

ETHN 289: Theorizing Embodiment Winter 2015

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Office: Social Sciences Building (SSB) 245
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-11:30am and by appointment

Course meetings: Thursdays 9:00-11:50am, SSB 103

Inscribed surface, political object, sign, flesh, boundary, matter, cultural product, artistic work—these are some of the many ways that the human body has been theorized in a wide cross-section of critical scholarship and cultural production. In this transdisciplinary course we will engage primarily with recent work that interrogates the social, political, and philosophical stakes of embodiment as it pertains to racialization, gender, class, colonialism, sexualities and discourses of ability and disability. We will engage in dialogue that centers on the creative potential of bodies to generate social transformation.

Requirements:

- **Participation:** Consistent and engaged participation in seminar discussions is required. I expect for you read thoroughly and critically and come to seminar prepared with questions and comments. We will be supportive and respectful of one another as we engage in debate--good collegiality is a form of politics and our classroom is a community. Missing more than one class meeting will negatively affect your standing in the course.
- **(1) Collaborative Class Facilitation:** A group of 2-3 students will facilitate a class discussion every week. If we have guest speakers the group will be in charge of moderating the conversation. (If our class size is smaller than I anticipate we may have individual presentations.)

Facilitations will provoke dialogue about; 1-the central argument(s) of the scholarship being engaged, 2-the theoretical and methodological approaches utilized and innovated by the scholars, 3-the potential social, cultural, and political stakes of the work, 4-how the work connects to other scholarship we have engaged in the class (with the exception of the first group).

I encourage facilitation groups to utilize media (such as short video screenings), group activities (such as free writing or creative writing exercises), and other methods to create a dynamic space. However, these are not required, what is most important is that we have a quality exchange in the seminar.

- **(6) 2-3 page Response Papers:** You will submit six 2-3 page response papers during the course of the seminar on the weeks of your choice. Response papers are due on the date we are discussing the readings and late papers will not be accepted. Response papers are tools for working through the material and thinking about how the work can expand (or not) your scholarly, artistic, and social justice interests. The papers can be critical, open-ended, and/or personal. What I am looking for is an earnest engagement with the work. Make sure that your papers engage with all of the readings assigned, although more emphasis on one or two within that context is acceptable.
- **Final Project & Presentation**

The final project can take several forms:

- Research Paper
- Conference Paper
- Annotated Syllabus with Teaching Statement
- Research Proposal with Annotated Bibliography
- Substantive Creative Project with Artist/Curatorial Statement

I am interested in how you will utilize course materials to further your work and am providing several options for the final project in order to make it useful for your particular stage in the graduate school process. I will expect for you to meet with me in office hours to discuss your project by week 7 (Feb. 19). Brief presentations of your work will be held during our final meeting on March 12th and the **written portions will be due by 5:00pm on March 20th**. I will provide specific instructions as to the length and format of written work on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the project you choose to undertake (writings will not exceed 10-12 pages).

Reading Schedule

(subject to change)

January 8

Week 1-Course introduction

SOME INITIAL PROVOCATIONS

January 15

Week 2—Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17 (2): 64-81, 1987

Jason King, “Cultural Studies and the Body: Ass Politics, Feng Shui and the Timbaland Sound” in *Blackwell’s Companion to Cultural Studies*, ed. by Toby Miller. Blackwells' Press. 2001.

Martha Few, ““That Monster of Nature”: Gender, Sexuality, and the Medicalization of a ‘Hermaphrodite’ in Late Colonial Guatemala,” *Ethnohistory* 54:1 (Winter 2007), 159-176.

Leah DeVun, “Animal Appetites,” *GLQ* 20:4, 2014, 461-490.

Recommended:

Sander Gilman, “The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality” from *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. (1985, Cornell University Press)

Thomas Laquer, “Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology,” *Representations* 14, Spring 1986

Terri Kapsalis, “Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction” from *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (1997, Duke University Press)

Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (1994, Indiana University Press)

Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (2012, New York University Press)

GLQ 20 (4), 2014, Special Issue, *On the Visceral (Part 1): Race, Sex, and Other Gut Feelings*

Sara Kaplan, *The Black Reproductive: Feminism and the Politics of Freedom*, University of Minnesota Press (forthcoming)

BODIES & BIOPOWER

January 22

Week 3-Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France 1975-76*. (Picador, NY)

Chapter 11

Selections from Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, (2014, Duke University Press)
Introduction, Chapters 1-2, 4 (try to read the entire book if possible)

Mimi Thi Nguyen, “The Biopower of Beauty: Humanitarian Imperialisms and Global Feminisms in an Age of Terror,” *Signs* 36 (2), 2011, 359-383

Recommended:

Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012, Duke University Press)

Khiara M. Bridges, *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (2011, University of California Press)

Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (2002, University of California Press)

QUEERING NOTIONS OF ABILITY/DISABILITY

January 29

Week 4- -Selections from Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013, Indiana University Press) Introduction, Chapters 1 and 5

Amanda Cachia, “ ‘Disabling’ the Museum: Curator as Infrastructural Activist,” *Journal of Visual Practice* 12 (3): 257-289.

**Amanda Cachia will visit our class*

“VIRUS.CIRCUS.MEM” by Micha Cárdenas and Elle Mehrmand *from Speculative* (Exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 2008, Zach Blas and Christopher O’Leary)

Recommended:

Amy Lyford, “The Aesthetics of Dismemberment,” *from Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (2007, University of California Press)

LABOR & TECHNOLOGY

February 5

Week 5—Kalindi Vora, “Potential, Risk, and Return in Transnational Indian Gestational Surrogacy.” *Current Anthropology* 54 (7), 2013.

Kalindi Vora, “Re-imagining Reproduction: Unsettling Metaphors in the History of Imperial Science and Commercial Surrogacy in India.” Forthcoming in *Somatechnics*

Sarah Reboloso McCullough, “Body Like a Rocket: Performing Technologies of Naturalization” *Thirdspace* 9 (2), 2010

Carolyn Thomas de la Peña, “Designing the Electric Body: Sexuality, Masculinity, and the Electric Belt in America 1880-1920,” *Journal of Design History* 14 (4), 2001

**Kalindi Vora and Sarah Reboloso McCullough will visit our class*

Recommended:

Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1990, Routledge)

TRANS & TRANSFORMATION

February 12

Week 6-Selections from Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (2010, Columbia University Press)

Chapters 1, 2, 3

Marcia Ochoa, *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela* (2014, Duke University Press)

Chapters 3 and 5

Recommended:

Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993, Routledge)

SURFACE & STYLE

February 19

Week 7-- Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (2011, Oxford University Press)

Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (short piece)

Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (2009, Duke University Press)

Introduction, Chapters 1-2

Recommended:

Krista Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice* (2015, Duke University Press)

Anne Anlin Chen, "Shine: On Race, Glamour, and the Modern," 2011, PMLA, 126 (4): 1022-1041.

L. Ayu Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race in Transnational Indonesia* (2013, University of Hawaii Press)

February 26

Week 8- Selections from Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979, Routledge)

Kobena Mercer. 1987. "Black Hair/Style Politics." *New Formations* 3: 33-54

2 chapters from my book manuscript in progress, *Aesthetics of Excess: Art, Class, Bodies, and Sexual Racialization* (tentative title)

IN THE SPACES OF BODY WORK

March 5

Week 9- Selections from Tiffany M. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (2010, University of Illinois Press)
Chapters 2 and 5

Selections from Miliann Kang, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, and the Body in Beauty Service Work* (2010, University of California Press)
Chapters 4 and 5

Luis Alvarez, "From Zoot Suits to Hip Hop: Towards a Relational Chicana/o Studies" *Latino Studies*, 2007 (5): 53-75

March 12

Week 10—Final Project Presentations