SOC 340-1 The Body in Context
Antioch University Seattle, Winter Quarter 2009

Instructor: Dr. Cori Adler
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Class Time & Place: Wednesdays 1:00-3:30 pm, Room 202
January 7 through March 11, 2009
Credits: 3 (optional 4th credit)

Course Description

Inspired by Foucault’s insight that “the body” feels like the core of our “natural selves” precisely because it has been socially constructed as such, this course examines how historical, social and imaginative contexts have shaped bodies, body images and concepts associated with the body (like race, gender, beauty and desire) in nineteenth through twenty-first century America. Readings from a wide variety of disciplines offer a broad sense of how popular beliefs about “the” body and its innate “truths” have actually shifted and changed: for example, how beauty ideals, eating behaviors, and the significance of variations in skin color and hair texture have varied across historical generations and different American ethnic/cultural groups; and how dichotomies that seem “natural” or self-evident – like black or white, masculine or feminine, and male or female -- actually evolve and vary circumstantially. In addition, literary and artistic selections demonstrate how American artists, writers and thinkers have interjected opposing or transformative counter-representations into these social conversations about the body.

Objectives

➢ To create a learning community integrating self reflection, social analysis, and academic inquiry
➢ To inquire into multiple interconnections between personal experiences of the body and social constructions ‘written upon the body’ like race, gender, age, ability, and beauty.
➢ To analyze how these interconnections have been articulated in primary and secondary texts, and consider how such texts might effect social change.
➢ To examine our own beliefs, values and inherited traditions regarding the Body and articulate them in analytical and creative written forms.

📚 Required Texts and Materials

Books (buy at the Antioch Bookstore)
Natalie Angier, Woman: An Intimate Geography
Jennifer Boylan, She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders
Shirlee Taylo Haizlip, The Sweeter the Juice
Wendy Luttrell, Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds
Diane Wood Middlebrook, Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton

Writing Support can be found at the OWL at Purdue website http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
Please bookmark this site! It offers tips on drafting, outlining, proofreading, rules of grammar, punctuation and paragraphing, APA documentation style guidelines, and much more.
Assignments Overview

**Reading:** There are 6 textbooks. You will read the 2 memoirs and 1 biography in their entirety (Suits Me, She’s Not There and The Sweeter the Juice). You will read 2-4 chapters of each of the others.

**Writing:** Weekly Journal, 2 Papers (one Narrative/Reflective Essay and one Academic Analysis).

**Presentations:** 1 Reader Response (informal) and 1 Book Report (semi-formal)

Evaluation

My teaching is informed by my own passion for learning, my belief that it is what makes us human and is therefore the most important capacity we have for changing the world. Because I hope to inspire a collaborative, supportive community rather than a competitive one, you will receive credit for all the work you do, including the support you give one another and the contribution you make to the class community.

Credit in this course is based upon your work in 4 areas: Reading, Writing, Presentations and Participation. Your final narrative evaluation will address all aspects, describing what you did, the quality and character of your work, your insights and your participation in the Learning Community. The next section describes precisely what is expected in each area.

Learning Experiences and Demonstration of Learning

**Reading:** The reading assignments are the foundation upon which this course builds. It is therefore essential that students keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it.

**Evaluation of Reading:** You will keep a Journal (turned in weekly) responding to the readings. (You are welcome to include anything else you want to write about in this journal as well.) The journal will be my main vehicle for assessing whether you are keeping up with the reading and for observing the development of your critical reading skills. Since the journal’s main purpose is to prepare to discuss the reading in class, it is essential that it be kept up to date and turned in on time. You should not, however, worry about the quality of your writing in it. Entries can be brief and unpolished, thoughts freely associated or not-quite-complete. This is called “first writing” and is a very valuable writing exercise, in addition to its reading-related objectives. You may skip one journal entry. If you miss more, talk to me about a different type of make-up.

**Writing:** In addition to the Journal, you will write 2 papers: a Narrative/Reflective essay (Autobiography of My Body) and an Academic Analysis (Body in Context essay). Unlike the journal, these papers are expected to be well edited and proofread, with a sense of organization and purpose.

**Evaluation of Writing:** An Assignment Description for each of the papers will be posted on FirstClass; these will clarify expectations and guide you through the writing process. Read them closely before starting the assignment, refer to them during your writing process, and check your work against them after it is complete.

**Presentations:** Class presentations support the goal of creating a vibrant learning community that collaboratively builds ideas, capitalizing on both affinity and opposition, and utilizing the diverse imaginations of class members. Each student will make 2 class presentations: an informal Reader Response and a semi-formal Book Report.

**Reader Response Presentation:** This one requires little extra preparation. You will read your response to the day’s reading (from your journal), talk a bit more about your ideas, and raise one discussion question for the class.

**Book Report:** This one will require more preparation. You will summarize a section of one of the course texts and explain your sense of its importance to the class inquiry. An assignment description will be handed out.
**Participation:** “Participation” means more than attendance or ‘speaking up’ in class. Participation means “being present” with the course topic, the day’s assignments and your classmates. Because the topic of this course is both highly personal and highly controversial, it is especially important that participants come committed to principles of respectful communication across differences of experience and opinion, and that we maintain that awareness and sensitivity throughout the quarter. Together forging ways of articulating and comprehending our differences regarding something that matters a great deal to most of us (our bodies) will not only be necessary to allow us to do the work of this class (inquiry); it is the work of this class.

**Evaluation of Participation:** Participation will be evaluated based upon: attendance (see below), preparation (doing the reading, etc.), quality of contributions to discussion and activities, engaged listening, and support of fellow students in small group work.

**Attendance:** Antioch policy allows students to miss a maximum of 2 class sessions; you are expected to make up any absences. Here is what I expect you to do if you miss a session of one of my classes:

1. Contact a fellow student to find out what we did in class that day (or ask me if you know in advance that you will miss the class). Ask the student for notes or to spend 15 minutes or so really talking to you about what happened. (If you can’t get this from another student, ask me – best by e-mail.)

2. Based upon what you learned, think of a make-up project that you would like to do that can ‘cover’ the same ground or that is related to that section of the course. It should not be something extensive like an additional paper. For example, if there was an in-class writing exercise, you might do the same one on your own, then write a paragraph of reflection. If we spent a large chunk of class discussing a text, you might find out what the discussion questions were and write short responses to them. Or, take this opportunity to write about a film or a piece of music or art that you see as related to the unit/text we worked on that day.

**Accommodation:** Antioch University Seattle is committed to providing "reasonable accommodations" to qualified students with a disability in order to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from and have access to programs and services. Students in need of accommodations should contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office (206-268-4151 or 206-268-4403). TTY: 206-728-5745

**Schedule of Readings & Due Dates** is a separate document (also on First Class)