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Office location TBD; Office hours after the second class each week and by appointment
The class meets twice weekly. Exact time and location TBD.

THINKING BODIES: LITERATURE, FILM, AND PERFORMANCE

Course Description

This course surveys a variety of ways in which embodiment participates in attaining, producing, and transmitting human knowledge. Perspectives on embodiment represented in this course are drawn from feminist scholarship, affect studies, religion, psychoanalysis, and performance studies. Theoretical discussions are enriched by insights from a diverse selection of cultural production, ranging from the classics of American, German, and Russian literature, to the less well-known cinematic and performative traditions of former Yugoslavia, Poland, and Japan. Through close readings, seminar discussions, collaborative work, and written assignments, students analyze and synthesize different modes of thinking about, portraying, and experiencing the body. Ultimately, they are asked to reflect on the role of embodiment in their own personal, intellectual, and political identities.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss and compare, in oral presentation and class discussions, the various ways in which the course materials address the concept of the body and its role in human life and culture;
2. Demonstrate the ability to understand and synthesize readings from a variety of disciplines within the humanities;
3. Analyze the portrayal and problematization of the body in various types of cultural production (literature, film, theatre, dance), applying concepts garnered from theoretical and critical readings to reach an independent interpretation;
4. Contextualize the role of the body within history, culture, society, and politics, demonstrating the ability to interpret their interconnections.

Course Materials:

The syllabus contains four longer works of fiction and one collection from which two longer pieces are taken; all four books are available through Columbia libraries. Students should aim to obtain the exact editions listed below in order to ensure consistency in referencing page numbers in class.

1. F. M. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004);

2. Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, (London, New York: Penguin Classics, 2008);
3. Toni Morrison. *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Plume Book, 1994);
4. Susan Sontag. *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).

All other readings listed on the course schedule will be scanned and posted on Courseworks. All films and video materials will be made available digitally through Panopto. For the following five films, screenings will also be organized at times that are convenient to the greatest number of students in the class.

1. *Jesus Camp* (Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, 2006)
2. *W. R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (Dušan Makavejev, 1971)
3. *Possession* (Andrzej Żuławski, 1981)
4. *Metamorphosis*, (Arthur Pita, 2011), The Joyce Theatre New York 2013 (Sky Arts Broadcast and DVD, 2013)
5. *The Mechanical Bride* (Alison de Fren, 2012)

Assessment criteria:

1. Participation (30%)
 - a. Coming to class on time, with prepared notes and questions on the assigned materials, ready to actively participate in class discussion and remain focused and engaged throughout the class period; different ways of demonstrating engagement and participation will be discussed in the first class, and will not be limited to speaking up (10%);
 - b. In the classroom, engaging with all class activities, supporting a positive, respectful, and collaborative class atmosphere, and demonstrating commitment to learning and helping others learn (10%);
 - c. **At least five** discussion posts on the class forum that reflect how interactions with class content and your peers contributed to, challenged, or changed your understanding of the world outside the classroom; and **at least five** responses to peer reflections.

Discussion posts can contain critical reflections, but also informal opinions, personal associations, or connections to other materials and media. Posts should be no shorter than 100 words, but there will be no upper limit. The instructor will open a new discussion topic after each class with some starting questions for the online discussion, but students are welcome to create independent forum topics of their own. Students may choose the timing and theme of their posts independently. Posting more frequently and fostering an active informal discussion within the community is strongly encouraged, but staying within the minimum will not be penalized. Keep in

mind that this segment of the grade assesses the degree *engagement with the class*, rather than the quality of writing posted (10%).

At the end of weeks 5 and 9, students will receive non-graded feedback on their participation, in writing, so as to highlight strengths and offer avenues for improvement that can be implemented before receiving the final grade for the semester.

2. Papers (55%)

- a. Midterm paper (20%) of 1350-1650 words will analyze how the concepts and questions raised in **two** of the theoretical essays covered may be used to understand the representation of the body in **one** of the primary sources covered in the first five weeks of the semester. It will demonstrate a solid understanding of the approaches to the body covered in the first half of the semester, as well as the ability to critically evaluate them alongside each other and apply them to analyze cultural production.
- b. Final paper (35%) of 2250-2750 words may take one of the following forms:
 - i. **An analytical paper** will probe a question related to embodiment in **one or two** of the literary works, films, or dance pieces covered. For this format, students should rely on assigned theoretical readings and criticism, but will need to conduct further independent research.
 - ii. **A theoretical essay** will show how **three** components of the course informed, changed, or challenged the student's understanding of one aspect of embodiment in her life.

Paper topics must be chosen in collaboration with the instructor at least two weeks before the end of classes, and a work-in-progress in the form of a small presentation must be brought to the last class of the semester for seminar discussion. A successful paper in either genre will demonstrate an agile grasp of approaches to the body covered in the course, and the ability to apply them when developing a critical position on a subject.

Papers are graded on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of relevant content (25%);
- Analysis, application, and synthesis of ideas and concepts (35%);
- Clear structure of argument (20%);
- Appropriate use of language and terminology tailored to the subject-matter (15%);
- Neat presentation, use of Times New Roman 12pt. font, 1.5 spacing, and consistent referencing and bibliography (5%).

3. Oral presentation (15%)

The aim of the oral presentation is to demonstrate personal and intellectual engagement with one of the foundational questions raised in the first five weeks of class. **All students must make time to meet with the instructor during office hours by the end of week 3** to discuss their interests for the class and determine a presentation topic based on their personal goals for the class. Students are encouraged to take the oral presentation as an opportunity to reflect on the focus of their own interest in the materials, and use it as a guiding line for following the course for the rest of the semester.

Classroom Policies:

1. No food or eating in class.
2. **No cellphone use in class.** In case of emergency, you may step outside to make your call or text, no questions asked. Laptops and tablets may only be used with the express permission of the instructor, or when they are indispensable for class work.
3. Full attendance is mandatory, with exceptions made for documented medical reasons, religious holidays, and emergencies. Students who need to miss a class will notify the instructor as soon as possible, and suggest a plan to make up the class with at-home work. Students with three or more unexcused absences will be taken off the roster.
4. All late assignments will automatically be downgraded by a full letter grade. If the assignment is not submitted within 48 hours of the due date, it will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero. Exceptions in extenuating circumstances are possible with advance permission of the instructor.

What students can expect and what is expected of them

A typical class will be structured as a discussion seminar that includes both close reading the materials covered, and surveying their overarching ideas. The instructor may deliver brief informational presentations where context is necessary. In addition to open-floor discussion, classes will also incorporate additional activities such as minute papers, pair work, work in small groups, anonymous opinion surveys, and games. In-class activities are often designed with the intention of providing varied avenues of demonstrating class participation that go beyond group discussion. If further help is necessary, students should work with the instructor to find a way of engaging with the class and their peers in a manner that suits their learning preferences. Everyone is expected to support a positive class atmosphere that welcomes participation and collaboration.

Readings for the course vary in length and complexity, and are paced with the overall rhythm of the semester in mind. On average, the workload will take up to 8 hours to complete, but is deliberately reduced at high-stress times around midterms and finals. This

being the case, students are expected to always complete **all** of the assigned readings and viewings **before** class, and come well-prepared for active discussion. The class discussion board is part of the formal participation grade, but will ideally serve as a semi-informal platform for the exchange of thoughts, impressions, and opinions within the group.

Students will be asked to actively reflect on their learning process, both in the discussion posts that are part of their class participation grade, and through occasionally filling out short, anonymous, non-graded feedback forms that help the instructor continually tailor her teaching approach to the students' interests and abilities.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Honor Code

This course is taught in the spirit of academic integrity, and all students are expected to adhere to the Columbia College Honor Code. The full text of the honor code, as well as the Columbia faculty statement on academic integrity, can be accessed here: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action.

The instructor shall not single-handedly make a determination on whether or not any piece of work is plagiarized, but will work with the student, the student's advising dean, and Student Conduct and Community Standards to resolve any suspicions. The specifics of disciplinary procedures are described here:

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/facultyadmin/academicintegrity/responding>

Students who are unsure whether an action might violate academic integrity are encouraged to speak to the instructor, who will be available to provide guidance and support in ensuring compliance with good practice.

Disability Rights and Responsibilities

All students with documented disabilities are entitled to receive accommodations necessary for their full participation in the class, and will be able to exercise that right in collaboration with the instructor and the Office of Disability Services. Details on the rights and responsibilities of students, instructors, and the ODS, as well as instructions for obtaining accommodations, are available here:

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities>

Academic support services

Students can expect the instructor to answer questions and address concerns expediently and to the best of her ability. Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the instructor's availability via email, during office hours, as well as during and after class.

For more in-depth help with writing assignments, students can schedule a consultation with Columbia Writing Center: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>

For help with independent research, Columbia University Libraries offer several kinds of support services, all of which are listed here: <https://library.columbia.edu/help/help.html>

Content warning

Certain readings and films assigned on this course contain topics and imagery some might find uncomfortable or disturbing, including nudity, disordered eating, sexual abuse, and violence. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, all students are expected to demonstrate a mature, supportive, non-judgmental, and thoughtful attitude even when expressing strong opinions or disagreement. Seeing as a completely safe space cannot be guaranteed, all participants in the class must commit to co-creating a space that is *safe enough* for everyone to learn.

COURSE SCHEDULE

THE BODY AND REASON

Week 1, Class 1, 01/12: Introduction to the course and syllabus overview

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Week 1, Class 2, 01/14: The body and mind

Read: Euripides. *Bakkhai*, trans. Robin Robertson (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015)

Charles Segal. *Introduction to The Bakkhai*, in *The Bakkhai*, trans. Robin Robertson (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. 1-5, 13-18.

SHAPED FROM INSIDE: YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

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Week 2, Class 1, 01/19: Pitfalls of Digestion

Read: Julio Cortazar. "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris" in *Bestiary: Selected Stories of Julio Cortazar* (London: Harvill, 1998), pp. 55-72

Elizabeth Wilson, "The Biological Unconscious," Chapter 2 in *Gut Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press 2015), pp. 45-49 and 59-67

Week 2, Class 2, 01/21: Gluttony

Watch: *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (Peter Greenaway, 1989)

Read: M. M. Bakhtin, "Banquet Imagery in Rabelais" in *Rabelais and his World* (Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 278-302

Ben Highmore, "Bitter After Taste: Affect, Food, and Social Aesthetics" in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Siegworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) pp. 118-137

SHAPED FROM OUTSIDE: WRITING ON THE SKIN

Week 3, Class 1, 01/26: Feelings that stick

Sara Ahmed, "Introduction: Feel Your Way" and "The Organization of Hate" in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 1-19, 42-61

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Week 3, Class 2, 01/28: Bodies disciplined

Watch: *13th* (Ava DuVernay, 2016) _

Read: Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony" in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 70-100

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Week 4, Class 1, 02/02: The fact of blackness

Read: Toni Morrison. *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Plume Book, 1994), pp. 1-93

Frantz Fanon. "The Fact of Blackness" in *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 82-108

Week 4, Class 2, 02/04: The gender of blackness

Read: Toni Morrison. *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Plume Book, 1994), pp. 94-205

Audre Lorde. "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger" in *Sister Outsider* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2007).

Individual office hour visits to be scheduled in Week 5; discussing the format and topic of the midterm assignment

Week 5: Class 1, 02/09: Rewriting the narrative

Watch: *Paris Is Burning* (Jennie Livingston 1990)

Lucas Hilderbrand. "Introduction: Love Is the Message" in *Paris Is Burning: A Queer Film Classic* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013),

BODIES TOUCHING

Week 5, Class 2, 02/11: Sharing love, pt. 1

Anaïs Nin. *Henry and June: from the unexpurgated diary of Anaïs Nin* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1986), excerpts

Stephanie Koziej. "Towards a Tender Sexuality: From Freud's implicit taboo on adult erotic tenderness, to the unexplored tender critical potential of Mitchell and Perel's clinical practice" in *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, pp. 342-350

First round of non-graded participation feedback

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Week 6, Class 1, 02/16: Sharing love, pt. 2

Read:

- Vladimir Mayakovsky, *That's What*, trans. Larisa Gureyeva & George Hyde, intr. John Wakeman, (Todmorden: Arc Publishing 2009) Read the introduction and the English sections of the poem. Pay attention to the illustrations.

-----, *A Cloud in Trousers, in The Bedbug and Selected Poetry*, trans. Max Hayward and George Reavey, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1961). read the Prologue and Part 1. (pp. 61-75)

- Bengt Jangfeld, *Mayakovsky: A Biography*, trans. Harry D. Watson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014) 142-224

- Marina Tsvetaeva. *Girlfriend* (1916), scans on Canvas

Week 6, Class 2, 02/18: Sex and the Revolution

Watch: *W. R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (Dušan Makavejev, 1971)

Read: Wilhelm Reich, "Ideology as a Material Force" in *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 3-33

BODIES MOVING

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Week 7, Class 1, 02/23: Bodies entranced

Screening: *Jesus Camp* (Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, 2006)

Read: Donovan Schaefer, "Teaching Religion, Emotion, and Global Cinema," in *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham NC; London: Duke University Press, 2015) pp. 60-91

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Week 7, Class 2, 02/25: The performing body: theatre

Watch: *The Body Speaks* (Ryszard Cieslak, 1975)

Read: Jerzy Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," "Theatre is an Encounter," "The Actor's Training," and "Statement of Principles" in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2012) pp. 15-26, 55-59, 133-173, 255-262

Midterm Assignments Due 02/26

Spring Break

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Week 8, Class 1, 03/09: The performing body: speaking history

Watch: *Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis*, Part I (Michael Blackwood, 1990)

Read: Tatsumi Hijikata, "Wind Daruma," *The Drama Review (TDR)* 44:1 (Spring 2000), pp. 71-78.

Deidre Sklar, "Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance," in *Making History/Dancing Cultures: Dance History Reader*, eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), pp. 7-11

The Philosophy of Dance, introduction and sections 1-3:
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dance/>

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BODIES MOVED

Week 8, Class 2, 03/11: Shaped by history

Watch: *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959)

Read: Cathy Caruth, "Introduction: The Wound and the Voice" in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp. 1-9

Midterm grades from the instructor due 03/05

Week 9, Class 1, 03/16: Repression and resistance

Screening: "Ghost Dance to Wounded Knee" (Episode 8) and "Buffalo Bill" (Episode 9) from *The West*, PBS (Ken Burns 1996)

1894 Sioux Ghost Dance and Buffalo Dance, available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tMXbxVTby8>

Read: Maureen Needleham, "Introduction," George Caitlin, "The Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians (1836), and W.A. Jones, "Indian Bureau Regulations (1902)," in *I See America Dancing: Selected readings 1685-2000*, ed. Maureen Needham (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 1-25 and 35-39.

Jacqueline Shea Murphy "Have They a Right? Nineteenth-Century Indian Dance Practices and Federal Policy," *The People have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 29-52

Week 9, Class 2, 03/18: Pollution and politics

Read: Svetlana Aleksievich. "A Solitary Human Voice," "A Monologue on Why We Remember," "About What We Didn't Know: Death Can Be So Beautiful," "About the Shovel and the Atom," "About the Shadow of Death," "About a Damaged Child," "About Political Strategy" in *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), pp. 5-27; 155-165; 193-205.

Sophie Pinkham. "Witness Tampering" in *The New Republic*, August 29th 2016. <https://newrepublic.com/article/135719/witness-tampering> (Links to an external site.)

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Second round of non-graded participation feedback

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BEYOND THE HUMAN

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Week 10, Class 1, 03/23: Boundaries of humanity

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (New York: Grove Press 1994)

Donna J. Haraway, "Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic: A Political Psychology of Dominance," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991), pp. 7-20

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Week 10, Class 2, 03/25: Mechanic and inorganic

Watch: *The Mechanical Bride* (Alison de Fren, 2012)

Read: Alison de Fren. "Technofetishism and the Uncanny Desires of A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots)" in *Science Fiction Studies* vol. 36 (2009), pp. 404-427

Asja Bakić. "Asja 5.0" in *MARS* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2019) pp. 61-74

Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things," in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ontology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1-19

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Week 11, Class 2, 03/30: The alien body

Watch: *Possession* (Andrzej Żuławski, 1981)

Read: Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection" in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015) 67-76.

Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection" in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 1-31

UNRAVELING

Week 11, Class 2, 04/01: Dysmorphic

Nikolai Gogol, "The Nose" in *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, and Selected Stories* (London: Penguin 2005), pp. 113-139.

Abram Tertz, "Pkhentz" in *Fantastic Stories* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987), pp. 215-240

Individual office hour visits scheduled during Week 12 to discuss final project medium and topic

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Week 12, Class 1, 04/06: Untouchable

Watch: *120 BPM* (Robin Campillo, 2017)

Read: Deborah B. Gould. "Introduction" in *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act Up's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 1-48.

Week 12, Class 2, 04/08: Dead

Read: Aleksandar Hemon. "A Coin," in *The Question of Bruno* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2000) pp. 119-134

Karim Zaimović. "Episode #18 of *Joseph and His Brothers*" (*Words Without Borders: The Online Magazine for International Literature*, September 2008) <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/episode-18-of-joseph-and-his-brothers> (Links to an external site.)

Week 13, Class 1, 04/13: Virtuality

Read: Daniil Kharmis. "Blue Notebook #10"

Reflections on virtuality due in class.

Students bring together their summarized reflections on building a community without engaging bodies in a physical space, and discuss them within the cumulative framework of the ideas introduced by the course.

Week 13, Class 2, 04/15: Review and Discussion

The discussion will be structured around final projects, which the students will be ready to explain to classmates at that point.

The goal of the class is filling in any gaps that might have remained, refining ideas for the final projects, and co-creating a big-picture narrative of the course themes as a whole.

FINAL PROJECT DUE APRIL 26th (LAST DAY OF SEMESTER, TWO WEEKS AFTER END OF CLASSES)