

## Poststructuralist Theories of the Body

AMN-340.113

Tue 12:30-14:00, Rm 439

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Office hrs: Tue 2-3 or by appointment, Office: 312

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This is an advanced course surveying some contemporary theories of the body. After the introductory lectures given by the instructor on theories of representation, everyday life, and human spaces, we will read and discuss foundational texts on the following topics: body and soul, body and power; bodies male and female; techniques and languages of the body; bodies in consumer culture; dressing the body: clothing, fashion, dress codes; bodies and size; body and beauty; bodies and identities; the medicalization of the body; technologies of gender and race; “normalcy” and disability; the female object.

REQUIRED READINGS have been collected in a PACKET available for xeroxing. The following books have been used:

1. Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco, eds. *The Body—A Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
2. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, eds. *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
3. Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed. *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985.
4. Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque—Risk, Excess and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Grades will be based on (i) class participation, (ii) presenting one book + leading that class discussion, and (iii) a book review. An (iv) in-class final test will be given in case reading assignments are not properly done over the semester.

*Reading the assigned texts.* Students are required to come prepared for class: having read their assignments for the day, they must be able to understand the texts (know the words as well as the main theses and arguments), remember details, and formulate their critical comments. When students do not read the assigned texts, they will be required to hand in the outline, no more than one page for each text, of the assigned readings for the following class.

*Active participation, visibility.* Be visible. Mere physical presence, even when you have read the assignments, is not enough: you have to prove your skills in reading, analysis, and argument in class discussions.

*Presenting one book.* Here you are required to give a 15 minute review of a book related to that day’s topic. You should concentrate on the main theses of the book, find its originality and

significance. You can use your notes while giving your presentation, but cannot read out complete sentences from them. Be sure to rehearse your presentation at home so that you know how long it is. Remember, your presentation will come at the end of the class, so you will have to stop after 15 minutes no matter what. As to locating the book, I encourage you to check Budapest libraries first. If it is not available anywhere, I will lend you the book for three weeks altogether: two weeks before you give your presentation and one week after (when your review is due).

*Leading that class discussion.* Leading the class discussion the day when your presentation is due will also be your responsibility. This means that you will have to come extra prepared in the assigned readings of the day, understand them fully (you might have to do some research in order to accomplish that), and be able to explain the problematic parts.

*Book review.* As a written assignment, you must write up your presentation into a proper book review for the week following your oral presentation. Check scholarly journals about the genre of the book review. Give a summary of the main theses. Try to contextualize the book, show where it fits in, where it is original and where it might be useful.

*In-class final test (pending).* This test will cover all the readings, discussions, and presentations.

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## **Schedule of classes and assignments**

**September 9            Orientation**

**September 16        Representation**

Instructor's lecture on theories of the body, representation, the spectacle of the "other," and the exhibition of gender

**September 23        Theories of everyday life and its spaces**

Instructor's lecture on the self in everyday life, body and space

**September 30        What are bodies? Body and soul, body and power**

### Read:

Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Bodies"

Mary Douglas, "The Two Bodies"

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology"

Michel Foucault, "The Political Investment of the Body"

**October 7                    Bodies white and black, male and female**

Read:

Carol M. Armstrong, “Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body”

Ludmilla Jordanova, “Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality”

Presentation: Linda Nochlin, *Representing Women*

Susan Bordo, *The Male Body*

Stuart Hall and Mark Sealy, eds., *Different. Contemporary Photographers and Black Identity*

Linda Nead, *The Female Nude*

**October 14                    Techniques and languages of the body**

Read:

Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body”

Erving Goffman, “Embodied Information in Face-toFace Interaction”

Presentation: Allan and Barbara Pease, *Body Language*

Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (esp. Ch.6, “The Body as Inscriptive Surface”)

**October 21                    Bodies in consumer culture, dressing the body: clothing, fashion,  
dress codes**

Read:

Jean Baudrillard, “The Finest Consumer Object: The Body”

Presentation: Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion*

Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing*

Ruth P. Rubinstein, *Dress Codes*

Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication*

George B. Sproles and Leslie Davis Burns, *Changing Appearances—Understanding Dress in Contemporary Society*

**October 28                    No class**

**November 4                    Bodies and size, body and beauty**

Read:

Nicky Diamond, “Thin Is the Feminist Issue”

Noella Caskey, “Interpreting Anorexia Nervosa”

Fen Coles, “Feminine Charms and Outrageous Arms”

Presentation: Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*  
Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*  
Virginia L. Blum, *The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery*

**November 11            Bodies and identities**

Read:

Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, "Ageing and Its Embodiment"  
Allucquere Rosanne Stone, "In Novel Conditions: The Cross-Dressing Psychiatrist"  
Beverly Skeggs, "Ambivalent Femininities"

**November 18            The medicalization of the body, technologies of gender and race**

Read:

Ellen L. Bassuk, "The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women's Conflicts?"  
Carlos Novas and Nikolas Rose, "Genetic Risk and the Birth of the Somatic Individual"  
Jane Sawicki, "Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies"  
Paul Gilroy, "Race Ends Here"

Presentation: Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*

**November 25            "Normalcy" and disability**

Read:

Lannard J. Davis, "Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso"  
Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price, "Breaking the Boundaries of the Broken Body"

Presentation: Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*

Rosemarie Garland Thomson: *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*

**December 2            The female abject**

Read:

Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources"  
Rosi Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: Teratology and Embodied Differences"  
Mary Russo, "Introduction" to *The Female Grotesque—Risk, Excess and Modernity*

Presentation: *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art* (Whitney Museum Exhibition)

Catalogue)

Tina Chanter, *The Picture of Abjection*

**December 9**

**In-class final test or Grade books signed**

## PACKET OF READINGS

1. Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Bodies." *The Body—A Reader*. 47-51.
2. Mary Douglas, "The Two Bodies." *The Body—A Reader*. 78-81.
3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology." *The Body—A Reader*. 52-54.
4. Michel Foucault, "The Political Investment of the Body." *The Body—A Reader*. 100-104.
5. Carol M. Armstrong, "Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body." *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*. 223-242.
6. Ludmilla Jordanova, "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality." *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. 157-168.
7. Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body." *The Body—A Reader*. 73-77.
8. Erving Goffman, "Embodied Information in Face-to-Face Interaction." *The Body—A Reader*. 82-86.
9. Jean Baudrillard, "The Finest Consumer Object: The Body." *The Body—A Reader*. 277-282.
10. Nicky Diamond, "Thin Is the Feminist Issue." *The Body—A Reader*. 115-116.
11. Noella Caskey, "Interpreting Anorexia Nervosa." *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*. 175-189.
12. Fen Coles, "Feminine Charms and Outrageous Arms." *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. 445-453.
13. Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, "Ageing and Its Embodiment." *The Body—A Reader*. 117-121.
14. Allucquere Rosanne Stone, "In Novel Conditions: The Cross-Dressing Psychiatrist." *The Body—A Reader*. 135-149.
15. Beverley Skeggs, "Ambivalent Femininities." *The Body—A Reader*. 129-134.
16. Ellen L. Bassuk, "The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women's Conflicts?" *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*. 139-151.
17. Carlos Novas and Nikolas Rose, "Genetic Risk and the Birth of the Somatic Individual." *The Body—A Reader*. 237-241.
18. Jane Sawicki, "Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies." *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. 190-202.
19. Paul Gilroy, "Race Ends Here." *The Body—A Reader*. 251-255.
20. Lannard J. Davis, "Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso." *The Body—A Reader*. 167-181.
21. Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price, "Breaking the Boundaries of the Broken Body." *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. 432-444.
22. Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources." *The Body—A Reader*. 92-95.
23. Rosi Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: Teratology and Embodied Differences." *Feminist Theory and the Body—A Reader*. 290-301.
24. Mary Russo, "Introduction" to *The Female Grotesque*.