

**Subject, Body, Autobiography**  
**Enikő Bollobás**

This doctoral course attempts to survey a particular theoretical space: that framed by theories of the subject, the body, and autobiography. The premise of the course establishes links between these critical areas, insisting that the subject, brought about by Butlerian-Foucauldian *assujettissement*, is always an embodied subject, one firmly grounded in the body and the body's (critical) relations to a set of norms as well as other individuals. Moreover, the subject's becoming conscious of itself is inseparable from self-narrating and ethical self-making, both involving the body. The three theoretical concepts—subjectivity, embodiment, autobiography—give the primary focus of the course, which we will explore historically and in various disciplines from poststructuralist literary theory to cognitive sciences to feminist criticism.

Topics include: the body's agency, embodied selfhood, intersubjectivity, proprioception, interface between the physical and the cultural, body / self-awareness / perception; spiritual & corporeal individuality, the body and narrative, the lived body, body and language, pain and voice, language and the embodied subject, life writing about the body, the body as a site of autobiographical knowledge, narratives of the body, body and memory, memory and embodiment, body and identity, the body made visible in the narrative, narrative traces of the body, the damaged body.

Students are required to

- (i) read the assignments for each class,
- (ii) do one oral presentation on the concept of embodiment in a discipline or approach of their choice (April 9 & 16),
- (iii) write a research paper of 8-10 pages in which they apply this theoretical framework to their own dissertation topic (or, where this does not apply, to a topic of their choice). Deadline: May 15.

All reading assignments and presentation texts are available in pdf form. You can also download them through this link:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B7Oy5nWDSBDaOEtnCy1XNG9QZIU&usp=sharing>

## Schedule of topics and assignments

### Orientation

### SUBJECTIVITY

#### THEORIES OF THE SUBJECT

Assignment for all:

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

(It is assumed that everyone is familiar with this classic; should this assumption not prove true, please [re]read Butler so that you can participate in class discussion.)

#### Power, Critique, Agency

Assignment for all:

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power"

Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique"

Judith Butler, "What Is Critique"

#### Intersubjectivity

Assignment for all:

Kym Maclaren, "Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming a Subject"

#### The Body

Assignment for all:

Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Bodies," "The Body as Inscriptive Surface"

### EMBODIMENT

#### The classics: Husserl

Assignment for all:

Joona Taipale, "Selfhood and the Lived Body," "Intersubjectivity"

#### The classics: Merleau-Ponty

Assignment for all:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Sense Experience," "Other Selves and the Human World"

## Embodiment in the humanities and social sciences

### Student presentations:

#### 1. Embodiment in cognitive sciences

Szokolszky Ágnes, „Nyelvi megértés az »embodiment« nézőpontja szempontjából”

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#### 2. Embodiment in social psychology

Brian P. Meier, Simone Schnall, Norbert Schwarz, John A. Bargh, “Embodiment in Social Psychology”

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#### 3. Embodiment and feminism

Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*

Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”

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#### 4. Embodiment and ethics

Gail Weiss, *Body*, “Bodily Imperatives”

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#### 5. Embodiment in visual culture

David Levente Palatinus, “From the *Pictorial Turn* to the Embodiment of Vision”

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#### 6. Embodiment and anthropology

Thomas J. Csordas, “Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology”

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#### 7. Embodiment and the narrative

Genie Babb, “Where the Bodies Are Buried: Cartesian Dispositions in Narrative Theories of Character”

Catriona Mackenzie, “Personal Identity, Narrative Integration, and Embodiment”

*Helikon* “Testírás”-szám – LVII (2011)/1-2. (Recenzió: Tóthová Andrea: “Megírni a testet és testet adni az írásnak” – TNTf)

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## **Student presentations cont'd**

### **FEMALE EMBODIMENT**

#### Assignment for all:

Susan Bordo, "Material Girl," "Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies, Postmodern Resistance"

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

#### Assignment for all:

Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact"

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Life Narrative: Definitions and Distinctions,"  
"Autobiographical Subjects"

### **Life writing and the body, body and identity**

#### Assignment for all:

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "The History of Autobiography Criticism, Part I: Theorizing Autobiography," "The History of Autobiography Criticism, Part II: Expanding Autobiography Studies"

Sidonie Smith, "The Universal Subject, Female Embodiment, and the Consolidation of Autobiography," "The Bodies of Contemporary Autobiographical Practice"

### **Wrapping up; research papers due.**

## List of readings

1. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
2. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power"
3. Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique"
4. Judith Butler, "What Is Critique"
5. Kym Maclaren, "Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming a Subject" (*Embodiment and Agency*, ed. Sue Campbell, Letitia Meynell, and Susan Sherwin, 25-45)
6. Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Bodies" (*Volatile Bodies*, 3-24)
7. Elizabeth Grosz, "The Body as Inscriptive Surface" (*Volatile Bodies*, 138-159)
8. Joonas Taipale, "Selfhood and the Lived Body" " (*Phenomenology and Embodiment—Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity*, 21-66)
9. Joonas Taipale, "Intersubjectivity" (*Phenomenology and Embodiment—Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity*, 69-117)
10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Sense Experience" (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 207-242)
11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Other Selves and the Human World" (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 346-365)
12. Susan Bordo, "Material Girl" (*Unbearable Weight—Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, 245-275 [esp. 265-275])
13. Susan Bordo, "Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies, Postmodern Resistance" (*Unbearable Weight—Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, 277-300 [esp. 287-300])
14. Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact" (*On Autobiography*, 3-30)
15. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Life Narrative: Definitions and Distinctions," "Autobiographical Subjects," (*Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* [The U of Minnesota P, 2001], 1-48)
16. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "The History of Autobiography Criticism, Part I: Theorizing Autobiography," "The History of Autobiography Criticism, Part II: Expanding Autobiography Studies" (*Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* [The U of Minnesota P, 2001], 111-164)
17. Sidonie Smith, "The Universal Subject, Female Embodiment, and the Consolidation of Autobiography" (*Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* [Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993], 1-23)
18. Sidonie Smith, "The Bodies of Contemporary Autobiographical Practice" (*Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* [Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993], 126-153)