Women and THE BODY
SC089
Fall 2009

SHARLENE HESSE-BIBER, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

DIRECTOR, WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM
Women and the Body
Sharlene Hesse-Biber Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Sociology
Director, Women's Studies Program
419 McGuinn Hall
x4139

Tuesday and Thursday 1:30
CARNEY 206

Teaching Assistant: Emilie DuBois
Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology
Email: emilie.anne.dubois@gmail.com

Teaching Apprentice:
Mary K. Downer
Chioma J. Ebinama
Stewart P. Harris

Dr. Hesse-Biber's Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 and by appt
Email: hesse@bc.edu

Note: All Images in this syllabus have been downloaded from Google Images and are reproduced here for educational use only.

Course Description:

This course addresses the socio-cultural construction of the female body 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 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, and 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-media 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 beyond academia to activism 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%)
Mandatory Attendance
Notecards
Book Review (15%)
Course Exams (40%)
Midterm: 20%
Final: 20%
Final Paper (30%)

See the end of the syllabus for more detailed assignment information.

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 classroom 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 NEEDED.

WOMEN AND THE BODY


**Required Articles**

- Available on BLACKBOARD for our course.

**WOMEN AND THE BODY: COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Note:** I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as deemed necessary

**Tuesday and Thursday, September 8th and 10th. Introduction to the Course: The Politics of Women's Bodies**

Rose Weitz, Chapters 1 and 3

**Tuesday, September 15th. Cultural and Scientific Constructions of the Body: Creating Bodies; Society, Nature and the Shaping of Body Image**

Weitz, Chapter 2

**NOTE:** Drop/add period ends on Wednesday, September 16th

**Thursday, September 17th**

Weitz, Chapters 15 and 16

Messner, Michael A. 2007 “Barbie Girls Versus Sea Monsters” BLACKBOARD

**Tuesday, September 22nd. Feminist Theories and the Body: Understanding Embodied Practices**


Weitz, Chapter 3
Thursday, September 24
Collins, Patricia Hill. 2007. “Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection” BLACKBOARD
Hesse-Biber, The Cult of Thinness: chapters 1-4

Tuesday, September 29. Mass mediated images of women’s bodies and the Cult of Thinness
Finish The Cult of Thinness for today’s class; discussion and presentation of the book

Thursday, October 1. The Medicalization of Women’s Bodies
Weitz, Chapter 4
Martin, Emily. 1999, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” BLACKBOARD

Tuesday, October 6. Medicalization, continued.
The Waiting Room, Pages 1-40

Thursday, October 8
Finish The Waiting Room; Panel Discussion of The Waiting Room

Tuesday, October 13
MIDTERM EXAM

Thursday, October 15. Alteration of the Female Body: Cosmetic Surgery, Tattooing and Body Piercing
Weitz, Chapters 11 and 12 BLACKBOARD
Tuesday, October 20th. Cosmetic Surgery continued and The Body and Violence Against Women


Thursday, October 22nd. The Body and Violence Against Women

Cho, Grace. 2007. “Prostituted and Invisible Bodies” BLACKBOARD

Gross, Alan. “An Examination of Sexual Violence Against College Women” BLACKBOARD

Kahn, Arnold. 2007. “What College Women Do and Do Not Experience as Rape” BLACKBOARD

Tuesday, October 27th. Violence Against Women, continued

*Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: read chapters 1-4*


Thursday, October 29th.
WOMEN AND THE BODY

**NYPimps Up, Ho's Down**

*Tuesday, November 3th*


Vertiisky, Patricia. 1998. “More Myth Than History: American Culture and Representation of the Black Female’s Athletic Ability.” **BLACKBOARD**

**Thursday, November 5th. The Marking of Race on the Body**

**Film Screening:** *The Life And Times Of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus*, 1998.


*Tuesday, November 10th; Thursday, November 12th. Finish *Kabul Beauty School*; panel discussion today*

**Tuesday, November 17th. Constructing Ethnic Bodies: Latina Arab, and Asian Women**

Molinary, Rosie: *Hijas Americanas: Beauty,Body Image and Growing Up* Chapter 4, Latina The Latina Mystique, Chapter 6, Maria de la Barbie and Chapter 7, How Latina are You.? Seal Press, 2007 **BLACKBOARD**


Thursday, November 19th, Women, Food, and the Body/Sexualizing of the Female Body

Read Chapters 1-4 Appetites

Tuesday, November 24th

Finish Appetites for today; panel presentation

Thursday, November 26th: NO CLASS

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!

Tuesday, December 1st Sexualizing the Teenage Female Body and Women’s Reproductive Rights

Silliman, Jael “Women of Color and their Struggle for Reproductive Justice” BLACKBOARD


Thursday, December 3rd Sexualizing the Teenage Male Body: Cultural Resistance and the Male Body

Finish Reading Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and Myth of the Slut.

Finish Book Today for Panel Discussion

Begin reading Dude You’re a Fag, first half of book

Tuesday, December 8th

Finish Dude, You’re a Fag Panel Panel Presentation.

Thursday, December 10th

Class Presentation of Paper Abstracts

Wednesday, December 16th at 12:30

FINAL EXAM: GOOD LUCK!!!

Location: Cushing 209, our classroom

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (15%, includes notecards)
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. TWO (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 THE READINGS FOR THAT DAY

For each class period, you are required to bring ONE 3x5 index card on which you write:

- Your name
- ONE (1) specific discussion question (be sure to cite what specific reading/s prompted that question).
- TWO (2) quotes from the readings—one you particularly resonated with in a positive way, and one you disagreed with. 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. (INDEX CARDS WILL BE COLLECTED RIGHT WHEN CLASS STARTS AND I WILL NOT ACCEPT CARDS AFTER THAT). Please bring a duplicate card if you want to refer to your information during our class discussion. Points will be deducted for missing cards.

In addition: You are to prepare 4 notecards (2 for the midterm and 2 for the final) As you read books and Blackboard articles, make 4 index cards with ONE term or concept from the readings. Write your last name on the front, lower right-hand corner of the card. Provide a definition of the term and give an example of its use from the course readings. Be sure to cite the reading and page number.

Course Exams (40%)

Two exams: Midterm (20%) and Final (20%)
YOU WILL BE GIVEN A STUDY GUIDE WHICH CONTAINS 8 TO 10 QUESTIONS AND 15 TERMS TO STUDY. I WILL SELECT 2 QUESTIONS AND 2 TERMS OUT OF THOSE ON THE GUIDE FOR THE MIDTERM AND 3 QUESTIONS AND 5 TERMS FOR THE FINAL.

The midterm will be October 13.
The final will be December 16

FINAL PAPER (30%)

Gender Justice and Women’s Bodies

PAPER SCHEDULE FORMAT AND DUE DATES:

Length: 12 to 15 pages (including references). USE APA TEMPLATE FOR YOUR PAPER. I WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A THE SPECIFICS ON THIS IN A CLASS HANDOUT.

DUE DATES:
PAPER DRAFT DUE TO YOUR RESEARCH BUDDY: November 17
FINAL COMMENTS FROM YOUR RESEARCH BUDDY ARE DUE: December 1

Comment: I would include information about word/page length for the final paper and the book review.
FINAL PAPER DUE: December 10th. ALL PAPERS MUST BE HANDED IN AT THE START OF CLASS. NO LATE PAPERS ARE ACCEPTED.

TERM PAPER INSTRUCTIONS:

This term paper requires you to select one current problem/issue with regard to the general area of "women and the body" that you feel needs to be tackled/addressed and what strategies and potential solutions you feel have been useful in moving towards a resolution of this problem and how you would address this issue in your own community.

STATE your research problem. YOU ARE TO USE AT LEAST 5 CURRENT EVENTS (NEWSPAPER, WEB NEWS, ETC.) that define the problem and the extent of this problem. To what extent do they discuss any solutions? If so, what type/s of solutions? Please use media ARTICLES that were published after 2007. Be sure to assess the credibility of these media/news articles. Find at least four academic (peer-reviewed) articles (not discussed in this class) from journals from 2007 or later. What research has been done on this problem and what are their findings? What solutions are addressed? Summarize the academic research articles and academic literature you have found on your problem and its solution. Critically evaluate the articles. Do not use extensive quotes from these articles when summarizing them, but use your own words.

Please use the following research paper rubric in putting together your paper.

1) Define the problem you are interested in solving that deals with women and the body
2) Summarize what you have learned from the current events/media articles and describe how these articles alerted you to the problem and whether or not they suggest solutions to the issue. Address the solutions and evaluate them.
3) Summarize four (4) academic journal articles not from this course. How do they address the issue you are interested in and any solutions regarding this problem? Critically evaluate these articles in terms of their overall usefulness to you in understanding the problem and solutions to the problem. Be specific in your evaluation (here you might discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the article).
4) In your paper, envision an "action-plan": what you might do to redress the problem. What can a larger entity (an organization, public or private) do to address this problem? In answering this fourth part of your paper, assess the feasibility of your solution and your organization's solution to this problem. Be sure to consider issues of cost. What could go wrong? Be sure to address issues of difference among women with regard to issues of race/class/ethnicity/sexual preference in your implementation for social change.

In addition, throughout your problem, you can also draw on the readings, YouTube clips and books from class in answering your research problem and its solution

The first draft of your paper will be peer-reviewed (blind) by a partner you select to discuss and work with throughout this process. You will be responsible for a peer review of another student's paper. A first draft of your paper is due to your partner (who will hand you their formal comments one week after) three weeks before the last day of class.

BOOK REVIEW (15%)

3 to 4 Pages doubled-spaced 12pt font New Times Roman
You have a choice of which book you would like to review:

- Hesse-Biber, *The Cult of Thinness.*
• Elaine White, *Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut*
• C.J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag*

NOTE: Book Reviews are due on the date they are presented in class. NO EXCEPTIONS.

You will sign up for the book you would like to review. I want to divide the book reviews so that at least four students cover each book, in order to have a panel discussion for each book. I will hold you to working on the book review for the assigned day, since we expect you to specifically discuss the book in class 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:

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 other 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 each 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.