Seminar: History of the Body
Upper Level History Course
Instructor: Heather Bennett
Meeting Times: TBD

Course Summary:

Bodies are, as Levi-Strauss wrote, "good to think with." Bodies stand in for social concerns, we interact with them on a daily basis, and we can do history through an examination of the meanings of bodies in different eras. This course is, therefore, one part theory, one part history, and one part reflection on contemporary issues. The course is structured thematically and designed to familiarize students with major topics in the field of history of the body. The vast majority of our discussion and reading will focus on Europe and the U.S. in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as that is my area of expertise.

Grading:

- Attendance: 10%
- Discussion Questions: 20%
- Film Review 1: 15%
- Film Review 2: 15%
- Research Paper Proposal: 10%
- Research Paper: 20%
- Research Paper Presentation: 10%

Attendance Policy:

You are allowed two absences, no questions asked. After that, absences will begin to negatively affect your grade. If you must miss more than two classes due to illness, family emergencies, or other concerns, please contact me ASAP.

Class Discussions:

This course is discussion based and deals with potentially sensitive material. I would ask that all discussions be conducted respectfully. That does not mean we all have to be in agreement. It does mean that we will employ tools like gender-, racially-, sexuality- and class-sensitive language (where appropriate), calm voices, and listening until a person is done speaking.

Assignments:

Discussion Questions:

- You will be required to submit a discussion question for each reading to me prior to each class. (So, two readings = two discussion questions.)
- Discussion questions must prove critical engagement with the texts. Ask questions that address a theme you're curious about or something you found thought provoking or about a definition that seems tricky or slippery. Avoid factual questions, such as "What author does so-and-so talk about on this page?"
The overarching goal is to get conversation going, not find answers immediately.

**Film Reviews:**

- We will be watching two films in this class, *Blade Runner* and *The Elephant Man*.
- For each film, I will provide you with a few possible questions to examine and you will be asked to choose one. Alternatively, you are welcome to come up with a question/thesis statement of your own.
- Synthesize an answer to the question you choose based on the film and our class readings.
- Reviews should be five pages long. (See "A Word About Writing" for formatting details.)
- The overarching goal is to investigate the ways films address, complicate, or enhance our understanding of specific themes addressed in the course.

**Research Paper Proposal:**

- Choose a theme to expand on from the course or something we haven't covered, but you might be interested in. The topic must focus on definitions, treatment, and/or symbols related to bodies and it must be historical in nature. Other than that, I give you free reign.
- Before you begin your proposal, you should make an appointment to talk with me about the topic(s) you're interested in. I can point you in the direction of sources or help you narrow down (or expand) your topic.
- Mid-term, you will need to submit a proposal for your end-of-term research paper. The proposal should be 500 words and should include:
  - A working title
  - A thesis statement
  - A summary of your internal themes, topics, or arguments.
  - A detailed bibliography of ten academic sources (articles or books)

**Research Paper:**

- Your paper will be 10 pages in length. (Same formatting style as the film reviews.)
- Your paper should include an introduction with a clear thesis statement, a clear argument throughout the paper, and a conclusion at the end.
- Everything must be cited. If it isn't your idea or it isn't your words, you must include a footnote.

**Research Paper Presentation:**

- At the end of the semester you will be asked to give a brief presentation (10-15 min) summarizing your research.
- Be creative! You can lead a discussion, do a powerpoint, show video clips, write a song, or give a mini lecture. Heck, you can bring in a felt board to illustrate your point.
- The only thing we don't have time for is a full reading of papers. Please don't read word-for-word from your paper.

**A Word About Writing:**

All long-form writing (film reviews, proposal, and paper) should be submitted electronically and should be formatted thus:
I also expect the use of proper grammar and spelling. These fundamentals will count for a portion of your grade on each paper. Use spell/grammar check, visit OWL Purdue and Grammar Girl, and/or visit the writing center on campus to ensure that this component of your writing is correct.

**A Word About Time Management:**

This course is reading and writing intensive and will require you manage your time well. I'm a procrastinator - I understand how difficult it can be to stay motivated and on top of your work. If you feel like you are having difficulty managing your time and/or the workload, please come chat with me. We can work out a schedule and some tools for time management together.

**Plagiarism Policy:**
*Exact wording of university/college/school's policy to be inserted here.*

**Academic Accommodations:**
*Exact wording of university/college/school's policy to be inserted here.*
Course Outline

Class 1: Intro/Syllabus/Ice-breaker

Class 2: Defining History of the Body


Class 3: Mind/Body Connections


Thomas Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology." Ethos (1990), 5-47.


Class 4: Female Bodies


Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady, selections (TBD)

Class 5: Reproducing and Birthing Bodies


Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, The Midwife’s Tale, selections. (TBD)


Class 6: Male Bodies

Bordo, Susan, "Does Size Matter?" and "What is a Phallus?" from The Male Body (1999), 69-106.

Class 7: Intersex Bodies


Class 8: Queer Bodies

Halberstam, J. *Female Masculinity* (1998), Chapters 1-5.

Class 9: Trans* Bodies


Class 10: Cyborg Bodies (1)


Class 11: Cyborg Bodies (2) - *Blade Runner*

Class 12: Race and Bodies


Class 13: Colonized Bodies (Proposal Due)


Class 14: Poor Bodies

Ruth Richardson, "Introduction" and "Bringing Science to the Poor Man's Door" from *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (1987), xiii-1; 193-218.


Class 15: Animal Bodies *(Blade Runner Review Due)*


Donna Haraway, "Introduction" and "Shared Suffering" from *When Species Meet* (2008), 3-44; 69-94

Class 16: Disability and Bodies


Class 17: Freakish Bodies (1)


Class 18: Freakish Bodies (2) - Elephant Man film

Class 19: Sex Worker Bodies


**Class 20:** Body Image


**Class 21:** Body Modification (*Elephant Man Review Due*)


**Class 22:** Research Day - In Class or Remote

**Class 23:** Presentations - Research Papers

**Class 24:** Presentations - Research Papers

**Class 25:** Presentations - Research Papers

**Class 26:** Presentations and Wrap Up