Women and the Body
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Tuesday and Thursday 1:30
Cushing 209
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Course Description: This course addresses the socio-cultural construction of the female and addresses the issue of “anatomy as destiny” through an examination of biological and sociological literature on this topic. We will address women’s self esteem and the factors that serve to enhance or detract from women feeling good about their physical bodies. We will also focus on race, class, health and sexuality of the feminine body and discuss issues of power and authority over women’s bodies.

We will employ a feminist pedagogy that provides for short lecture-format, classroom and small group discussions as well as group projects. We will enhance the course with a variety of multi-mediated data—films, videos, YouTube clips—to illuminate specific topics addressed throughout the readings.

Course Objectives:
1. To provide students with a sociological understanding of women’s bodies. We address how the female body is socially and historically constructed.
   a. Breakdown ideologies of sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism and ageism as they pertain to women’s embodiment.
   b. Assess socio-biological arguments regarding women’s bodies.
   c. Develop a historical understanding of how women’s bodies have been shaped and reshaped by the political economy and mass media.
2. To develop an understanding of the ways in which body image is increasingly an extension of women's self identity.
3. To develop research skills in content analysis of multi-mediated data as a method for understanding the objectification of the female body.
4. To understand the etiology of disordered eating and eating disorders.
5. To challenge stereotypical messages about women's bodies by questioning and challenging our own standpoint through developing a wider appreciation and understanding of "difference."
6. Apply knowledge in the classroom to activism beyond academia toward social justice goals.
7. To assist students in their writing skills through faculty and peer evaluations of writing and to encourage undergraduate students to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (15 percent).

Your participation is vital to our course. Excused absences are given only in cases of documented emergencies or sickness. You must arrive on time ready for class, and please turn off your cell phones. 2 participation points will be deducted for each missed class.

Preparation for Class:
Our course will be structured around discussion of core readings for that day. Please come to class with your readings each day. In addition:

For each class period you are required to bring ONE 3 x 5 index card on which you write:
Your name
Three (3) specific discussion questions (be sure to cite what specific reading/s prompted that question).

TWO Quotes from the readings—one you particularly resonated with in a positive way, and one you disagreed with and be prepared to state your opinion regarding these two quotes during class discussion.

We will collect index cards at the beginning of class and choose several to start the discussion off. Please bring a duplicate card if you want to refer to your information during our class discussion. Points will be deducted for missing cards.

Course Exams (45 percent).

Two exams—midterm and final (20 percent Midterm; 25 percent, Final)
Content Analysis Paper: Mass Media Advertising Project (25 percent) See «Assignments»

Book Review (15 percent)

Late Assignments: 5 percent will be deducted from your assignment grade for each day the assignment is late. No exceptions, NO extensions will be granted except in cases of documented emergencies. ALL PAPERS MUST BE HANDED IN DURING THE CLASS PERIOD. DO NOT COME TO CLASS LATE AND HAND IN YOUR PAPER. DO NOT GIVE YOUR PAPER TO SOMEONE ELSE TO HAND IN. NO EMAIL ATTACHMENTS OF PAPERS IS ACCEPTED.

Classroom Environment:
I would like to have a place that is open to differing points of view. When a peer is talking please listen and do not engage in other activities that will take away from your ability to fully listen to others. Let’s make our class a safe space of respect and intellectual creativity! Please come to class on time and do not leave before class is finished.

Required Course Readings: NOTE: I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THIS SYLLABUS AS IS NEEDED.


Required Articles: Available on WEBCT for our course. Videos and film clips are also available on WEBCT, including clips of Nip/ Tuck, The Office, and The Simpsons.
Films we strongly urge you to view include “Lovely and Amazing” (issues dealing with skin color, and cosmetic surgery) and “Real Women Have Curves” (cultural expectations around body image and size issues).

WOMEN AND THE BODY: COURSE SCHEDULE
(note: I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as deemed necessary)

Week of January 14th  "Introduction"

Tuesday and Thursday January 15th and January 17th:

Introduction to the Course: The Politics of Women’s Bodies.
Rose Weitz, Chapters One & Three


Tuesday, January 22nd
Weitz, Chapter 2.

Thursday, January 24th
The Making of the Female Body: The Process of Gendered Socialization and its Consequences

Weitz, Chapter 15 & 16.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Walk like a Man, Sit like a Lady


Tuesday, January 29th:


Weitz, Chapter 3.

Thursday January 31st.


Week of February 4th: How to conduct a content analysis of mass mediated images of women’s bodies and the Cult of THINNESS
Monday, February 5th

Using Content Analysis to Study Mass-Mediated Images with Examples.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Leavy, Patricia. 2006. “Chapter 5: Content Analysis” in The Practice of Qualitative Research. Sage. ON WEBCT


Tuesday, February 7th.

Chapters 1-2 of Hesse-Biber,

Cult of Thinness

Week of February 11th: Cult of Thinness. Women, Weight, and Body Image and Eating Issues and Medicalization of the Female Body

February 12th: Finish Book: Hesse-Biber. The Cult of Thinness

February 14th: The Medicalization of the Female Body

Weitz, Chapter 4.


Week of February 18th: Medicalization Continued...

February 19th:

analysis of motherhood ideologies and myths in magazines.” *Sex Roles* 46(1/2): 21-33.

Video on medicalization of the female body.

**February 21st Mid-term Exam** We will have an essay exam on all readings up to and including Thursday February 19TH.

**Week of February 25th: Alteration of the Female Body: Cosmetic Surgery, Tattooing, and body piercing.**

**PLASTIC SURGERY PARTIES.**
[www.piercemattie.com/blogs/plumping_parties_plastic_su.jpg](http://www.piercemattie.com/blogs/plumping_parties_plastic_su.jpg)

**Tuesday, February 26th**


Thursday, February 28th:


Rose Weitz Reader, Chapters 11 & 12.

Recommended Video: The Merchants of Cool

Feminism and Plastic surgery Exercise (Shaw and Lee).

**Spring Vacation: March 3rd to March 7th.**

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Tuesday, March 11th .


Thursday, March 13th Violence Against Women on The College Campus


T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. Pimps Up, Ho’s down. Chapters 1-3

Class Learning Exercise: How Safe is Your Campus (Handout): Pg. 563 of Shaw and Lee’s Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions.
Website resources: Violence Against Women and Prevention: http://www.ndaa.org/links/violence_against_women_links.html
Rape Quiz, http://www.justicewomen.com/cj_rapequiz_intro_en.html (Take rape quiz)

Week of March 17th: Violence Against Women..Continued

Tuesday, March 18th Pimps Up Ho’s Down

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting: Finish Book

EASTER BREAK: THURSDAY, MARCH 20TH.
Tuesday, March 25th.


Thursday, March 27th

Deborah Rodriguez *Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil*: Finish the book

Week of March 31st: The Marking Race on the Body.

Tuesday, April 1st Marking Race on the Body and The Female Colonial and Postcolonial Body


Thursday: April 3rd:


Begin Reading Appetites, Chapters 1-3

Recommended Videos: Hollywood Harems Video
A Question of Color

Week of April 7th

Women, Food and the Body/Sexualizing the Female Body

Tuesday April 8th
Finish Appetites. We will discuss this book today.

Thursday: April 10th:

Weitz, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8. (Select 2 of these chapters). Also, read any three chapters from: White, Emily. 2003. Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut. Berkeley Books, Inc. (Chapters 1-3).
Week of April 14th: Sexualizing the Teenage Body AND Women’s Reproductive Rights.

Tuesday: April 15th: Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut. Finish Book. We will discuss this book in class today.

Excerpts from: Slut: the Documentary

Thursday, April 17th.


Week of April 21st: Cultural Resistance and the Female Body
Tuesday April 22nd:

Clips from the Movie: Real Women Have Curves.


Thursday April 24th.

Various Clips from Movies That Resist Dominant Norms of Weight and Body Image.

Rose Weitz, chapter 9

Week of April 28th

Tuesday and Thursday, April 29th and May 1st.

Wrap Up. Class Presentation of Group Projects. Everyone is required to present and you will need to hand in an abstract of your paper by April 24th. You should be prepared to present a 10 minute talk about your paper to the class.
**Content Analysis Project Paper. (25%)**

**Media Analysis Project** - How do the media, and advertisers, more specifically, portray women’s bodies? Your task as a group is to choose four popular magazines targeted toward women. You are to select a sample of ads across these magazines (you will need to decide on the magazines, how many ads and what type of ads: Hint: This depends on your research problem. What do you want to find out? How can doing a content analysis answer this question?) You will conduct a content analysis of your sampling of ads. Be sure to read Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s chapter on Content analysis and how to do a content analysis and be sure to know how to “code” ads for content. I will also provide the class with some examples of how to code an advertisement in class.

Please write up your results in an 8 to 10 page paper. You must include an abstract of your paper of no more than 250 words. Be sure to include all ads and your specific analysis work. You must use at least 4 scholarly articles that support your results and interpretation beyond the class readings.

**What is your research problem:** What do you want to find out? Sample your specific ads.

**Code the advertisements:** What specific meanings are you interested in identifying in these ads? What are your codes? Do these codes serve to answer your research question?
Conduct an analysis of the data. How will you get at meaning in your data?

What are your findings?

Interpret the findings: What do they mean? Integrate findings with the research literature on this topic.

Up to three people can work on this group project.

**Reaction Paper #2: Short Book Review (15%) and Classroom Discussion of the Book.**

You have a choice of what book you would like to review.

**Choices:**
- Hesse-Biber, The Cult of Thinness.
- Elaine White. Fast Girls Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut

Book Reviews are due on the Date they are presented in class. NO EXCEPTIONS. We will be asking you to sign up for the book you would like to review (your first and second choice) the beginning of the semester. I will hold you to working on the book review that you have chosen since we expect you to specifically discuss the book during classroom discussion and your specific ideas/thesis regarding this book will be vital to our classroom discussion.

Contained within your review should be answers to the following general questions:

1. What is the thesis or general argument of this book? In this question address the forest, not the trees. What larger issue concerns this author?
2. Why is this issue relevant to our course? Be sure to tie in at least 2 to 3 course readings that show a connection to this reading.
3. How well does the author support her argument?

My strong advice before doing this assignment is not to wait until the last minute. You need time to focus on each author’s ideas/argument. Therefore read in segments and take notes after each segment: What did you find interesting? How does the author make her point? (Write a short summary/memo about what you read for that segment that you can use later for your review). Be sure to take notes on the specific information you will need to answer the book review questions.