

SOC 258: SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY
Winter 2009
Bellevue College



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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 258"
in the subject line)
Office Hours: 8:30-9:30am daily
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Class Meets: Daily 10:30am-11:20am
Class Location: C164

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 "good hair," and other hair not?
Which bodies are perceived to be "normal" and which are not?
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 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.)

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 *MyBCC* (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.*
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework. 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 can not 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, even if it was assigned on the day you were absent.** 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 unless you have had it approved by me BEFORE the due date.** Late work will receive a **zero** grade.

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

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. Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

- *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.* If you cheat, 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. 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) seminar, (3) a group research project and presentation, (4) class participation, and (5) homework. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Exams (2 @ 250 pts each)	500 points (50% of final grade)
Seminar	250 points (25% of final grade)
Research project and presentation	150 points (15% of final grade)
Participation	50 points (5% of final grade)
<u>Homework</u>	<u>50 points (5% of final grade)</u>
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) **Seminar:** We will have sixteen seminars over the course of the quarter; you are permitted to miss one seminar without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Seminar involves breaking students into groups in order to have thought-provoking discussions about a reading or two. It is crucial that you come to seminar prepared. You will need to complete the readings ahead of time and bring a brief paper to each seminar. (NOTE: I will not accept papers that are not typed.) Each seminar paper should include the following:
 - a statement of the article's main claim/conclusion (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!)
 - 3-4 central questions about the article that you would like to talk to classmates about (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").

Seminar papers should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!). Your seminar grade is based on attendance, participation, and papers.

Seminar papers: 15 @ 10pts each = 150 points	(graded throughout the quarter)
<u>Seminar participation: 100 points</u>	<u>(grade assigned at end of quarter)</u>
TOTAL SEMINAR POINTS: 250	

- (3) 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. 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.*
(Research Project and Presentation = 150 total points)
- (4) 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!*
- (5) Homework Assignments: You will complete several 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. Homework will be graded not only on completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also thoughtfulness (Does your assignment show that you thought hard about the topic, or did you give the topic just a little superficial attention?). Homework assignments vary in length - some may be a paragraph long, others will be 1-2 pages (usually typed and double-spaced). 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”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Body, Tomb, Temple, Machine, Self”

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

Read Tavis “Measuring Up” (on WEBSITE)

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

Reading 41: “Women and Their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation”

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

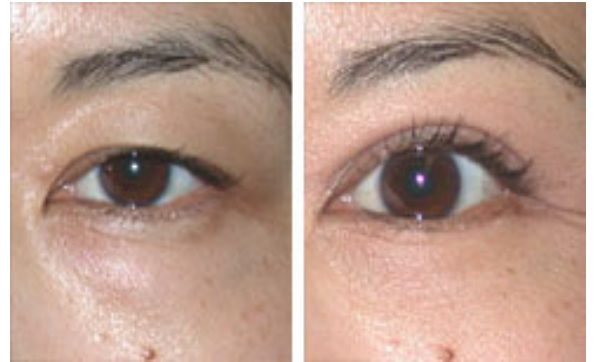
Visit and read the following website:

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

TUESDAY: Seminar on Tavis

THURSDAY: Seminar on Kaw

FRIDAY: Homework: In a couple of paragraphs, 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?



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



NOTE: No classes on Monday, January 19th – Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!

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 40: “Modern Primitivism’: Non-mainstream Body Modification and Racialized Representation”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Modern Primitivism”

WEEK FOUR – Social Control of Bodies

Reading 10: “Discipline and Dehumanization in a Total Institution”

Reading 11: “The Anthropological Born Criminal”

Reading 12: “The Destruction of ‘Lives Not Worth Living’”

Reading 23: “Fetal Rights”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “Fetal Rights”

WEEK FIVE – Gendered Bodies

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

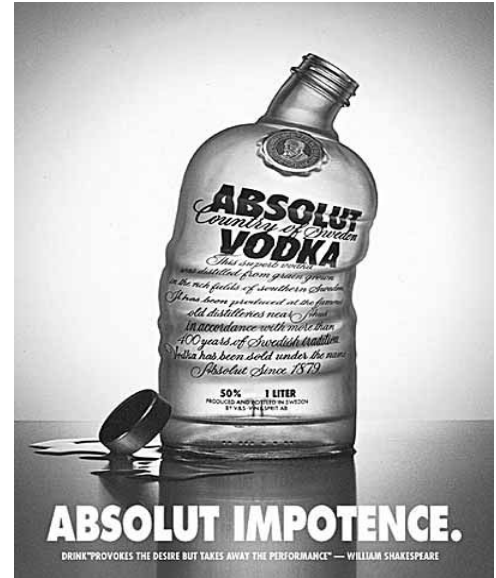
Reading 13: “From Sacred to Disembodied Motherhood: Breast-Feeding with the Experts and State”

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

Reading 15: “Men’s Bodies”

MONDAY: Seminar on “Becoming a Gendered Body”

THURSDAY: Seminar on “Anorexia Nervosa”



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

THURSDAY: Seminar on “Hermaphrodites with Attitude”

WEEK SEVEN – Disabled Bodies



NOTE: No classes on Monday, February 16th

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...”

TUESDAY: Seminar on “Anonymous Journal Entry” and “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: Seminar on “Holding Back”

WEDNESDAY: Seminar on “Looking Into Masculinity”

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

WEEK NINE – Racialized Bodies

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: Seminar on “Feared and
Revered”**

FRIDAY: Exam #2



WEEK TEN – Commodified Bodies



Reading 30: “Exotic Dancing and the Negotiation of

Intimacy: The Multiple Uses of Body Technologies”

Reading 48: “The Sacrificial Body of Orlan”

FRIDAY: Seminar on “The Sacrificial Body of Orlan”

WEEK ELEVEN – Course Wrap-up and Presentations

**NOTE: We will meet on Thursday, March 19th, from 9:30-11:20am
in order to watch each other’s presentations.**