WOMEN AND THE BODY

SC089
FALL 2013

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DIRECTOR, WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM
SC089 Women & the Body
T/TH 1:30
Gasson 306
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursdays
3:00pm-4:00pm and by appointment

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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.

I employ a feminist pedagogy that includes short lectures, classroom and small group discussions, and group projects. We will enhance the course with a variety of multimedia data (including films, images, 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 and to 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. To apply knowledge in the classroom beyond academia into activism toward social justice goals.

7. To assist students with acquiring writing skills through faculty and peer evaluations and to encourage undergraduate students to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals.
Course Requirements

Class Participation/Attendance is required. Lack of attendance/unexcused absence = 2 point reduction in total points for each class missed. Students are expected to come to class on time and not leave until class is finished. No cell phones/no computer usage during class. See me if you have a specific need with regard to computer usage.

Extra (2) credits given for outside speaker attendance and Summary of talk handed in next class period

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLACKBOARD POSTINGS</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOOK REVIEW:</td>
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<tr>
<td>COURSE EXAMS:</td>
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<td>Midterm (20%)</td>
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See the next page for more detailed requirements/assignment information.

Grading Scale
The following scale will be used to calculate your final grade:

- 92-100 = A
- 80-83 = B-
- 67-69 = D+
- 90-93 = A-
- 77-79 = C+
- 64-66 = D
- 87-89 = B+
- 74-76 = C
- 60-63 = D-
- 84-86 = B
- 70-73 = C-
- 0-59 = F

Late Assignments
All papers must be handed in at the start of the class period. Please do not hand in your paper or give your paper to someone else to hand in. No email attachments of papers are accepted. 5 percent will be deducted from your assignment grade for each day the assignment is late. No exceptions or extensions will be granted except in cases of documented emergencies.

Classroom Environment
I would like to have a classroom that is open to differing points of view. When a peer is talking, I would appreciate it very much if you 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 full of respect and intellectual creativity!

Plagiarism Policy
According to the Boston College Academic Catalog, "plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrative material, or statements of someone else, without full and proper acknowledgment, and presenting them as one's own" (34). Refer to your student manual if you are unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism.
REQUIRED READINGS AND ARTICLES

BOOKS:


All books/articles in the course schedule are listed on the day they are due. All articles are available on Blackboard. All books are on reserve at the reserves desk in O’Neill copy. You can take out a copy for 2 hours at a time.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. CLASS ATTENDANCE: REQUIRED
   Your participation is vital and expected in our course and attendance will be taken each class. 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) points will be deducted from your overall course points (100 points) for each missed unexcused class.

   Please come to class with the readings for that day.
   Our course will be structured around discussion these readings.

2. PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION OF READINGS VIA BLACKBOARD: (20% OR 20 POINTS)

   You will required to do TEN (10) POSTINGS OF 300 WORDS PER POSTING IN RESPONSE TO THAT WEEK’S DISCUSSION QUESTION VIA THE BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION GROUP for our course. POSTINGS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION GROUP.

   (Make sure you know how to log into Blackboard under SC089. All students registered for this course are already populated to the Blackboard site for SC089).

   Each post is worth TWO (2) points for a total of 20 POINTS
That week’s discussion question will be posted Monday morning at 9am—the beginning of that week’s class. The question will be about the readings for that given week. Students will have until Thursday of that week’s class at 9am sharp to respond to that week’s class question. **No late postings will be accepted.**

Responses should be **300 words** and should critically engage any (2) two of that week’s class readings that you feel pertain the specific question for that week’s readings. These responses will be reviewed and graded each week. Responses will be given an evaluation of from 0 to 2 points depending on level of completeness (we will give partial point credit where applicable).

2 points:
- Response critically analyzes, reflects upon, and critiques thematic material in **two** readings
- Response makes connections between the readings and greater/bigger themes/topics in the course
- Response is at least 300 words and is posted to Blackboard by the deadline

1 point:
- Response critically analyzes one reading, but engages the other on a superficial level
- Response reads like more of a summary and does not draw connections between texts or place readings in the greater context of the course
- Response is at least 300 words and is posted to Blackboard by the deadline

0 zero points
- Response is late
- OR
  - Does not engage readings, seems sloppily or hastily done

I have found that when students engage with the week’s class readings, it is a great way to promote a more focused classroom discussion of the readings. The Discussion board in Blackboard is also an important way to engage thoughtfully with the readings as well as to share that engagement with the class.

**3. Book Review (10%)**

Length: 3-4 pages  
Due: The day your book is assigned for reading in class

You have a choice of which book you would like to review:
- Hesse-Biber, *The Cult of Thinness*
- Knapp, *Appetites: Why Women Want*
- Rodriguez, *Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil*
- Sharpley-Whiting, *Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: Hip Hop’s Hold on Young Black Women*
- Lloyd, *Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale. An Activist Finds Her Calling and Heals Herself*
- Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag*

At the beginning of the semester, 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.

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?

**Tips for Reading the Books:** 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 **ALL** the book review questions. As you read over your review, make sure you include material that will answer the three questions required for the book review.

4. **Course Exams (40%)**
There will be a midterm and final each worth 20% of your final grade.

You will be given a study guide ahead of time with 8-10 questions and 15 terms to study. I will select 2 questions and 3 terms out of those on the guide for the midterm, and 3 questions and 8 terms for the final.

**The midterm will be Tuesday, October 8th during class**
**The final will be TUESDAY, December 17th at 12:30PM (in our classroom)**

5. **Final Paper (30%): Gender, Justice, and Women’s Bodies**

Length: 12-15 pages (including references)

**Paper Deadlines:**

- November 13: Paper draft is due.
- November 27: Feedback from Instructor
- December 4: Paper Abstract (Name, title and summary of paper)
  Hand in beginning of class (250 words or less)
- December 6: Final paper due handed in beginning of class. NO EXCEPTIONS

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 or addressed. Discuss 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 event sources (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? Be sure to assess the credibility of these media/news articles.
- At least 4 academic (peer-reviewed) journal articles (not discussed in this class) published in 2008 or later. What research has been done on this problem and what are their findings? What solutions are addressed?

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. 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). Do not use extensive quotes from these articles when summarizing them, but use your own words.
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 race/class/ethnicity/sexual orientation in your implementation for social change.

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

NOTE: All work must be 12 pt New Times Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Use APA format. I will provide you with the specifics on this in a class handout.

**Class Schedule: Topics and Required Reading**

Note: The schedule and readings may change as we move through the course.

*All articles (asterisked) are available on Blackboard.

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**Tuesday, September 3rd.** *Introduction to Course: The Politics of Women’s Bodies*

Weitz, R. (2010). Chapter 1—A History of Women’s Bodies (Weitz)

**Thursday, September 5th.** *Cultural and Scientific Constructions of the Body*

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 2—Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology (Lorber)

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 3—Becoming a Gendered Body (Martin)

**Tuesday, September 10th.** *Cultural and Scientific Constructions of the Body*

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 20


NOTE: Drop/add period ends on Wednesday, September 11th

**Thursday, September 12th.** *The Disciplined Body*

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 5—Affronting Reason (Chase)


**Tuesday, September 17th.** *Feminist Theories and the Body: Understanding Embodied Practices*


Weitz. (2010). Chapter 12—Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling (Young)

Thursday, September 19th. Taking into Account Differences Among Women


*Hesse-Biber et al. (2010). “Racial identity and body image among Black female college students attending predominately White colleges”


Tuesday, September 24th. Cult of Thinness: Mass Mediated Images and The Cultural Pressures to be Thin: Book Panel Today

Finish *The Cult of Thinness*; discussion and presentation of the book Panel Today.

Thursday, September 26th. Medicalization of Women’s Bodies

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 4—Women and Medicalization (Riessman)


Tuesday, October 1st. The Waiting Room

Finish *The Waiting Room*;
Panel discussion of *The Waiting Room*

Thursday, October 3rd. Alteration of the Female Body: Cosmetic Surgery, Tattooing and Body Piercing


Tuesday, October 8th. MIDTERM EXAM today

Thursday, October 10th. Alteration of the Female Body: Cosmetic Surgery (continued)


BEGIN READING FIRST 4 CHAPTERS OF Rachel Lloyd’s Memoir: *Girls Like Us.*
**Tuesday, October 15th. The Body and Violence Against Women**

Lloyd: Finish Book Panel discussion today: Sex Trafficking in America

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 22-Till Death Us Do Part (Wilson and Daly)

**Thursday, October 17th. Violence Against Women, continued**


*Gross, Alan et al. (2006). “An Examination of Sexual Violence Against College Women”

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

**Tuesday, October 22nd. Is Biology Destiny? : Somatotyping Bodies and Human Behavior**


Begin Reading Sharpley-Whiting. (2007). Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: Chapters 1-4

**Thursday, October 24th. The Marking of Race and the Body: Pimps Up, Ho’s Down Panel Today**

Finish reading Pimps Up, Ho’s Down

Panel presentation today

**Tuesday, October 29th. The Marking of Race & Sexual Orientation on the Body**


Weitz. (2010). Chapter 19-From the “Muscle Moll” to the “Butch” Ballplayer (Cahn)

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

**Thursday, October 31st. Marking Race & The Body (continued)**
Film Screening: The Life And Times Of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus


Weitz. (2010). Chapter 9-“Get Your Freak On”: Sex, Babies and Images of Black Femininity. (Hill Collins)

Tuesday, November 5th. Middle Eastern Women and the Veil


-Rodriguez. (2007). Kabul Beauty School: Chapters 1-4

Thursday, November 7th. Kabul, Beauty School

Finish the book Kabul Beauty School; Panel presentation today

Tuesday, November 12th. Constructing Ethnic Bodies: Latina and Asian Women & Body Image


-Chapter 4: The Latina Mystique

-Chapter 7: How Latina Are You?

Thursday, November 14th. Sexualizing of the Female Body

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 7-“Menarche and the (Hetero) sexualization of the Female Body (Lee)

Weitz. (2010). Chapter 8-Daring to Desire: Culture and the Bodies of Adolescent Girls. (Tolman)
Tuesday, November 19th. The Social Construction of the “Wild Woman.”

Thursday, November 21st: The Social Construction of the “Wild Woman.”
**Panel Presentation Today**

Tuesday, November 26th: The Body and Women’s Reproductive Rights

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

Thursday, November 28th: NO CLASS
**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Tuesday, December 3rd. Men and Masculinity: Women & Food: Appetites
**Panel Presentation**

Finish Appetites; **Panel presentation today**


Thursday, December 5th. Men and Masculinity: *Dude, You’re a Fag*.

Finish *Dude, You’re a Fag*; **Panel presentation**

Tuesday, December 10th. Paper Abstract Presentations

- Final paper due
- Class presentations of paper abstracts

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 17th: @ 12:30 PM OUR CLASSROOM**