

SOC 258: SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY

Spring 2012

Bellevue College

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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 258" in the subject line)
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"The Man Whose Arms Exploded"

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Why do we spend so much money trying to "improve" our bodies?
Why do women allow themselves to be physically uncomfortable for the sake of their appearances, sometimes even purposefully starving themselves?
Why do some men desire so strongly to be muscular that they are willing to take steroids and put their health at risk?
Why are some perfectly "normal" bodily functions considered to be disgusting or repulsive?
Why is some hair considered to be "good hair," and other hair not?
Which bodies are perceived to be "normal," which are not, and why?
How is all of this shaped by society and culture?

Throughout the quarter, we will examine the body from a sociological perspective, paying particular attention to the ways in which cultural ideas about the body affect our everyday, lived experiences. What is the relationship between your body and your sense of Self? Is your body simply a vessel for your mind and soul, or does your body define what it means to be you? How does your physical appearance (and the ways in which you "manipulate" it) affect your interactions with others? We will attempt to answer these questions (and more) over the next several weeks, exploring how all kinds of social processes are inscribed, (re)produced, and challenged through bodily practices.

The Sociology of the Body is a burgeoning subfield of the larger discipline that I think is very intellectually and theoretically exciting. I have a passion for this subject matter, and I hope by the end of the quarter you will have a passion for it too! You may look at and think about bodies very different after you finish this class.

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you are expected to read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a "collaborative learning community" where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

(Please note that since this is a class about bodies, we may have frank discussions about potentially sensitive and explicit topics. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during class, you are free to step out of class. However, if you are one to become upset by open and frank discussions, this course may not be a good choice for you. This is an "R" rated class.)

A note about instructor availability: I have noticed that, sometimes, students have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day. In general, I am in my office for a couple of hours in the morning (before my classes), and I always check my email a few times a day. As a result, you will rarely be able to reach me by phone or by email in the evenings or on the weekends. I am, obviously, an active member of this course, but I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Explain how the body is simultaneously biological and social;
- Discuss the body at a theoretical and abstract level;
- Identify the role of culture and group norms in the presentations of our bodies;
- Illustrate the complex interactions between culture, groups, identity, the Self, and the body;
- Analyze the major social problems connected to the body;
- Assess the impacts of power, dominance, and inequality on our bodies;
- Explain how bodies can be a site of both oppression and empowerment; and
- Apply the course material to his or her own life, allowing for a deeper understanding of his/her own bodily experience.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: "Sociology of the Body: A Reader" by Malacrida and Low (Oxford University Press)
Additional course readings are posted on *MyBC* (from the BCC homepage)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

- *A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.* Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can.
- *Accessibility.* I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours whenever you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. Please try to make it your personal goal to visit my office hours at least once this quarter. I think you will find it helpful. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule.
- *Attention.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention.
- *Fairness.* Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- *A sincere effort to learn the course material.* When participating in discussions and when writing assignments/papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. On seminar days, you should bring the readings. Note that the BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- *Attendance.* Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course as I cover a lot of material in class that cannot be found in the readings. If you do need to miss class, please note that you will not be able to make up any in-class work that you may have missed (such as group work), and you are also responsible for any and all work that is due at the class meeting immediately upon your return. That means that being absent does not grant you an extension on anything. I highly recommend that you get the names and contact information of

one or two of your classmates so you can contact them for any assignments or notes you may have missed while absent.

- **Promptness.** You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should comply with all due dates. I believe that one of the major lessons students take away from college is the importance of meeting deadlines. As a result, **no late work will be accepted**. Late work will receive a **zero** grade. Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't. If you know you are going to be absent on the day an assignment is due, then turn it in early. **Being absent on the day something is due does NOT grant you an automatic extension (even if you were absent on the day it was assigned)**. Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email. It is your responsibility to get the work to me in class when it is due.

- **Contribution.** Learning about each other's experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. You should do your best to contribute to class discussions and activities. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.
- **Respect and tolerance.** Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.
- **Honesty.** This means no cheating, and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the textbook (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need can be found in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

GRADING

Grades are based on your performance on five factors: (1) exams, (2) quizzes, (3) seminar, (4) a group research project and presentation, (5) class participation, and (6) small homework assignments. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Exams (2 @ 200 pts each)	400 points (40% of final grade)
Quizzes (8 @ 10pts each)	80 points (8% of final grade)
Seminar (14 @ 15 pts each)	210 points (21% of final grade)
Research project and presentation	200 points (20% of final grade)
Participation	60 points (6% of final grade)
Homework	50 points (5% of final grade)
TOTAL	1,000 points

Course Grade	Point Total	Course Grade	Point Total
A	= 930-1,000 points	C+	= 770-799 points
A-	= 900-929 points	C	= 730-769 points
B+	= 870-899 points	C-	= 700-729 points
B	= 830-869 points	D+	= 670-699 points
B-	= 800-829 points	D	= 600-669 points
		F	= 0-599 points

- (1) **Exams:** Two exams are given over the course of the quarter. Exams *may* consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions. They may also involve a creative component. You are encouraged to study with your classmates for each exam. **Please note that I do not give make-**

up exams. If you are absent on the day of an exam, you will receive a zero grade. Please review the attached Course Calendar and make note of the exam dates. Plan ahead!

- (2) Quizzes: Most weeks, I will give a short quiz on the reading materials. Quizzes will be held at the beginning of class, so if you come in late, you will miss the quiz and receive a zero grade. You are permitted to miss one quiz without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Quizzes will typically be short answer, although I may throw in a multiple choice question once in a while. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you have done the readings and understand them on a basic level. My rationale for this is that I think our time in class will be much more productive, and you'll learn more, if you've done the readings ahead of time.
- (3) Seminar: THIS IS A SEMINAR-HEAVY CLASS. We will have sixteen seminars over the course of the quarter; you are permitted to miss two seminars without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest two scores). Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment independently AND another one in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. Early in the quarter, I will assign students randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups at any time, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). Each week, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment with them.

If you look at the Course Calendar, you will see that there is a Seminar due every week – some weeks even have two or three due. On Seminar day, it is crucial that you come to class prepared. You will need to complete the reading ahead of time and bring a brief assignment to each seminar. (NOTE: I will not accept assignments that are not typed.) Each INDEPENDENT seminar assignment (that you bring with you to class on Seminar day) should include the following:

- a statement of what you think the article's main claim/conclusion is (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!) Please note that a thesis is NOT the same as the topic of the article, but rather, a thesis is an ARGUABLE CLAIM that the author is making.
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article that you would like to talk about with your classmates (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").
- Seminar assignments should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!).

In class on seminar days, you will break into your assigned groups and come to an agreement about what the thesis of the article is. Your group will write your agreed-upon thesis on a piece of paper, and then begin talking about your discussion questions. After your discussion ends, your group will staple your individual seminar assignments to the sheet of paper that contains your agreed-upon thesis, and you'll CIRCLE the best three discussion-questions (that is, the three questions that were the most thought- and discussion-provoking for you all). I grade seminar in the following manner:

I review your group's agreed-upon thesis and assign it a grade (for example, 15 out of 15). I then look at my notes from class and check to see who contributed to discussion in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 15s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive zeros. Students who do not submit individual assignments (stapled in the packet) also receive a zero grade. This means that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less receive lowered grades.

- (4) Group Research Project and Presentation: You will form groups (of 4 to 5 students each) and conduct *original* social research as a team. This is not traditional library research; rather, your team will "go out" into the world and collect data about a course-related topic of your choice. You might decide, for example, to survey BCC students about their opinions of plastic surgery. You might go to a tattoo parlor and interview the artists. You might analyze how body care products are marketed in drugstores. It is up to your group to decide on a topic (it will be approved by me, of course). Your group will present your research to the class at the end of the quarter. *More details about this project will be distributed in the first part of the quarter.*

- (5) Participation: Participation is essential to the format of this class and will therefore contribute significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your *active* participation. “Participation” includes attendance, class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments. As a result, if you skip class or disrupt class by coming in late regularly or whispering, then your participation grade will suffer. Conversely, if you contribute to class discussions and add important insights, your grade will benefit. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly – excellent attendance and participation can significantly improve your final grade!*
- (6) Homework Assignments: You will complete several smaller homework assignments throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. You should do your best to address every assignment thoughtfully, clearly, and completely. Please note that I will not accept late homework, so homework that is not handed in on time will receive a **zero** grade. Additionally, I will not accept homework that isn’t typed (unless I’ve specifically mentioned that it can be handwritten). Some homework assignments are described in the attached Course Calendar, and others will be announced during class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with the Disability Resource Center (564-2498). You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from the DRC in room B233. The disability accommodation documentation must be given to me before it is needed rather than afterward, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

COURSE CALENDAR

The following Course Calendar will be revised as needed. Please note that you will be held responsible for all revisions to the calendar. If you miss a class, be sure to check either with me or a classmate regarding any changes.

WEEK ONE – Bodies in History: Social Thought on the Meaning of Bodies

Reading 4: “The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners”

Reading 5: “Body, Tomb, Temple, Machine, Self”

DUE FRIDAY: Homework Make an extensive list of all of the things that you can think of that people ‘do’ to their bodies in contemporary American society. Try to fill up one entire page with a list of things. Next, take a look at the list and try to answer the following question (in about a paragraph): what can we learn about our culture by the fact that we do all of these things to our bodies? You should turn in both your one-page list and your one-paragraph analysis.

WEEK TWO – Hierarchies of Bodies: Whose Bodies are Considered “Normal?”

Read Weitz “A History of Women’s Bodies” (on WEBSITE)

Read Tavis “Measuring Up” (on WEBSITE)

Read Kaw “Medicalization of Racial Features...” (on WEBSITE)

Reading 6: “The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality”

Visit and read the following website:

<http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/saartjie.htm>

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 2 readings (and website link)

TUESDAY: Seminar on Weitz AND Tavis

WEDNESDAY: Seminar on Kaw

DUE FRIDAY: Homework: In a couple of paragraphs (TYPED!), reflect on the “Hottentot.” What do you think about the fact that Saartjie (Sarah) Baartman was put on display for her “unusual” body? What does this teach us about which bodies are “normal?” Whose bodies are “normal” under these circumstances? Whose are not? What does Baartman’s experience teach us about racialized and gendered bodies? Do you see any similarities to the way Baartman’s body was viewed and the way in which Black women’s bodies are often viewed today?



WEEK THREE – Presentation of Bodies: How Do We Use Our Bodies to Communicate?



Reading 7: “Introduction’ from *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*”

Reading 8: “Big Handsome Men, Bears, and Others: Virtual Constructions of ‘Fat Male Embodiment’”

Reading 9: “Nurturing and Negligence”

Reading 41: “Women and Their Hair...”

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 3 readings

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Women and Their Hair”

DUE FRIDAY: Homework Think about the way in which you “use” your body to communicate who you are (including your identities), and write a couple of paragraphs in which you reflect on the ways in which you alter and present your body. For example, how does your hairstyle communicate ‘who you are?’ How do your clothes reflect your identity? Do you ‘alter’ or modify your body in any way, and if so, what does this say to others about who you are? Write a couple of paragraphs, typed.

WEEK FOUR – Social Control of Bodies

Reading 14: “Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture”

Kessler “Creating Good-Looking Genitals in the Service of Gender” (on WEBSITE)

Darby “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” (on WEBSITE)

Read “Female Genital Mutilation” at the following site:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/102/1/153.full>

Reading 23: “Fetal Rights”

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 4 readings

MONDAY: List of group members for research project is due

MONDAY: Seminar on Kessler

THURSDAY: Seminar on “Fetal Rights”

WEEK FIVE – Gendered Bodies

Reading 26: “Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools”

Hall “Size Matters” (on WEBSITE)

Tolman “Daring to Desire: Culture and the Bodies of Adolescent Girls” (on WEBSITE)

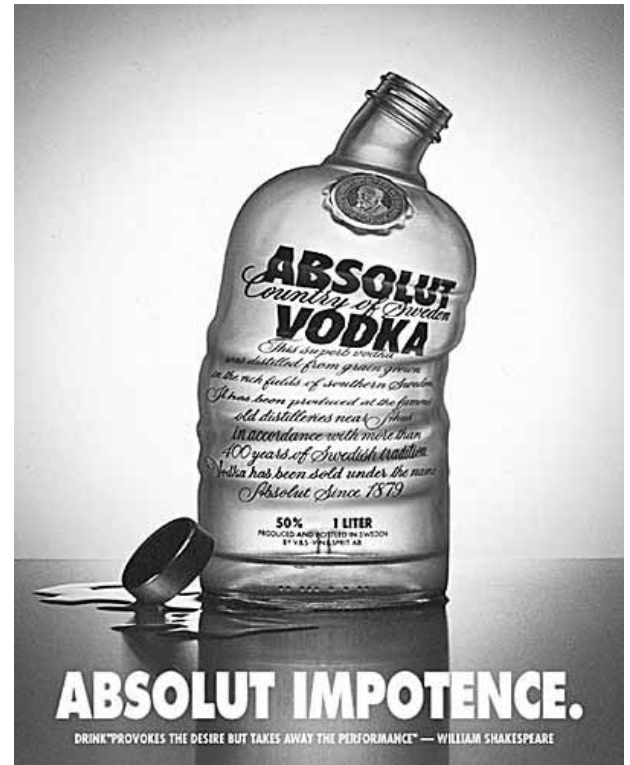
“Masculinities and Men’s Health” (on WEBSITE)

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 5 readings

THURSDAY: Seminar on “Daring to Desire”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Masculinities and Men’s Health”

DUE FRIDAY: Homework As you were growing up, what kinds of messages do you remember hearing and seeing about your body in the culture? In other words, if you are female, what do you remember the culture “saying” about how female bodies are supposed to look, act, and feel? (I’m taking about the entire female body, including genitals.) If you are a male, what do you remember the culture “saying” about how male bodies are supposed to look, act, and feel? (I’m taking about the entire male body, including genitals.) Write a reflection of a couple of paragraphs in length, typed.



WEEK SIX – Transgressive Bodies

Reading 16: “Introduction’ from *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal*”

Reading 17: “Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism”

Reading 18: “Telling Body Transgendering Stories”

MONDAY: Exam #1

TUESDAY: Quiz on Week 6 readings

TUESDAY: Seminar on “Introduction’ from *One of Us*”

WEDNESDAY: Group research topic and research plan due

FRIDAY: Poster presentation due

WEEK SEVEN – Disabled Bodies



Read Anonymous “Journal Entry” (on WEBSITE)

Reading 31: “Somewhere a Mockingbird”

Reading 32: “Coming to Terms: Masculinity and Physical Disability”

Reading 33: “(In)Visibility: Accounts of the Embodiment of Women with Physical Disabilities...”

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 7 readings

TUESDAY: Seminar on “Somewhere a Mockingbird”

WEDNESDAY: Seminar on “Coming to Terms”

WEEK EIGHT – Sporting Bodies

Reading 34: “‘Holding Back’: Negotiating a Glass Ceiling on Women’s Muscular Strength”

Reading 35: “Looking into Masculinity: Sport, Media, and the Construction of the Male Body Beautiful”

Reading 36: “Sport, Genetics, and the ‘Natural Athlete’: The Resurgence of Racial Science”

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 8 readings

MONDAY: Seminar on “Holding Back”

THURSDAY: Seminar on “Looking Into Masculinity”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Sport, Genetics, and the ‘Natural Athlete’”

DUE FRIDAY: Homework Consider our cultural messages about bodies and sports. Which sports seem to be culturally-defined as ‘appropriate’ for females, and which do not? Which sports seem to be culturally-defined as ‘appropriate’ for males, and which do not? Which kinds of ‘athletic’ female bodies seem to be culturally defined as acceptable, and which are not? Which kinds of ‘athletic’ male bodies seem to be culturally defined as acceptable, and which are not? What do your answers to these questions teach us about our cultural ideas about bodies? Write a couple of paragraphs, typed.

WEEK NINE – Racialized Bodies

NOTE: No classes on Monday, 5/28

Reading 37: “Feared and Revered”

Reading 38: “The Future of

Reproductive Choice for Poor
Women and Women of Color”

Reading 39: “Gendered Racial Violence
and Spatialized Justice: The
Murder of Pamela George”

TUESDAY: Quiz on Week 9 readings

**WEDNESDAY: Seminar on “Feared and
Revered”**



WEEK TEN – Commodified Bodies



Reading 30: “Exotic Dancing and the Negotiation of Intimacy: The Multiple Uses of Body Technologies”
Davidson and Taylor “Fantasy Islands: Exploring the Demand for Sex Tourism” (on WEBSITE)

Reading 48: “The Sacrificial Body of Orlan”

MONDAY: Quiz on Week 10 readings

THURSDAY: Seminar on “The Sacrificial Body of Orlan”

FRIDAY: Exam #2

WEEK ELEVEN – Course Wrap-up and Presentations

Monday: Presentations

Tuesday: Presentations

NOTE: We will also meet on Wednesday, 6/13, from 9:30am-11:20am in order to finish hearing each other’s presentations.