiry alongside relevant cultural examples. How can we read the body as a social construct? What identifiers or categories are applied to bodies—sexed, gendered, racialized, dis/abled? How do ideas about the body affect autonomy, sexual intimacy, political agency, reproductive labor, and social justice? Which bodies are framed by normative biomedical and social discourse as invisible, illegible, monstrous, deviant, or dangerous, and why? How does the body respond to pain/violence and illness/contagion? How can we complicate dualistic concepts of the relationship between the body and mind?

The course analyzes how ideas of bodies are shaped by socio-political and biomedical discourse and encourages students to explore what it means to be an embodied subject in a world that divides bodies into discrete categories. The current moment of both the COVID-19 pandemic

and the BLM movement in the wake of racist police violence has highlighted the disparate ways bodies are vulnerable to violence and precarious to viral contagions. Vaccine refusal discourse raises important questions about whether personal bodily autonomy should be privileged over herd immunity. As a result, it has perhaps never been more urgent to think about how the body is shaped (and potentially destroyed) by socio-political forces. We will confront these bioethical questions related to bodily autonomy and violence against bodies and query how we can understand broader social injustices as being written on the body. The course will challenge students to reconceptualize the perceived limitations of bodies—as discrete from socio-political and historical influences, as an isolated nation, or as distinct from the mind/mental experiences.

This class will strive to create a setting in which everyone feels that their dignity, identity, privacy, personal space, and autonomy are respected. While it is impossible to guarantee that the classroom will remain a safe space or be entirely confidential, it will be accountable space. Sensitive topics such as oppression, discrimination, and violence will come up in this class. We will not skirt difficult issues. This course contract details some of these topics. Talk to your instructor if you have any concerns about course material or about respectful language. Please keep in mind that pejorative language will not be tolerated. I encourage all my students to speak to me if they ever feel uncomfortable in the classroom and to challenge my own use of language when they find it problematic.

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize how ideas of the body and embodiment are socially constructed and how bodies are represented in distinct disciplines (medicine vs. art) and popular culture
- Identify how broader hierarchies of power influence normative conceptualizations of embodiment, including sex, gender identity, race, and dis/ability
- Engage with bioethical debates surrounding embodiment, including vaccine hesitancy and refusal and the paid surrogacy market in India
- Problematize how certain bodies are cast as invisible, illegible, monstrous, unruly, deviant, or dangerous and how this discourse causes these bodies to be subjected to violence and/or health inequalities
- Challenge dualistic conceptions of the mind/body and individual/society
- Engage with ideas of the body from multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives
- Analyze and critique how bodies are portrayed in popular culture/social media
- Reflect on what it means to be (and feel) embodied in a creative project

Required Texts:

Zawilski, Valerie, Ed. *Bodies Studies in Canada: Critical Approaches to Embodied Experiences*. Canadian Scholars, 2021. (Available at the Western Bookstore and on Course Reserve at Weldon Library.)

Additional readings will be provided on OWL or through the library.

Evaluation:

Creative Writing Assignment (20%), 2-3 pages, Due **Feb. 8th** at 11:55pm EDT

This assignment will allow students to utilize their creativity to explore their personal experiences or reflections on embodiment. What does it mean to be embodied?

Online Midterm (20%), 90 Minutes, Due **March 1st** at 6pm EDT

A linear online assessment composed of true/false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions designed to evaluate knowledge of course readings and lecture material.

Critical Reflection Paper (20%), 2-3 pages, Due **March 15th** at 11:55pm EDT

This assignment asks students to illustrate connections between a course reading and a relevant literary or cultural text of choice. How can we see ideas of the body at work in popular culture and/or social media?

Final Exam (40%), TBA by Registrar during Final Exam Period (April 4 – 30)

This will be a cumulative final exam that threads together key themes and topics of the course with long answer questions and an essay.

Course Website:

All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

Course Policies:

Prerequisites: “Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/courseoutlines.pdf

Assignment Submissions: All assignments (except the final exam) will be submitted virtually on OWL under “Assignments.” You will receive a verification email from OWL after successfully submitting an assignment. If you do not receive this notification, try again, or

contact Western IT for assistance. Please give yourself adequate time to submit in case of electronic or Internet-connectivity issues. The time/date stamp on OWL will be used to determine potential late penalties.

Hard copies will not be accepted. Drop box submissions will not be accepted. Email submissions will not be accepted.

Grading: Assignment submissions will be evaluated according to the rubrics and guidelines provided. If a student provides a cogent written argument within one week of the assignment being returned for why their assignment meets the criteria for a higher grade than they received, a clean copy of the assignment will be re-graded. Please keep in mind that the new grade **may be lower than the original grade**. Additionally, grades are assigned on a merit basis only, and it is departmental policy to *never* increase a student's grade purely to improve their average.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will receive a 2% grade penalty per day up to a maximum of 7 days, after which the assignment will no longer be accepted and receive **an automatic zero**. Late assignments will not receive feedback.

Please keep in mind that Student Reported Absences (SRA) grant a 48-hour extension only. For example, if your assignment is due Feb 8th at 11:55pm EDT, with an SRA, your assignment is now due Feb 10th at 11:55pm EDT. Please also notify the Professor and/or TA of your SRA.

Academic Consideration: Please see the following:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Students seeking academic consideration for medical grounds, compassionate grounds, or other extreme circumstances 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 within 28 days of the missed assignment**. **Academic consideration cannot be granted by the instructor or department.** For UWO Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness see the online Academic Calendar; information can also be found here: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

Attendance: Attendance is highly encouraged for success in the course, but students should not attend class if they are feeling unwell, exhibit potential symptoms of COVID-19, or have been asked to self-isolate. Students will not be penalized for missing classes. The instructor will post all PowerPoint presentations on OWL within 24 hours of each lecture. These PowerPoints will be available until the final day of classes (April 1st).

Email: Professor Blanchette will respond to all emails sent between Monday – Thursday within 24 hours. Emails sent Friday – Sunday will be responded to on Monday mornings. Please be professional and courteous in all emails with the Professor and teaching assistants.

Classroom behaviour: Students must wear appropriate 3-layer face masks in the classroom. You are not allowed to record the lecture in any format without explicit permission from the

Professor. Students requiring lecture notes should seek assistance from SSD (<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>).

Electronic devices: Laptops are permitted in the classroom for educational purposes. If you know that you are prone to browsing the Internet, please be respectful of your classmates and sit at the back of the class so as not to distract others. **Cell phones are NOT permitted in class.** You may be asked to step out of the class if you are using your phone.

Online behaviour: Students will NOT be required to turn on their video if/when there are online virtual Zoom classes. These sessions will also not be recorded to protect student's privacy. Students are still expected to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner online as they would in a physical classroom. Derogatory remarks and offensive language will not be permitted in the call or chat.

Turnitin: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to 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 licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)" (<https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/TurnItIn.html>)

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests or exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating." (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

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

Note for students with disabilities: Please contact gswsugchair@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 may also contact aew@uwo.ca to find out the full range of services available to you.

Lecture & Reading Schedule

Jan 4: Introduction

N/A

Jan 11: Social Theory

Shilling, Chris. "The Socially Constructed Body," *The Body and Social Theory*. SAGE, 2012, pp. 75-102.

Turner, Bryan S. "Sociology and the Body," *The Body & Society*, SAGE, 3rd Edition, 2008, pp. 33-56.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Faces." *Staring: How We Look*, Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 97-118.

Jan 18: Sexed, Gendered, and Racialized Bodies

Grosz, Elizabeth. "Refiguring Bodies." *Volatile Bodies: Towards Corporeal Feminism*. Taylor & Francis, 1994, pp. 3-24.

Malatino, Hilary. "Impossible Existences: Intersex and 'Disorders of Sex Development.'" *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience*. U of Nebraska P, 2019, pp.71-99.

Bernard, Tamara. "(Re)Storying Indigenous Womanhood: Reclaiming Selfhood and Resisting Colonial Dismemberment." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, pp. 15-40.

Jan 25: Disrupting the Healthy/Unhealthy Binary

Erevelles, Nirmala. "Disability as 'Becoming': Notes on the Political Economy of the Flesh." *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*. Palgrave, 2011, pp. 25-64.

Plyley, Heather and Annette Burfoot. "Fat Reclamation and Identity Management in the Canadian Context." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, pp. 59-71.

Ning, Ana M. "The Myth of Healthiness: Rethinking the Boundaries between Healthy Selves and Unhealthy Others in Drug Addiction Treatment." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, 144-170.

Feb 1: Trans- Identity and Gender Legibility *Virtual Guest Lecturer: Evan Buck*

Kirkup, Kyle. "The Origins of Gender Identity and Gender Expression in Anglo-American Legal Discourse." *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, vol. 68, no. 1, 2018, pp. 80-117.

Stryker, Susan. "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." *GLQ*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1994, pp. 237-254.

Final Reading TBA (poetry or fiction)

Feb 8: Embodiment and Sexuality

Wilkerson, Abby. "Normate Sex and its Discontents." *Sex and Disability*, Eds. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, Duke UP, 2012, pp. 183-207.

Hobson, Janell. "Remnants of Venus: Signifying Black Beauty and Sexuality." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1/2, 2018, pp. 105-120.

Mandell, Nancy and Lois Kamenitz. "Women Moving into Later Life: Aging Bodies, Changing Identities." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, pp. 72-94.

Feb 15: Embodied Labor

Quinlan, Andrea and Rashmee Singh. "COVID-19 and the Paradox of Visibility: Domestic Violence and Feminist Caring Labor in Canadian Shelters." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2020, pp. 572-582.

Alomar, Maisam. "Crisis, Care, and the Terror of Uncertainty." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2020, pp. 596-602.

Pande, Amrita. "Embodied Labor and Neo-Eugenics." From *Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India*. Columbia UP, 2014, pp. 104-127.

Mintz, Judith. "'It Was Such a Good Medicine for Me': Contesting the Body Project of Yoga, Health, and Ideal Femininity." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, pp. 114-129.

Feb 22: READING WEEK

Mar 1: Virtual OWL Midterm *No Class*

Mar 8: The Body as Abject, Deviant, or Monstrous

Strings, Sabrina. "Being Venus." In *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. New York UP, 2019, pp. 15-41.

Smith, Donna Lynn, Megan Aiken, Amy Gerlock, and John Church. "The Undignified Body: Excremental Assault in Canadian Nursing Homes." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, pp. 224-250.

Singer, T. Benjamin. "From the Medical Gaze to Sublime Mutations: The Ethics of (Re)Viewing Non-normative Body Images." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Eds. Stephen Whittle and Susan Stryker. Taylor and Francis, 2013, pp. 601-620.

Mar 15: Social Injustice & the Body

Smith-Purviance, Ashley L. "Masked Violence against Black Women and Girls." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2021, pp. 175-200.

Tajrobehkar, Bahar. "Power and the Body: Iranian Female Immigrants' Perceptions and Experiences of Bodily Freedoms in Iran and Canada." *Bodies Studies in Canada*, edited by Valerie Zawilski, 171-188.

Clare, Eli. "Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies: Disability and Queerness." *Public Culture*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Duke UP, 2001, pp. 359-66.

Mar 22: COVID-19 and the Body

Ng, Eve. "Unmasking Masculinity: Considering Gender, Science, and Nation in Responses to COVID-19." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2020, pp. 694-703.

Destine, Shaneda, Jazzmine Brooks, and Christopher Rogers. "Black Maternal Health Crisis, COVID-19, and the Crisis of Care." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2020, pp. 603-614.

Junker, Yohana Agra. "On Covid-19, U.S. Uprisings, and Black Lives: A Mandate to Regenerate All Our Relations." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2020, pp. 117-129.

Mar 29: Bodyminds

Blackman, Lisa. "Psychiatric Culture and Bodies of Resistance." *Body & Society*, Vol. 13 (2), 2007, pp. 1-23.

Donaldson, Elizabeth. "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness." *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Fall 2002, pp. 99-119.

Schalk, Sami. "Whose Reality Is It Anyway? Deconstructing Able-Mindedness." *Bodyminds Reimagines: Disability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. Duke UP, 2018, pp. 59-84.