

The Body and Society
History 506:402:07
Spring, 2016

M 1:10-4:10
SC 215

Office Hours: T 1:20-2:20
W 3:20-4:20

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Course Requirements and Description

Until recently, historians have assumed that the experience of the human body is natural – that is, outside the bounds of historical inquiry. Yet modern conceptions of the body are shaped by a long history of contested ideas about nature, normalcy, and authority. This course therefore asks students to consider how we understand embodiment. What happens to our basic beliefs about gender, race, and even humanity if the “naturalness” of the body is questioned? In particular, we will examine the ways in which the body has been used to construct boundaries: between male and female, between human and animal, between living and dead, and between normal and abnormal. Our course traces this history from the European Middle Ages to the contemporary United States, focusing on a variety of topics, from werewolves and monsters to prosthetics and sex reassignment surgery. In this class, students will explore why some ideas about bodies seem “natural” or “obvious,” while others do not. Students will consider the methods used to enforce such ideas, from social discipline to surgery, while analyzing the ways in which these ideas have been challenged. Students will also examine how ideas about bodies have changed over time, and finally, they will speculate about how new scientific modes of thought may affect the development of such ideas in the future.

This is an advanced seminar in history. In addition to your work on your research paper, we will have daily activities and discussions of readings. For this to work, this means that students (i.e., you!) will be required to keep up with readings and contribute to discussions and activities. The amount of reading in this course will be heavy, as indicated below. Written work will include a number of papers, which will make up 75% of your grade. Regular attendance and participation will account for 25% of your grade.

Required Texts

- Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels* (ISBN: 9780226645636)
- Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (ISBN: 9780312610418)
- Course Reader [R] on Sakai

Required readings are listed below in the course schedule. Selections in the Course Reader (which will be available on Sakai) are marked with [R].

Assignments, Lateness, and Absences

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Please note: My policy is that assigned work is due in class on the days noted below. I do not grant extensions other than for exceptional circumstances. If you believe you are embroiled in such a circumstance, I expect you to request an extension at least a day before the paper is due (if possible). If you must miss additional

classes for a valid reason (such as a religious holiday, an illness, or a family emergency), you should inform me prior to the class or as soon thereafter as you can. Please be advised that in the case of foreseeable absences, the sooner you notify me, the better.

Academic Integrity

Any student who cheats or who fails to cite all sources consulted in preparing written assignments, *including material found on the internet*, will be subject to the severe penalties mandated by University regulations, which include suspension from the university and a permanent record on your transcript. For details see: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

Class announcements may be sent to your Eden accounts via Sakai. *Be sure to check your Eden accounts regularly.*

Students with Disabilities

If you need special arrangements for exams or other coursework, please contact the Office for Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>) and provide the instructor with documentation as soon as possible.

Week One

1/25 An Introduction to the Course

Week Two

2/1 Animals and Humans in the Middle Ages and Modern World

- We will continue our discussion of sources, databases, and doing research for your upcoming papers. Please turn in a list of possible paper topics to me during class.
- Selections from *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, readings on medieval animals [R]
- David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"
(<http://www.columbia.edu/~col8/lobsterarticle.pdf>)
- (All readings marked with an [R] are posted on Sakai under "Resources.")

Week Three

2/8 The Science of Race in Europe and the U.S. – PLUS Library Visit

- **Meet at Alexander Library 413**
- Londa Schiebinger, "Why Mammals Are Called Mammals," in *Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science* [R]
- Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of 'Hottentot' Women in Europe, 1815-1817" [R]
- Kimberly Tallbear, "Native-American-DNA.com: In Search of Native American Race and Tribe," in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* [R]
- Please bring several concrete ideas about research topics that you might pursue for your paper.

Week Four

2/15 Natural and Unnatural Bodies, Foreign and Domestic Bodies in Early Modern Europe

- Read Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, xv-161
- **Assignment #1 (2-3 pages):** Paper on Paré reading due in class.
- Bring two copies of your paper to class

Week Five

2/22 The Limits of Surgery?

- Video: “Whole” (In class)
- R.A.R. Edwards, “Sound and Fury; or, Much Ado about Nothing? Cochlear Implants in Historical Perspective” [R]
- Additional readings on SRS [R]
- Read selections from Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*

Week Six

2/29 Can We Be More than Human?

- Video: Aubrey de Grey on aging (In class)
- Babak A. Parviz, “Augmented Reality in a Contact Lens” (<http://spectrum.ieee.org/biomedical/bionics/augmented-reality-in-a-contact-lens/0>)
- Anders Sandberg, “Morphological Freedom – Why We Not Just Want It, But Need It” [R]
- David Segal, “This Man is Not a Cyborg. Yet.” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/business/dmitry-itskov-and-the-avatar-quest.html?src=xps>)
- Discussion of papers in progress – be prepared to give an update.
- **Assignment #2 (2-3 pages):** Due in class. Select a secondary source (book or article) related to your research topic. Now select a substantial footnote of a primary source within your secondary source. Go and find the primary source cited by the author, read it yourself, explain carefully how the author is using it (as proof, illustration, exception to a general trend, etc.), and discuss whether – in your view – the source is used correctly. You’ll also of course need to briefly summarize the argument of the secondary source in your discussion.

Week Seven

3/7 Who is a Patient? Who is a Person?

- Wolfgang Müller, *The Criminalization of Abortion in the West* [R]
- Monica J. Casper, *The Making of the Unborn Patient* – 6th chapter [R]
- Rayna Rapp, “The Disabled Fetal Imaginary” [R]
- **Assignment #3: **Paper proposals due today.****

Week Eight

3/14 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK!

Week Nine

3/21 NO CLASS -- Work on your papers

Week Ten

3/28 Living Bodies, Dead Bodies

Take a break from your papers for a cheerful discussion today of brain death!
Roger Cooter, "The Dead Body" [R]
Martin S. Pernick, "Brain Death in a Cultural Context: The Reconstruction of
Death, 1967-1981" [R]

4/1 **Assignment #4**: First drafts of paper due via email by 5pm.

Week Eleven

4/4 Writing Workshop

Week Twelve

4/11 Individual Meetings (I will schedule these with you)

Week Thirteen

4/18 Individual Meetings (I will schedule these with you)

Week Fourteen

4/25 **Student Presentations**

Week Fifteen

5/2 **Student Presentations**

The Body and Society: Some Conclusions

Assignment #5: Final drafts due via email by 5 PM. Happy summer break or graduation!