Sociology of the Body

The body is at once material and symbolic, an object of regulation and control and a site of contentious political struggle. It exists at the intersection of multiple discourses (e.g., occupational, reproductive, technoscientific, feminist, leisure, sport, and sexual). In this seminar, we will draw on an interdisciplinary literature and use a range of theoretical traditions to consider ways in which the body is constituted by these discourses. For example, what is “natural” about the body? How are distinctions made between the normal and the pathological? Are bodies subordinate to the mind? How are bodies commodified? How are bodies categorized and constituted by discourses of race, class, gender and sexuality?

Course Logistics
Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1) This is a seminar course. Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to show up to every class having read all required material. The quality of our discussions depends on your full participation.

2) Over the course of the semester, each student will be expected to write a 1-2 page memo responding to each week’s readings. (single-space is fine.) These comments will be uploaded to the appropriate folder on sakai the day before class (Sunday) by noon, so that everyone has time to read each other’s comments by Monday morning. Comments may be informal, but they must be a critical response. Memos will be graded as check/check plus/check minus. You can take four exemptions from writing these memos. If you choose to take an exemption, please let me know by email. These memos should help you focus your ideas in a way that can contribute to our collective conversation during class time. In general, each memo should include: a) a brief summary of the main idea of the readings and how these claims were supported; b) a synthetic analysis of some dimension of the course readings that you found compelling and warrants further discussion; and c) two to three well-crafted questions for the class to consider as a group. These memos ought to compare readings within that particular week, but you may also bring compare that week’s readings to themes and theories discussed earlier in the semester. This is also a good opportunity to raise questions and concerns about the substance of the readings. Finally, these memos are a great opportunity to develop a killer set of notes.

3) Each student will be responsible for helping me lead at least one weekly class discussion. Sign-up sheets will be passed around during the first week of class. As a codiscussant, your job is to introduce critically the material and to come up with a few (3-5) substantive questions in the form of a one-page handout (to be electronically
distributed to the rest of the group by 9 pm on the day before class) to get the discussion rolling. Such questions may target what you consider the key issue/problematic raised by the author(s) in question, a shortcoming in the argument/evidence, a puzzling claim, broader implications, exciting/provocative comparisons, and so forth. You will meet with me 15 minutes before class to go over our approach to discussion for the day.

4) Students taking the course for credit are expected to submit a 17-20 page paper on a topic related to this course. The paper can be analytical, critically reflecting on a substantive issue related to the sociology of the body or you may choose to write a research proposal, drawing on theoretical perspectives and existing empirical work to identify an interesting and, as of yet, unsolved empirical question.

Your topic must be approved in advance. Approval will be granted via a 2-3 page memo that describes your project, complete with a brief bibliography by October 26th. At that time, please make an appointment with me, so that we can discuss the paper in greater detail. Of course, I’m happy to discuss this with you in advance. Final paper is due on December 16th. Late papers are strongly discouraged.

5) Students will present their research in progress in class on December 12th. These presentations are both an opportunity to share your work with the class and to receive feedback on your project.

**Grade Allocation**
Class participation 25%
Memos 25%
Presentation 10%
Final Paper 40%

**Required Texts**
Available at the Rutgers University Bookstore


All other readings are available on sakai.
Course Schedule

Week One: Thursday, September 8th
Bringing in the Body

Week Two: Monday, September 12th
Phenomenology and the Lived Body
Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception. Selections.

Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl” and “Embodied Pregnancy.” On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays.


Recommended:


Week Three: Monday, September 19th
Habitus and the Social Body


Recommended:

Week Four: Monday, September 26th
Normal & Pathological


Recommended:

Week Five: Monday, October 3rd
Medicalization


Recommended:


Week Six: Monday, October 10th
Are Bodies There? Grappling with the biosocial


**Week Seven: Monday, October 17**

*The Social Construction of Sex*


Recommended:

**Week Eight: Monday, October 24th**

*Race in science*
American Anthropological Association Statement on "Race" (May 17, 1998)


**Week Nine: Monday, October 31**

*Somaticization: Do Bodies Speak?

*Recommended:*


**Week Ten: Monday, November 7th**

*Technologies and the Body*


**Week Eleven: Monday, November 14th**

*Commodifying Bodies*


**Week Twelve: Monday, November 28th**

*Biological Citizenship*

Michel Foucault, Part IV, *History of Sexuality.* vol. 1


*Recommended:*

Week Thirteen: Monday, December 5th

Embodied Fieldwork


Recommended:


Week Fourteen: Monday, December 12th

Presentations

Final paper due on December 16th.