

## **The Body in Culture and Art**

**Instructor: Prof. CHEUNG Shoan Yin (she/her/hers)**

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**Course Hours:**

**Wednesday 6:45 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.**

**CKB 706C**

Bodies are multiple: they are icons, metaphors, texts, commodities, raw materials, and more.

This course uses a cross-disciplinary approach that views culture as a dynamic medium that shapes, molds, and disciplines bodies into their many forms. We will learn how bodies change in relation to the methods that measure, regulate, and classify them, and how their production, regulation, and representation is central to the operations of power. This requires an expansive understanding of culture, and our topics will include an investigation of how bodies are made in relation to cultures of health, science, and global capitalism as well. By doing so, we will understand how the cultivation of physical bodies links individuals to broader social and political processes. We will also investigate how normative discourses on the body are created and circulated, and how they intertwine with race, gender, class, ethnicity, nation, and other markers of social difference. The first half of the class surveys a variety of social theories that explore how bodies are made through culture. The second half of the class investigates the relationship between body vitality and governance. As a final project, students will create a lesson plan with the goal of teaching high school students about the intersections between the body and power.

### **Course Objectives**

By completing this course, you will develop the ability to:

- Explain multiple theories about how bodies are constituted culturally
- Analyze the role of institutions in shaping and disciplining bodies and bodily practices, and reflect on how your own body is implicated in these processes as well
- Identify how and why normative ideas of bodies circulate in various cultural contexts
- Gain in-depth insight into one aspect of this topic through a final project
- Communicate about these issues orally

## Assessment

Your grade will be assessed according to the assignment breakdown and criteria listed below. Generally, performance that exceeds or falls short of expectations within a grade category will receive a modification of + / - to the overall letter grade.

Participation	20%
Discussion Leader	20%
Response Paper (2)	20%
Final Project	40%

- A Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
- B Good performance on all learning outcomes
- C Satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- D Non-satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- F Failure to complete assessment requirements, including plagiarism

## Course Schedule

1.     **Sep. 6**            **Introduction: The Body in Culture and Art**
  
2.     **Sep. 13**         **Body, Self, and Society**
  - Mary Douglas, “The Two Bodies,” *Natural Symbols* (2003)
  - Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” *Beyond the Body Proper* (2007 [1934])
  - Terence Turner, “The Social Skin,” in *Beyond the Body Proper* (2007)
  
3.     **Sep. 20**         **Body Practices**
  - Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus, Practices,” *The Logic of Practice* (1980)
  - Loïc Wacquant, “The Pugilistic Point of View: How Boxers Think and Feel About Their Trade,” *Theory and Society* (1995)

4. Sep. 27

### Sensing the Body

- Kathryn Geurts, “Senses,” *Keywords for Disability Studies* (2015)
- Kathryn Geurts, “On Rocks, Walks, and Talks in West Africa: Cultural Categories and an Anthropology of the Senses,” *Ethos*
- Shigehisa Kuriyama, “Grasping the Language of Life,” *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (2002)
- Oliver Sacks, “The Disembodied Lady,” *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985)

5. Oct. 4

### Theorizing Difference

- Nicholas Hudson, “The ‘Hottentot Venus,’ Sexuality, and the Changing Aesthetics of Race, 1650-1850,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* (2008)
- Philippa Levine, “Why Gender and Empire?” *Gender and Empire* (2007)
- Londa Schiebinger, “Theories of Gender and Race,” *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (2004)

6. Oct. 11

### Body Representations

- Genevieve Clutario, “Pageant Politics: Tensions of Power, Empire, Nationalism in Manila Carnival Queen Contests,” *Gendering the Trans-Pacific World* (2017)
- Nicole Constable, “Sexuality and Discipline Among Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong,” *American Ethnologist* (1997)

7. Oct. 18

### Thick and Thin

- Susan Bordo, “Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture,” *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993)
- Susan Greenhalgh, “Disordered Eating/Eating Disorder: Hidden Perils of the Nation’s Fight Against Fat,” *Medical Anthropology* (2016)
- Sabrina Strings, “Obese Black Women as ‘Social Dead Weight:’ Reinventing the Diseased Black Woman,” *Signs* (2015)

#### *Recommended:*

- Katherine Pike and Amy Borovoy, “The Rise of Eating Disorders in Japan: Issues of Culture and Limitations of the Model of

‘Westernization’,” *Culture, Medicine, & Psychiatry* (2004)

**8. Oct. 25 Disability**

- Margaret Stran, “Sitting and Resisting: How Using a Wheelchair Confronts Ideas of Normal,” *Body Battlegrounds* (2019)
- Gregor Wolbring, “The Politics of Ableism,” *Development* (2008)
- Susan Wendell, “The Social Construction of Disability,” *The Rejected Body* (1996)

**9. Nov. 8 Body Commodification**

- Rene Ameling, “Gender and the Value of Bodily Goods: Commodification in Egg and Sperm Donation,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* (2009)
- Warwick Anderson, “The Third-World Body,” *Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (2000)
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Human Traffic: Exposing the Brutal Organ Trade,” *New Internationalist* (2014)

*Recommended:*

- Margaret Lock, “The Alienation of Body Tissue and the Biopolitics of Immortalized Cell Lines,” *Body & Society* (2001)

**10. Nov. 15 Enhancement**

- Jean Baudrillard, “The Finest Consumer Object,” *The Body: A Reader* (2005)
- Alexander Edmonds, “‘The Poor Have a Right to Be Beautiful:’ Cosmetic Surgery in Neoliberal Brazil,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2007)
- Alvaro Jarrin, “The Politics of Beauty,” *Revista* (2017)

*Recommended:*

- Aren Aizura, “Where Health and Beauty Meet: Femininity and Racialization in Thai Cosmetic Surgery Clinics,” *Asian Studies Review* (2009)

**11. Nov. 22 Muscle**

- Xinyan Peng, “‘You’ve Got to Have Core Muscles:’ Disciplining Hardworking Bodies,” *Corporate Women in Contemporary China: ‘We’ve Always Worked’* (2022)
- Shigehisa Kuriyama, “Muscularity and Identity,” *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (2002)

*Recommended:*

- Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas Carter, “Sports, Nation, Nationalism,” *The Anthropology of Sports: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (2018)

**12. Nov. 29 Final Presentations**