

Western University
Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
GSWS 2162B The Body
Course Outline Winter 2026

Course Time: Wednesdays 4:30pm-7:30 pm

Prerequisites: No Prerequisites

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Auger

Email: lauger3@uwo.ca

Office Hours: TBD

GSWS Department Phone Number: 519-661-3759

Land Statement

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

Department Course Description

We will examine social and scientific constructions of the body, including concepts of beauty, health, fitness, sexuality, and questions of representation. Among other things, we may examine particular social problems, such as technologies of the body and bodily modification, ideas of health and illness, society's difficulty with understanding the disabled body as sexual, the cultural obsession with body size, psychiatric and medical responses to people who feel that their bodily sex does not match their gender, changing ideas about beauty and attraction, and artistic conceptions, representations, and alterations of the human body.

Detailed Course Description

This course will demonstrate that bodies matter and embodiment matters. How bodies are understood, valued, and represented in our culture has a real impact on people's everyday lives, how people view themselves as individuals, and people's lived experiences in their bodies. Students will consider the concept of 'embodiment' and unpack the ways in which certain bodies are valued over others. Taking an interdisciplinary feminist approach, we will consider how the

body figures in social attitudes regarding idealized feminine and masculine social roles. The course will unpack contemporary reproductive politics and period politics in the Canada and United States. Students will consider the presence of queer bodies in history examining queer community and healthcare in the Weimar Republic as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We will examine contemporary queer activist bodies including the Drag Time Story Time phenomenon. We will unpack the considerable incarceration rate of BIPOC folx in Canada and the United States and the continued violence against BIPOC bodies by law enforcement. The course will discuss racist origins of contemporary fat shaming discourses that emphasize thinness as wellness and thinness as the beauty ideal. We will learn about the harms committed against disabled communities in history. Students will unpack the exclusion of disabled bodies from sexual cultures and how disabled folx have advocated to be seen as sexual subjects in an ableist world. We will consider how ideas of good health, politics, and racism influenced responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The course will look at the recent advancements in AI and will consider what these advancements may mean for future social attitudes towards material bodies in an increasingly digital world. Finally, the course will discuss current issues in reproductive politics and medicine including abortion, IVF, and genetically enhancing bodies.

Course Objectives

1. to understand the concept 'embodiment' and how scholars in interdisciplinary fields write about embodiment
2. to understand material and discursive frameworks of bodies in body studies
3. to understand how social perceptions regarding 'ideal bodies' influence social hierarchies that have a real effect on people's lives
4. to unpack the power of representation, why representation matters, and how representation influences social attitudes regarding bodies
5. to understand how cultural discourses regarding bodies impact people's material lives
6. to understand why problematic understandings of bodies need to be challenged and changed
7. to investigate how folx resist dominant discourses
8. to understand material experiences of the body
9. to develop students' analytical skills in course assessments making connections between themes and content
10. to enhance students' written communication skills

Evaluation Breakdown

Mid-Term Exam	40%
In-class Responses (2x10%)	20%
Final Exam	40%

Assignment Description

Mid-Term Exam (2 hours) (40% of final grade) The exam will cover weeks 1-6.

In-Class Responses (2x10% of final grade) (**Wednesday, January 21 and Wednesday, March 18**)

Students will write two in-class responses over the course of the term. These responses will be written on paper during our class time. You will be asked to respond to the following question: What is the importance of this week's topic and how does this topic resonate with you? Students will be evaluated based on their ability to adequately and thoughtfully answer the above questions, based on the extent to which they draw on course content, themes, and terms, and based on their level of analysis. **This is an open-book in-class activity. Students will have one hour to complete the response. Please contact the Professor if you have academic accommodations for course assessments.**

Final Exam (2 hours) (40% of the final grade) The exam will cover week 1 as well as weeks 8-13. It will be scheduled during the exam period.

Course Delivery Mode

This course is an in-person course. Weekly readings will be posted online.

Course Materials

All course material will be posted to OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800

Weekly Schedule and Reading Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction- Embodiment and Theorizing the Body

Wednesday, January 7

Shilling, Chris. Introduction. *The Body and Social Theory*. Third edition., SAGE, 2012. 1-20.

Blackman, Lisa. Introduction. *The Body: the Key Concepts*. Second edition., Routledge, 2021. 1-18.

Week 2: Appropriate Feminine Bodies- Sexuality, Pleasure, Motherhood, and Maternal Health

Wednesday, January 14

Milles, Karin, et al. “Something That Stretches During Sex: Replacing the Word ‘Hymen’ with ‘Vaginal Corona’ to Challenge Patriarchal Views on Virginity.” *Gender and Language*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2018, pp. 294–317, <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.31894>.

Green, Fiona Joy. “Re-Conceptualising Motherhood: Reaching Back to Move Forward.” *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2015, pp. 196–207, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2015.1086666>.

Kendall, Mikki. Reproductive Justice, Eugenics, and Maternal Mortality. *Hood Feminism : Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*. Viking, 2020. 173-185.

Week 3: Reproductive Health, Menstruation, Education, and Body Politics

Wednesday, January 21 In-Class Response (10% of final grade)

Purvis, Dara E. “How Sex Ed Fails People With Periods.” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2021, p. Only–, <https://doi.org/10.52214/cjgl.v41i1.8835>.

Olivia Fleming, Jordana Kier, & Alex Friedman, “How to Teach Men About Period Paraphernalia,” *HARPER’S BAZAAR* (July 20, 2017), <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/a10336531/teaching-men-about-tampons/> [<https://perma.cc/S474-ZBDL>].

Scala, Francesca. “Menstrual Activism, Insider-Outsider Alliances and Agenda-Setting: An Analysis of the Campaign to End the ‘Tampon Tax’ in Canada.” *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2023, pp. 228–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2022.2081913>.

“Post-Roe Realities.” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 388, no. 6, 2023, pp. e15–e15, <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2300935>.

Week 4: ‘Making Men’- Building Masculinity-Size Matters

Wednesday, January 28

Coyne, Sarah, et al. “Making Men of Steel: Superhero Exposure and the Development of Hegemonic Masculinity in Children.” *Sex Roles*, vol. 86, no. 11-12, 2022, pp. 634–47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01293-2>.

Simpson, Paul, and Julie Adams. “A Structured Review and Critical Analysis of Male Perceptions of the Penis: A Comparison Between Heterosexual Men and Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM).” *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2019, pp. 658–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17715054>.

Week 5: Queering Bodies and Queer Bodies in History

Wednesday, February 4

Heaney, Emma. “‘I Am Not a Friend to Men’: Embodiment and Desire in Magnus Hirschfeld’s Transvestites Case Studies.” *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2018, pp. 136–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2017.1342443>.

Andriote, John-Manuel. Chapter One Why Not Me? A Medical Diagnosis Upturns my Life and Launches A Journey of Self Discovery. *Stonewall Strong : Gay Men's Heroic Fight for Resilience, Good Health, and a Strong Community*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated, 2017. 15-21. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?docID=5061845>.

João Florêncio . “AIDS Homophobic and Moralistic Images of 1980s Still Haunt Our View of HIV That Must Change. *The Conversation* November 27, 2018. <https://theconversation.com/aids-homophobic-and-moralistic-images-of-1980s-still-haunt-our-view-of-hiv-that-must-change-106580>

Week 6: Contemporary Queer Bodies, Social Space, and Activism

Wednesday, February 11

Suess Schwend, Amets. “Trans Health Care from a Depathologization and Human Rights Perspective.” *Public Health Reviews*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2020, pp. 3–3, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-020-0118-y>.

Keenan, Harper, and Lil Miss Hot Mess. “Drag Pedagogy: The Playful Practice of Queer Imagination in Early Childhood.” *C*, vol. 50, no. 5, 2020, pp. 440–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2020.1864621>.

Week 7: Midterm Exam (40% of final grade)

Wednesday, February 25

Week 8: Reproductive Healthcare in History

Wednesday, March 4

Flemming, Rebecca. "Fertility Control in Ancient Rome." *Women's History Review*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2021, pp. 896–914, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1833491>.

Cook, H. (2004). 'Conferring a Premium on the Destruction of Female Morals': Fertility Control and Sexuality in the Early to Mid-Nineteenth Century." *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (1st ed., pp. xiii–xiii). Oxford University Press. 62-89. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199252183.001.0001>

Week 9: Racialized Bodies, Police Violence, and Incarceration

Wednesday, March 11

Jones, James M. "Killing Fields: Explaining Police Violence Against Persons of Color." *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2017, pp. 872–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12252>.

Smith-Purviance, Ashley L. "Masked Violence Against Black Women and Girls." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2021, p. 175–, <https://doi.org/10.15767/feministstudies.47.1.0175>.

McGuire, Michaela M., and Danielle J. Murdoch. "(In)-Justice: An Exploration of the Dehumanization, Victimization, Criminalization, and over-Incarceration of Indigenous Women in Canada." *Punishment & Society*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2022, pp. 529–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14624745211001685>.

Week 10: Body Image and 'Fearing Black Women's Bodies'-

Wednesday, March 18 In-Class Response (10% of final grade)

Strings, Sabrina. "Introduction: The Original Epidemic." *Fearing the Black Body : the Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. New York University Press, 2019. 1-15

Hart, Ellen, et al. "Anti-Fat Attitudes and Dietary Restraint Within Mother-Daughter Dyads: An Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) Analysis." *Eating and Weight Disorders*, vol. 26, no. 5, 2021, pp. 1417–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-020-00949-w>.

Edwards, Mackenzie. "'Spread My Thighs and Imagine a Better, Fatter World': The Uses of the Erotic in Fat Activist Art." *Fat Studies*, vol. ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print, 2021, pp. 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21604851.2021.2017117>.

Week 11: Disabled Bodies in History and Sexual Cultures

Wednesday, March 25

Loeser, Cassandra, et al. "Disability and Sexuality: Desires and Pleasures." *Sexualities*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2018, pp. 255–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460716688682>.

Erickson, Loree. "Revealing Femmegimp: A Sex-Positive Reflection on Sites of Shame as Sites of Resistance for People with Disabilities." *Atlantis (Wolfville)*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2007, p. 42–52.

Tsiokou, Katerina. "Body Politics and Disability: Negotiating Subjectivity and Embodiment in Disability Poetry." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2017, pp. 205–22, <https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2017.15>.

Benham, Jessica. "Fabulous Fetishization: Kylie Jenner's Interview Cover and Wheelchair Identity Politics." *Gender Forum*, no. 68, 2018, pp. 4–7

Week 12: Modern Body Issues- COVID 19 and Digitized Bodies

Wednesday, April 1

Logie, Carmen H. "What Can We Learn from HIV, COVID-19 and Mpox Stigma to Guide Stigma-Informed Pandemic Preparedness?" *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, vol. 25, no. 12, 2022, pp. e26042–e26042, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26042>.

Zhou, Yuan, and Tracey D. Wade. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Body-dissatisfied Female University Students." *The International Journal of Eating Disorders*, vol. 54, no. 7, 2021, pp. 1283–88, <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.23521>.

Boulton, Maggie, et al. "A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Media Reporting on the Nurse-as-hero During COVID-19." *Nursing Inquiry*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2022, p. e12471–n/a, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nin.12471>.

Cave, Stephen, and Kanta Dihal. "The Whiteness of AI." *Philosophy & Technology*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2020, pp. 685–703, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-020-00415-6>.

Week 13: Medical Intervention and Reproduction: Abortion, IVF, and Genetic Engineering

Wednesday, April 8

Letterie, Gerard, and Dov Fox. "Legal Personhood and Frozen Embryos: Implications for Fertility Patients and Providers in Post- Roe America." *Journal of Law and the Biosciences*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2023, pp. lsad006–lsad006, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jlb/lsad006>.

Borenstein, Jason. "The Wisdom of Caution: Genetic Enhancement and Future Children." *Science and Engineering Ethics*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2009, pp. 517–30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-009-9183-9>.

Learning Environments and Email Policies

Participants enrolled in this class are expected to complete the required course readings, attend all class sessions, respectfully contribute to classroom activities and discussions, and complete course assessments. Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructor. I will try to reply to emails within twenty-four hours during the work week. Please do not expect an immediate response. Put the course code in the subject line of the email. Be as specific as possible with your questions. Specific questions receive specific answers. I may not respond to emails on weekends or during the evenings. If your question is more appropriately handled in-person, please feel free to make an appointment during my office hours or see me after class.

Technical Requirements

This course requires you to have a reliable high-speed internet connection and a computer that meets the technical requirements for writing online timed assessments.

Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for the midterm nor the final exam. Electronic devices of any kind including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted. Electronics such as computers and smartphones are permitted in-lecture. However, please be respectful and refrain from using your electronics for outside activity during class. Please have your telephones set to silent. Our learning environments (including online) will be respectful spaces.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Formal Documentation Designation Statement for the Mid-term Exam

Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: **via a make-up midterm exam.**

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make **one** Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- **Mid-term exam**
- **Final exam**

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Students are expected to **submit each of the responses by the end of class on the day of the response**. Should students miss an in-class response due to extenuating circumstances students must request a makeup response or receive a grade of zero for the assessment. Make-up responses will not be scheduled after **February 25 for response 1 and March 30 for response two**.

Additional Statements

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, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#) . Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Grading Criteria

A+ (90 to 100)

One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A (80 and up)

Superior work which is clearly above average

- Challenging and specific thesis that is clearly developed
- Correct and interesting sentence structure
- Sophisticated writing style
- Appropriate documentation
- Quotations well integrated into the text, with proper documentation
- Evidence of originality or independence of thought
- Provision of strong analysis

- Complexity, and subtlety in approach to subject
- Well-organized with a logical development of the argument

B (70 to 79)

Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

- Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs
- Correct sentence structure
- Adequate documentation
- Allowance for some (minor) problems such as:
 - o errors in factual content or interpretation
 - o some minor errors in terminology or general writing skills
 - o occasional lapses in clarity, including vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure
- Provision of some analysis

Note: A grade in the range of 75-79 indicates an essay that borders on an A but has some significant flaw that prevents giving out the higher grade.

C (60 to 69)

Competent work, meeting requirements

- Generally correct but tends to provide more description than analysis
- Tends to be too general or superficial in the handling of material
- Weaknesses in argument including a descriptive thesis, a mechanical approach, lack of adequate evidence, documentation, or support
- Problems with grammar or matters of style
- Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression

D (50 to 59)

Fair work, minimally acceptable

- Does not provide an argument or a line of thought
- Major difficulties with logical structure, and expression of ideas
- Topic has not been thought through
- Errors of grammar and diction interfere with understanding
- Over-generalization with inadequate support, evidence, or documentation

F (49 and down)

Fail

- Assignment submitted does not apply to course
- Basic requirements of the assignment are not met

Plagiarism with intent to deceive (to be handled by the department)