Welcome To Our Course—
WOMEN & THE BODY
SOCY108901
Fall 2015
Tu/Th. 1:30

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Director, Women's & Gender Studies Program (WAGS)
419 McGuinn Hall
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursdays
3:00 p.m. -4:00 p.m. and by appointment
Class will meet in: Campion Hall Room 300

Sociology Department Graduate Teaching Assistant: Jackie Carroll
Email: carrolct@bc.edu

Pedagogy Assistant:
Jillian Burke
Email: burkehv@bc.edu
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. Break down 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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Grading Scale

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**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 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 listed in the course schedule should be read before the day listed in the syllabus.**
- **All articles listed on the syllabus by due date are available on Canvas.** 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

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 prepared by reading and being ready to discuss the readings BY the Due Date listed in the syllabus. You must bring the readings for that day to the class. No computers are allowed to be used during the class period. Exceptions must have written documentation. So the reading listed for September 1st must be read before you come to class on September 1st. You are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings for that day and you need to bring the article/book with you to class on the due date of the reading.

ALL CELL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF AND STOWED AWAY. PLEASE DO NOT EAT DURING THE CLASS PERIOD. YOU CAN BRING YOUR FAVORITE NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE WITH YOU IF YOU LIKE.

Our course will be structured around discussion of these readings.

Book Review (15%)

Length: 5 pages (double-spaced).
Due: The day your book is assigned for your class presentation.

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
- Pascoe, Dude, You’re a Fag
- Jon Krakauer, Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town.

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. YOUR BOOK REVIEW PAPER WILL BE DUE ON THE DAY THE BOOK REVIEW IS PRESENTED IN CLASS. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK DURING A PANEL PRESENTATION ALONG WITH OTHER STUDENTS WHO ALSO REVIEWED THE BOOK. NOTE: I DO NOT PERMIT SWITCHING OF BOOKS ONCE YOU HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED A 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 & Reviewing 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 (50%)**

There will be a midterm and final each worth 25% 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. I may also give you a set of multiple-choice questions that will comprise a section of the Midterm and Final.

**Occasional in-class exercises and quizzes (Requirement)**

From time to time I will give you a class exercise to do at home or during class that you are expected to complete. I will occasionally give a few quizzes during class time to get a sense of how things are going and the extent to which you comprehend the reading material.

**The midterm will be Tuesday, October 6th during class**

**The final will be SATURDAY, December 19TH at 9:00 a.m. (our classroom)**

**Final Paper (35%): Gender, Justice, and Women’s Bodies: An Activist-Centered Group Paper Project & PowerPoint Group Presentation.** Group Paper. Length: 10 pages (not including references or appendices), plus a PowerPoint Class Presentation that summarizes your group project for the class.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

This is a group project where you will work together in groups of 6 students. Your group will collectively decide on a topic/problem your group feels needs addressing here at Boston College that pertains to an issue/topic we specifically addressed in this course (no exceptions). Pick a topic/problem where you think your group can make a difference. The paper itself should follow the following format:

- **1.** Specifically state the women and the body problem/issue you seek to change on the Boston College campus and tell why this is a significant problem to address via activism.

- **2.** Find two (2) current event sources (newspaper, web news, etc.) that define the problem and the extent of this problem on university campuses in general. How is the problem presented by the media? Be specific. To what extent do any of these mass media articles discuss solutions? If so, what type/s of solutions? Be specific. You must hand in the media articles with your paper.

- **3.** Find three (3) academic journal (peer reviewed articles) not read in this course that address through scholarly research the problem you seek to change on the B.C. campus. Briefly state the thesis of the article and the empirical findings--- what does each article say about the problem and what solutions are offered? Some tips for answering this part: 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. You must hand in these articles with your group paper.
4. Come up with a concrete action plan you want to implement here at B.C. Describe the plan and show how you seek to address the issue you raise at B.C. This means “showing,” not just telling the class what you will do.

5. Describe the specific implementation/social action you decided on. Please be sure to check in with me ahead of time to go over your specific action plan, as I will need to approve of this plan as it does impact the campus community. What is your specific action plan? Be sure to give a detailed accounting of the specifics of your activist intervention and why you believe it can provide a way forward for addressing the problem you are addressing. What could go wrong? Be sure to address issues of difference among women & men with regard to race/class/ethnicity/sexual orientation in your implementation for social change.

6. In your final paper also be sure to report back on your plan. What went well? What were some issues/potential roadblocks? What did you learn that you would do differently next time?

Timetable for Group Project (Due dates are not negotiable)

September 17th: You are to form your groups no later than September 17th (Must have 5 to 6 members).

1. Go into the Canvas Site through Agora Portal
2. Select “People” from the Left Menu
3. Select Groups at the top of the Screen
4. Click “Activist Groups” Then Click the Name of a Group to Enroll in it. I have created 11 groups for you to choose from. Remember the group will close at 6 members. If a group is closed, go to the next one and so on For more info on how to do this go to the canvas homepage for the course and you can access the link that says: How do I sign up for a group?

Have one member of your group tell me who is in the group—name and email contact info for each group member.

September 29th: Group negotiates what issue/problem them will address. Group hands in a description of the problem they will address and why the problem is important for the BC Campus as a whole. Be specific in your response no more than 1 page double-spaced.

October 8th: A detailed account of the division of labor in your group. Be as specific as you can at this point. Remember this is what you are personally accountable for and tasks must be as equitably split as possible. Each Student will be given an overall Group Grade & and Individual Grade (based on your individual effort and overall contribution the to Group Project. All work on the project will be posted to your Canvas Activist Group site. Early in the semester, Sarah Castricum will visit our class Tuesday, September 15th to show you how your group project can be set up in canvas so all group members can easily work together and communicate with one another via your Activist Group Site and even set up virtual Chats!!


December 1st: PowerPoint Due (no exceptions)

December 3rd: All Group Papers Due (no exceptions).
December 3rd & December 8th: Group Project Presentations.

Here are some examples of what other students have done elsewhere:

https://blogs.stockton.edu/perspectives/class-activism-projects/fall-08-public-service-announcement-about-body-image/

https://blogs.stockton.edu/perspectives/class-activism-projects/fall-08-public-service-announcement-about-body-image/

NOTE: All work must be 12 pt font Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Use APA format.

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 Canvas.

Tuesday, September 1st, Introduction to Course: The Politics of Women’s Bodies
- Weitz Chapter 1 - “A History of Women’s Bodies” (Weitz)

Thursday, September 3rd, 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 8th The Disciplined Body
- Weitz: Chapter 5- Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” (Bartky)

Thursday, September 10th Feminist Theories and the Body: Understanding Embodied Practices
- Weitz, Chapter 7 “Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling” (Young)
- Weitz, Chapter14 “Women and their Hair Seeking Power through resistance and Accommodation”

Tuesday, September 15th 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)
- Serano, Julia. “Reclaiming Femininity” Transfeminist Perspectives in and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies

September 17th: Groups for projects should be in place. Each group should hand-in a list of group members and contact info for each member.

Thursday, September 17th, 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”

- Hale, Jacob. 1996. “Are Lesbians Women?”

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

Tuesday, September 22nd. Cult of Thinness: Mass Mediated Images and The Cultural Pressures to be Thin

- Finish The Cult of Thinness; discussion and panel presentation today.

Thursday, September 24th. 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 29th. The Waiting Room

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

September 29th: Group negotiates what issue/problem them will address. Group hands in a description of the problem they will address and why the problem is important for the BC Campus as a whole. Be specific in your response no more than 1 page double-spaced.

Thursday, October 1st: 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 6th. MIDTERM EXAM today

Thursday, October 8th. The Body and Violence Against Women
- Complete chapters 1-4 of Rachel Lloyd’s Memoir: *Girls Like Us*
- Weitz, Chapter 22 Till Death Us Do Part (Wilson and Daly)
- ISIS and the Theology of Rape: see this link: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html?emc=edit_na_20150813&nlid=56485708&ref=cta&r=0

October 8th: A detailed account of the division of labor in your group. Be as specific as you can at this point. Remember this is what you are personally accountable for and tasks must be as equitably split as possible. Your overall group project will be given a grade that will also be your individual grade therefore everyone must pull together to form an effective team-based project.

Tuesday, October 13th. The Body and Violence Against Women
- Rachel Lloyd: Finish Book
- Panel presentation of *Girls Like Us*

Thursday, October 15th. Violence Against College Women
- Begin Reading First half of Jon Krakauer’s book, *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town*
- *Kahn, Arnold. 2007. “What College Women Do and Do Not Experience as Rape”*

Tuesday, October 20th By this date: Finish up Missoula: Rape and Justice in a College Town.
- Panel Presentation Today

Thursday, October 22nd. The Marking Sexual Orientation on the Body
- Weitz, Chapter 19. From the “Muscle Moll” to the “Butch” Ballplayer (Cahn)

Tuesday, October 27th Marking Race on the Body (continued)
- Weitz Chapter 9 “Get Your Freak On”: Sex, Babies and Images of Black Femininity.”  
  (Hill Collins)

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

**Thursday, October 29th. Middle Eastern Women and the Veil**


- *Abu-Lughod “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?”

- Rodriguez, Kabul Beauty School: Chapters 1-4

**Tuesday, November 3rd. Kabul, Beauty School**

- Finish the book Kabul Beauty School; Panel presentation today

**Thursday, November 5th. Constructing Ethnic Bodies: Latina, and Asian Women**


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

**Tuesday, November 10th. 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)

- *Wednesday, November 11th: Jean Kilbourne Lecture for Love Your Body Week  
  - Location: McGuinn Auditorium 121  
  - Time: 6:00pm  SAVE THIS DATE IN YOUR CALENDAR

**Thursday, November 12th. Sexuality and College Women & The Social Construction of the “Wild Woman.”**

---Halliwell, E. Malson, H and Tischner,I. “Are Contemporary Media Images Which Seem to Display Women as Sexually Empowered Actually Harmful to Women? Psychology of Women Quarterly March 2011 vol. 35 no. 1 38-45


Tuesday, November 17th. The Social Construction of the “Wild Woman.”
- Panel presentation today: Cheryl Strayed

Thursday, November 19th: The Body and Women’s Reproductive Rights
- *Silliman, Jael “Women of Color and their Struggle for Reproductive Justice”*
- Knapp, *Appetites: Why Women Want*-- Chapters 1-4

Tuesday, November 24th: Men and Masculinity
- Finish *Appetites*; Panel presentation today
- Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag*: read first half of book

Thursday, November 26th: NO CLASS

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Tuesday, December 1st. Men and Masculinity
- Finish *Dude, You’re a Fag*; Panel presentation today

December 1st: Group PowerPoint Due (no exceptions)

Thursday, December 3rd. Group Project Presentations via Powerpoint

Tuesday, December 8th. Group Project Presentations via Powerpoint

Final paper due
- Class presentations of paper abstracts

FINAL EXAM: SATURDAY, December 19TH at 9:00 a.m. (our classroom)
FYI: Here are the due dates and choices for your Book Review Assignment

- No more than 8 students per book review.
- Select your top 3 choices.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 24TH.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: NOVEMBER 24TH.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: OCTOBER 20TH.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION AND DUE DATE: OCTOBER 13TH.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 29TH.

- BOOK REVIEW & PANEL PRESENTATION DUE TODAY: DECEMBER 1ST.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: NOVEMBER 3RD.

- BOOK REVIEW & PRESENTATION DUE DATE: NOVEMBER 17TH.