Women and THE BODY SC089
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Women and the Body
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Tuesday and Thursday 1:30

Teaching Assistants:
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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 disorderly 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 points).
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.

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.

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 (30 Points).
Two exams—midterm and final (30 Points, 15 points each)

Reaction Papers (15 points each)
Reaction Paper #1 Film Review
Reaction Paper #2 Book Review

Course Paper: (30 points). Please refer to course paper requirements at the end of this syllabus.

Late Assignments: 5 points will be deducted from your grade for each day the assignment is late. No exceptions, NO extensions will be granted except in cases of documented emergencies.

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


Recommended: Schoech, Samantha and Lisa Taggart. 2007. The Bigger, the Better, the Tighter, the Sweater: On Beauty, Body Image, and Other Hazards of Being Female. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.

I will have you read selected articles from this book.

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 will discuss 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

Week of September 4th

Introduction

Tuesday and Thursday September 4th and September 6th:

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


Week of September 11th


Tuesday, September 11th
Weitz, Chapter 2.

Thursday, September 13th
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

**Week of September 18th: Feminist Theory and the Body: Understanding Embodied Practices.**

Tuesday, September 18th:


Weitz, Chapter 3.

Thursday September 20th.


**Week of September 25th: How to conduct a content analysis of mass mediated images of women’s bodies and the Cult of THINNESS**
Week of October 2nd: Cult of Thinness. Women, Weight, and Body Image and Eating Issues

Finish Book: Hesse-Biber. The Cult of Thinness

Week of October 9th: The Medicalization of the Female Body

Tuesday, October 9th

Weitz, Chapter 4.


Thursday, October 11th.


Video on medicalization of the female body.

October 16th Mid-term Exam

Tuesday October 16th. Mid-Term Exam. We will have an essay exam on all readings up to and including Thursday October 11th.
Reshaping and Altering the Body

Video Clips from Nip/Tuck

Make-up, cosmetic surgeries, tattooing and body piercing.

Tuesday October 23rd.


Selections from the Book: The Bigger, the Better, the Tighter the Sweater:


shapes women, by Tebbel, Cyndi. Sydney: Finch Publishing.

Feminism and Plastic surgery Exercise (Shaw and Lee).

Thursday, October 25th
Rose Weitz Reader, Chapters 11 & 12.

Video: The Merchants of Cool

WebCT


Thursday November 1st. Violence Against Women on The College Campus


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
Tuesday, November 6th


Thursday, November 8th


WEITZ, CHAPTER 10


Video: The Beauty Pageant
Week of November 13th. The Marking of Race on the Body

Tuesday, November 13th. Marking Race on the Body and The Female Colonial and Postcolonial Body


Thursday: November 15th:


Recommended Books:


Videos:

- Hollywood Harems Video
- A Question of Color

Week of November 20th: Women, Food and the Body

- Tuesday November 20th.
- Caroline Knapp, Appetites: Entire Book

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: No Class November 22nd

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27TH: Sexualizing the Female Body: Female Desire, Heterosexism and Objectification and Reproductive Rights.

- Tuesday, November 27th.
- Weitz, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8. (Select 2 of these chapters)

- Thursday, November 29th.
- Media Influence on Sexuality and the Body


**CLASS ACTIVITY:**

The Heterosexual Questionnaire: Martin Rochlin. (Handout on WebCT)

**HETEROFORMATIVITY AWARENESS EXERCISE (SHAW AND LEE)**

**Week of December 4th**

**Cultural Resistance and the Female Body**

**Tuesday December 4th:**


Rose Weitz, chapter 9

**Thursday December 6th**

**Student Summary Presentations of Paper Projects**
I. CONTENT ANALYSIS PAPER PROJECT (30 POINTS)

Content Analysis Paper.*This exercise is adapted from Janell Hobson’s course on women and the media. Go to: www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/wss281/womedia2006.html

I would like you to submit a paper for possible publication. There are several on-line e-journals that accept undergraduate student papers. One of these is Transcending Silence. Another is Boston College's Women's Studies Newsletter, Voices. (Website for journal: bany.edu/ws/journal/; history of this journal: http://www.albany.edu/main/features/2004/08-04/2journal/journal.htm)

You are to develop a critical essay between 10 to 12 pages (typed and double-spaced including references) that addresses the ways mass-mediated images portray women's bodies. Your paper should especially tend to issues of gender, class, and race.

Paper Specifics:

I would like you to sample a series of advertisements (from newspapers/magazines), TV ads, music videos, etc. as your database.
Research Problem: You need to state the nature of your research problem: What do you want to find out?

Sample: Identify the media.
Specify the time frame and number of examples per time frame

Code the advertisements: What specific meanings are you interested in identifying in these ads, videos, etc.?

Conduct an analysis of the data: What are your findings?
Interpret the findings: What do they mean?

Please access the web site of the journal *Transcending Silence* in order to download their submission requirements.

You may work with one co-author from class.

This project will be done in THREE PARTS.

PART ONE: DUE SEPTEMBER 27th.
Hand in a one to three page statement (double-spaced) telling me what you intend to do, including the research problem (as specifically as you can)

PART TWO: One week later: OCTOBER 4TH.
HAND IN an annotated bibliography. This should be a summary and analysis of at least 5 sources (peer-reviewed journals) related to your topic.
Each annotation should be at least 250 words and state the main argument of each source. List citations in APA format.

PART THREE:
The first draft needs to be turned in on November 5th.

The Final PAPER is due on November 30th.

Those students that receive an A- or higher are encouraged to submit their papers to the editorial board of the Voices Newsletter or Transcending Silence Journal.

If your submission is accepted, we will assist you with revisions on your paper based on what feedback you receive from the editorial board of the journal.

2. REACTION PAPERS (15 POINTS EACH=30 POINTS)

Reaction Paper #1: Critical Film Review (Due 10/22)

5 pages (double-spaced).

Your review is graded on overall organization, content analysis of issue, and grammatical style.

Write a critical analysis of a film (select one you have seen in this class).

You are to ANALYZE the film, not give a summary of it.
Answer the following questions:
What is the central thesis or goal of this film?

In your opinion, is the film effective in meeting this goal? Why or why not?

How does this film directly relate to the course readings? Be specific and relate it to TWO class readings and show how they directly relate to the film.

**Reaction Paper #2: Short Book Review (Due 11/27)**

**Short Book Review**

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

**Choices:**
- Hesse-Biber, The Cult of Thinness.

These are three very specific empirical examples that serve to ground many of the issues and concepts you are learning throughout our course.

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.