WOMEN AND THE BODY
SOCY1089.01

Fall 2014

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Professor of Sociology
Director, Women's and Gender Studies Program
**SOCY1089.01 Women & the Body**
**T/TH 1:30**

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Graduate Doctoral Student, Sociology  
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BC Senior Undergraduate Pedagogy Assistant:  
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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 some 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 employ a feminist pedagogy that includes short lectures, classroom and small group discussions, 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 of writing 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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<td>BOOK REVIEW</td>
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<td>COURSE EXAMS:</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:

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Late Assignments

All papers must be handed in at the start of the class period. Please do not hand in someone else’s your paper or give your paper to someone else to hand in. Please, no email attachments of papers. Please note that 5 percent will be deducted from your assignment grade for each day your 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 of respect and intellectual creativity! Please turn off and put away all cell phones and computers. Computers are not allowed in the class except under special circumstances.

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 BOOKS:


- **All books/articles listed in the course schedule must be read on the day they are due). All articles are available on Canvas.** All books are on reserve at the reserves desk in O’Neill Library. You can take out a copy for 2 hours at a time.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

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 to class on time.

Two (2) points will be deducted from your overall course points (100 points) for each missed unexcused class.

**Please note: All readings should be read for the day they are listed in the syllabus.**

Our course will be structured around discussion these readings, so please be prepared to discuss the readings.

PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSION OF READINGS VIA CANVAS: (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 CANVAS DISCUSSION GROUP for our course.

POSTINGS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE CANVAS DISCUSSION GROUP.

(Make sure you know how to log into Canvas under SOCY1089. All students registered for this course are already populated to the Canvas site for SOCY1089).
Each post is worth TWO (2) points for a total of 20 POINTS

That week’s discussion question will be posted Monday morning at 9a.m. The question will be about the readings for that given week.
THERE WILL BE A TOTAL OF 10 DISCUSSION QUESTION POSTINGS FOR THE SEMESTER (MAXIMUM OF 2 POINTS GIVEN PER POSTING).

Students will have until Thursday of that week’s class at 9 a.m. 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 2 to zero 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 students engaging with the week’s class readings is a great way to promote a more focused classroom discussion of the readings.

**Book Review (10%)**

Length: 3-5 pages
Due: The day your book is presented 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*
- 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 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?

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 be sure to make sure you include material that will answer the three questions required for the book review.

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 7th during class
The final will be Tuesday, December 16th at 12:30PM (our classroom)

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

Length: 12-15 pages (including references)

Paper Deadlines:
November 11th Paper draft is due.
November 27th Feedback from Instructor
December 4th Paper Abstract (Name, title and summary of paper)
Hand in beginning of class (250 words or less)
December 9 Final paper due handed in beginning of class. NO EXCEPTIONS

All papers must be handed in at the start of class. Late papers will not be accepted.

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 font Times New Roman, 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.

Tuesday, September 2nd. Introduction to Course: The Politics of Women’s Bodies

-Weitz Chapter 1. A History of Women’s Bodies (Weitz)

Thursday, September 4th. Cultural and Scientific Constructions of the Body

-Weitz: Chapter 2 –Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology (Lorber)
-Weitz: Chapter 3- Becoming a Gendered Body (Martin)

Tuesday, September 9th. The Disciplined Body

-Weitz: Chapter 5- “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” (Bartky).

Thursday, September 11th. Feminist Theories and the Body: Understanding Embodied Practices

Tuesday, September 16th Taking into Account Differences Among Women


- Weitz, Chapter 11 “Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture.” (Isabel Molina Guzman and Angharad N. Valdvia)

Thursday, September, 18th Taking into Account Differences Among Women (Continued)

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

Begin Reading: Hesse-Biber, The Cult of Thinness: chapters 1-4

Tuesday, September 23rd 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 25th Social Construction of Women’s Bodies

- Weitz, Chapter 4 Women and Medicalization, Natural Childbirth and Birthing Experiences (Brubaker and Dillaway)

- Weitz, Chapter 6 “ Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist theory” (Garland-Thomson)


Begin Reading Loomer, The Waiting Room: Pages 1-40

Tuesday, September 30th The Waiting Room

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

Thursday, October 2nd Alteration of the Female Body: Cosmetic Surgery


Weitz, Chapter 17. Reclaiming the Female Body: Women Body Modifiers and Feminist Debates (Pitts)

- *Davis, Simone Weil. 2007. “Designer Vaginas”
Tuesday, October 7th. **MIDTERM EXAM** today

**Thursday, October 9th. **The Body and Violence Against Women.
- Rachel Lloyd’s Memoir: Girls Like Us. (complete 4 chapters).
- Weitz, Chapter 22 Till Death Us Do Part (Wilson and Daly)
  
  

**Tuesday, October 14th. **The Body and Violence Against Women
- Rachel Lloyd: Finish Book for this class period. Panel discussion today: Sex Trafficking in America

**Thursday, October 16th. **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”

Can an article about domestic violence or intimate partner violence be added to this section?

**Tuesday, October 21st. **Is Biology Destiny: Somatotyping Bodies and Human Behavior

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

**Thursday, October 23rd. **Pimps Up, Ho’s Down, continued
- Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: finish reading; **Panel presentation today**
Tuesday, October 28th. The Marking of Race & Sexual Orientation on the Body

- Weitz, 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 30th. Marking Race continued

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

Tuesday, November 4th. Middle Eastern Women and the Veil

- * Abu-Lughod “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?”
- Rodriguez, Kabul Beauty School: Chapters 1-4

Thursday, November 6th. Kabul Beauty School

- Finish the book Kabul Beauty School; Panel presentation today

Tuesday, November 11th. Constructing Ethnic Bodies: Latina and Asian Women

- Chapter 4: The Latina Mystique
- Chapter 7: How Latina are You?

Thursday, November 13th. Sexualizing of the Female Body

Weitz, Chapter 7. “Menarche and the (Hetero) sexualization of the Female Body (Lee)
Weitz, Chapter 8. Daring to Desire: Culture and the Bodies of Adolescent Girls. (Tolman)
**Tuesday, November 18th:** The Social Construction of the Sexuality and “Sexy.” The Role of Mass Media: Mass Media and Self-Sexualization


Smolak, L., Murnen, S., Myers, T.A. Sexualizing the Self: What College Women and Men Think About and Do to Be "Sexy." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* September 1, 2014 38: 379-397


**Thursday, November 20th:** The Social Construction of the “Wild Woman.”


*Panel Presentation Today.*

**Tuesday, November 25th:** The Body and Women’s Reproductive Rights

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

*Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* Chapter 1: Reproduction in Bondage
Chapter 2: The Dark Side of Birth Control.

-Knapp, *Appetites: Why Women Want*-- Chapters 1-4

**Thursday, November 27th:** NO CLASS

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

**Tuesday, December 2nd** Men and Masculinity: Women & Food: Appetites Panel Presentation

-Finish Appetites; *Panel presentation today*

-Pascoe, Dude, *You’re a Fag:* read first half of book

**Thursday, December 4th.** Men and Masculinity:  *Dude, You’re a Fag.*

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

**Tuesday, December 9th.** Paper Abstract Presentations

-Final paper due
- Class presentations of paper abstracts

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 16th:** @ 12:30 PM OUR CLASSROOM