

University of Wisconsin-Madison

**GWS 320:**

**The Female Body in the World: Gender and Contemporary Body Politics in Cross Cultural Perspective**  
**3 credit course**

<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/89077>

Special Topics Course  
Fall 2018

Class Time: Tuesday/Thursday 2:30 - 3:45 p.m.

Face-to-face instruction

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Instructor: Katherine Phelps, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Gender and Women’s Studies

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Office Hours: 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Tues/Thurs and by appointment

Office: 3323 Sterling Hall

### **Course Description**

How do bodies inform lived experience? How are bodies situated in matrices of privilege and oppression? What are the *politics of the body*? This course explores the social, cultural, and political construction of bodies of women and girls in global perspective. We consider specifically the bodies of women and girls, bodies that identify and are identified as female, as bodies that have historically and traditionally been sites of political contention, of societal meaning making, of cultural symbolism, and active resistance.

In this course we seek to challenge what we *think we know* about bodies, challenging tacit knowledge and investigating how normative discourses of the female body are formed across cultures, around the world. We will consider the impacts of phenomena such as globalization, neoliberalism, “global” feminism, imperialism, capitalism and other economic systems, and human rights movements, on cultural conceptions of health, ability, beauty, and the “value” of female bodies.

**Requisites:**

GWS 101 or 102, a course in a related discipline; or instructor consent.

**Some Course Discussion Themes:**

Body politics theory  
Privilege, power, and social capital  
Oppression, disadvantage, and inequality  
Race, ethnicity, and nation  
Biography and the uses of experience  
Language, imagery, and meaning making of the body  
Intersectionality/intersecting identities  
Globalization and the body  
Social movements, activism, and body resistance

**Learning Objectives:**

At the completion of this course you will be able to:

- Critically analyze and provide concrete examples of how bodies are socially constructed, and how the female body in particular is a site of political and cultural meaning making, contention, and resistance
- Articulate various theoretical frameworks (feminist theories, queer theory, Ethnic studies) as they relate to gender, embodiment, and the body, and use them in application of concrete ideas
- Think, observe, and write critically and analytically and engage thoughtfully in analytic (rather than simply opinionated!) discussions
- Understand and engage in the process of conducting a literature review and complete a clear, well organized, and thoughtful academic research paper

**Required Texts:**

- Laine Talley, Heather 2014. *Saving Face: Disfigurement and the Politics of Appearance*. New York: New York University Press.
- *All other readings will be made available in PDF form as a course reader on Canvas.*

**Required texts can be purchased at *A Room of One's Own* at 315 W. Gorham St.**

## Assignments and Grading:

*Participation (18% of overall grade):* In this class, participation is crucial if you want to do well. That means accessing course readings, completing assigned readings on time, and coming to class with questions and ideas related to the concept we are discussing that day. Anticipate between 60 to 80 pages of reading each week, sometimes more, sometimes less. I do not have an attendance policy for this class, but bear in mind that participation is a substantial part of your final grade, thus, you will be required to participate during in-class discussions and activities. This is a discussion-based course; I want to hear what YOU have to say!

*Topical Body Politics (12% of overall grade):* The discussion continues beyond the walls of the classroom! Over the course of the semester, you will write six topical body politics short papers. You will submit an article, or website, or advertisement, or other piece of media relating to female body politics on the world stage that strikes your interest. This media will be posted to our course Canvas page along with a double-spaced, 1-2 pg. response of what struck you about it. What questions did it raise for you? I want to see you demonstrate critical thinking and observation of media that we might otherwise pass by. Have an adventure and explore what is out there! We will talk about and engage with some of the things you find at the start of class each week. You can also share the media you chose for that week to the Canvas discussion forum so that your fellow students can see what you wrote about. *Topical body politics assignments will always be due on Tuesdays.*

*Reading Quizzes (10% of overall grade):* Over the course of the semester, you will be given 6 reading quizzes. These quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, but you will not know ahead of time when the quizzes will be. Each quiz will have one or two broad based questions on the readings for that week. You are allowed to use notes you have taken for these quizzes, but no readings, and NO LAPTOPS or OTHER DEVICES. The lowest quiz grade will be thrown out at the end of the semester, so only 5 of the 6 quizzes count toward your grade. Each quiz is worth a total of 2 points, resulting in 10 points, or 10% of your overall grade in the class.

*Leading Discussion (10% of overall grade):* Each week, students will lead discussion for a portion of the class. In addition to providing basic summary and synthesis of the readings for that class session, students leading discussion will be responsible for collaborating and conceptualizing discussion questions and activities, and finding and incorporating any relevant media or additional sources/experiences to aid in discussion. I very much encourage creativity here! Students must send a brief outline of their plan for leading discussion to me at least two days prior to the class so I can read it over and provide any feedback or suggestions. This is an opportunity to engage with each other, and design activities and incite discussion for topics that are particularly interesting to you! Students should plan to lead discussion for approximately half of the class period. A rubric for leading discussion can be found on Canvas. The ten points for leading discussion breaks down as: 3 points for preparedness and knowledge of the readings for that week, 3 points for organization and flow of the presentation, 3 points for participation and effective facilitation of class time, and 1 point for creative delivery of the material.

*Annotated Bibliography (10% of overall grade):* Partway through the semester you will be asked to submit an annotated bibliography that lists sources you plan to use in your final paper. These sources must be academic or scholarly sources, ideally from peer reviewed journals or published texts. You must give the proper ASA citation format for the source, provide a summary of the article/book, and then provide an explanation of how you plan to apply the source in your final paper analysis. I want to see you drawing connections between these sources and your paper topic and show me why they are relevant to your analysis/argument. This annotated bibliography should have a **minimum** of three sources from outside the class syllabus.

*Peer Review (10% of overall grade):* Towards the end of the semester we will have a peer review workshop on final paper drafts. You will work in small groups to read each other's work, provide constructive feedback and offer suggestions. You must bring two copies of your working paper draft to class, and be prepared to submit those drafts to your peer review group. **The draft must be a 5-page double-spaced excerpt from your paper.** You will give two of your peers your work to review, and you will review the work of two of your peers. The actual reviewing will be done outside of class, and then we will have a peer review workshop during part of a class period towards the end of the semester. We will talk more about this peer review workshop during the semester, and how it will run. The ten percent breakdown is as follows: 3 points for constructive comments on Peer 1 draft, 3 points for constructive comments on Peer 2 draft, and 4 points for showing up and participating on peer review workshop day.

*Final Term Paper (30% of overall grade):* At the end of the term, you will submit a paper on a topic of your choosing related to the politics of the female/feminine body. Perhaps you want to look at colorism and hierarchies of skin tone across cultures, a comparative study of female fatness and media representation, narratives of health and motherhood in a certain region, or femininity and embodiment in a context of physical labor. The paper **must** employ critical thinking and **theoretical frameworks explored in class** in the analysis. Over the course of the semester, you will hit certain milestones that will help you lead up to the final product: a written summary of the paper topic, an annotated bibliography of relevant sources, and a partial draft for a peer review workshop. You must use at least **two** relevant readings from the class for your analysis, and additionally cite at least **four** external academic sources in your paper. Papers will be 10 to 12 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font, ASA citation format.

**All written assignments will be submitted on Canvas with the exception of the two drafts for the peer review and the final paper, all of which MUST be submitted hard copy.**

### **Course Grading Scale:**

A 93 - 100	B/C 77 – 82	
A/B 87 – 92		D 60-66
B 83 - 86	C 73-76	
	C/D 67 - 72	F 59 and below

### **Policy on Late or Missed Assignments:**

For every week that an assignment is late, you will incur a penalty of 10% off your total grade for that assignment. If you have a valid reason to turn in an assignment late or do a presentation at a different time, you must talk to me before the due date if that's possible.

### **RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- See the Guide's to [Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)

### **Academic Integrity:**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to [studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/](http://studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/).

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

**McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement:** "The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities are a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA." <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

### **Resources for Academic Assistance:**

- The UW Writing Center: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Individual/index.html>
- Tutoring and Learning Support Services - <https://advising.wisc.edu/content/tutoring-learning-support-resources>

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

**Institutional statement on diversity:** “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

### **Important Notes:**

1. This syllabus is to act as a rough guide for the semester; it is not set in The dates may shift a bit. Each group of students moves at a different pace and gets fascinated by certain topics. I will honor this and we may find ourselves spending more time on certain topics and less time on others. Having fun with this class requires flexibility! As such, by choosing to remain in this course, you agree to all of the above requirements and stipulations. *I reserve the right to alter this syllabus at any time, but with fair and appropriate warning.*
2. You may use laptops for note taking in class, but if these become a distraction or a problem, you will be asked to put it away. Phones are not allowed in this class. If you plan to take notes on your phone, please plan to use another device or get a notebook. If I see you answering your phone or text messaging, you will be asked to put it away. If it is a recurring problem, I will ask you to leave the classroom.
3. I will attempt to respond to student emails as promptly as I am I will generally check and respond to email between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. I will always try to get you a response within 24 hours. Also, please send me emails from either your student email address, or another email address that readily identifies you.

### **A Final Thought:**

This course is designed to be interactive, fun, and open. All of you bring your own unique perspectives and experiences to this material, and I absolutely encourage that. That said, many of the topics we will cover and explore can become personal, and at times, difficult. You will never be required to share something you are not comfortable sharing. However, this does not mean you are exempt from participation. You must find ways to make your voice heard. I want you to feel safe in this classroom to discuss experiences and opinions on any and all topics we cover. Whatever is said or written in this class stays in this class. No one should feel oppressed or stifled because of gender, race, creed, class, ability, size, or sexual orientation. The success of this class is a community effort!

**Class/Reading Schedule (Listed readings and assignments are due THAT DAY for class!)**

**Week One: Introducing Body Politics**

Thursday 9/6: Course introduction, syllabus overview, in-class exercise

**Week Two: Contextualizing Body Politics and Woman as Body**

Tuesday 9/11: **Sign up for leading class discussion, Topical Body Politics 1 due**

Readings due:

- Miner, 1956. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58(3):503-507.
- Weitz, 1998. "A History of Women's Bodies." In *The Politics of Women's Bodies* edited by Rose Weitz. New York: Oxford University Press. 3-11.

Thursday 9/13:

Readings due:

- Bordo, 1993. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity." In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 165-184.
- Bordo, 1993. "Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body." In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1-42.

**Week Three: Constraining Bodies, Resistant Bodies**

Tuesday 9/18: Structuring the Feminine/Female Body

Readings Due:

- Bartky, Sandra 1988. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." 93-109.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "The Politics of Black Feminist Thought." In *Black Feminist Thought*. New York: Routledge. 1-20.
- hooks, 1992. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press. 366-380.

Thursday 9/20:

Female Masculinity and Queer Bodies

Readings due:

- Halberstam, 1998. "An Introduction to Female Masculinity." In *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 1-22.
- Cooper, Brenda. 2002. "Boy's Don't Cry and Female Masculinity." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19(1): 44-63
- Schilt, Kristen and Westbrook, 2009. "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity." *Gender and Society* 23(4): 440-464.

#### **Week Four: Colorism and the Politics of Skin Tone**

Tuesday 9/25: **Student led discussion, Topical Body Politics 2 due**

Readings Due:

- Hunter, 2007. "The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality." *Sociology Compass* 1/1:237-254.
- Quiros, and Dawson, B. A. 2013. "The Color Paradigm: The Impact of Colorism on the Racial Identity and Identification of Latinas." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 23: 287-297.

Thursday 9/27:

Readings Due:

- "Nakano Glenn, 2008. "Yearning for Lightness: Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lighteners." *Gender and Society* 22(3):281-302.
- Slocum, 2008. "Thinking Race Through Corporeal Feminist Theory." *Social and Cultural Geography* 9(8): 849-869.

#### **Week Five: Does Size Matter?**

Tuesday 10/2: **Student led discussion**

Readings Due:

- Murray, 2007. "Corporeal Knowledges and Deviant Bodies: Perceiving the Fat Body." *Social Semiotics* 17(3):361-373.
- Erdman Farrell, 2011. "Fat and the Uncivilized Body." In *Fat Shame* by A. Erdman Farrell. New York: New York University Press. 59-81.
- Vincent, 2016. "Fat in a Time of Slim: The Reinscription of Race in the Framing of Fat Desirability in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Sexualities* 19(8):914-925.

Thursday 10/4: **Final paper topic summary due**

Readings Due:

- Kent, Le'a. "Fighting Abjection: Representing Fat Women." In *Bodies Out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression* edited by J. Evans Braziel and K. LeBesco. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 131-145.
- Shaw, 2005. "The Other Side of the Looking Glass: The Marginalization of Fatness and Blackness in the Construction of Gender Identity." *Social Semiotics* 15(2): 143-152.

### **Week Six: The Mother Body**

Tuesday 10/9: **Student led discussion, Topical Body Politics 3 due**

Readings due:

- Kannen, 2013. "Pregnant, Privileged, and PhDing: Exploring Embodiments in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Gender Studies* 22(2):178-191.
- Moe, 2011. "Belly Dancing Mommas: Challenging Cultural Discourses of Maternity." In *Embodied Resistance* edited by C. Bobel and S. Kwan. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. 88-98.
- Nash, 2014. "Picturing Mothers: A Photovoice Study of Body Image in Pregnancy." *Health Sociology Review* 23(3): 242-253.

Thursday 10/11:

Readings Due:

- Teman, 2010. "Introduction." In *Birthing a Mother: The Surrogate Body and the Pregnant Self*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1-26.
- Ensler, 1998. "I Was There in the Room" in *The Vagina Monologues*. New York: Random House.
- Greil et al. 2011. "The Social Construction of Infertility." *Sociology Compass* 5(8): 736-746.

### **Week Seven: Bodies and Borders**

Tuesday 10/16: **Student led discussion**

Readings due:

- Beckmann Al Wazni, 2015. "Muslim Women in America and Hijab." *Social Work* 60(4): 325-333.
- Fabri, 2003. "Genocide or Assimilation: Discourses of Women's Bodies, Health, and Nation in Guatemala." In *The Politics of Selfhood* edited by Richard Harvey Brown. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sudbury, Julia. 2005. "Celling Black Bodies: Black Women in the Global Prison Industrial Complex." *Feminist Review* 80:162-179.

Thursday 10/18: Lit Review Tutorial

Readings Due:

- Anzaldúa, 1997. “La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness.” In *Writing on the Body* edited by K. Conboy, N. Medina, and S. Stanbury. New York: Columbia University Press.

### **Week Eight: Working as Woman – Labor and the Body**

Tuesday 10/23: **Student led discussion, Topical Body Politics 4 due**

Readings due:

- Fernandes, and Leite, R. 2016. “Embodied Women in the Work Context: The Case of Portuguese Businesswomen and Their Female Subordinates.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 56: 45-55.
- Maven, Sharon and Grandy, 2016. “Women Elite Leaders Doing Respectable Business Femininity: How Privilege is Conferred, Contested and Defended Through the Body.” *Gender, Work, and Organization* 23(4):379-396.
- Mears, 2014. “Aesthetic Labor for the Sociologies of Work, Gender, and Beauty.” *Sociology Compass* 8(12):1330-1343.

Thursday 10/25: **Annotated Bibliography due, Chain of Love documentary**

Readings due:

- Liu, 2015. “The embodied crises of neoliberal globalization: The lives and narratives of Filipina migrant domestic workers.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 50: 80-88.

### **Week Nine: Representing Female Bodies**

Tuesday 10/30: **Student led discussion**

Readings due:

- Fedorenko, 2015. “Politics of Sex Appeal in Advertising: Female Creatives and Post-Feminist Sensibility in South Korea.” *Feminist Media Studies* 15(3):474-491.
- Heck, Axel and Schlag, 2012. “Securitizing Images: The Female Body and the War in Afghanistan.” *European Journal of International Relations* 19(4):891-913.
- Marcus, Sarah-Rose. “Thinspiration vs. Thicksperation: Comparing Pro-Anorexic and Fat Acceptance Image Posts on a Photo Sharing Site.” *Cyberpsychology* 10(2):37- 56.

Thursday 11/1: In-class activity

### **Week Ten: Gender and the Politics of Facial Appearance**

Tuesday 11/6: **Student led discussion, Topical Body Politics 5 due**

Readings due:

- Laine Talley, Heather. 2014. *Saving Face*. Introduction – Chapter 4 pg. 1-105.

Thursday 11/8: ***Saving Face* documentary**

**Week Eleven: The Face Continued**

Tuesday 11/13: **Student led discussion**

Readings due:

- Laine Talley, Heather. 2014. *Saving Face*. Chapter 5 – 7 pg. 106-200.

Thursday 11/15: In-class activity. Bring drafts to exchange for workshop on 11/20.

**Week Twelve: Peer Review Workshop**

Tuesday 11/20: Peer Review Workshop – Bring drafts with comments prepared!

**Week Thirteen: Female/Feminine Bodies and Violence(s)**

Tuesday 11/27: **Student led discussion**

Readings due:

- Kaye, 2016. “Reconciliation in the Context of Settler-Colonial Gender Violence.” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 53(4): 461-467.
- Watson, 2016. “Gender-based Violence and Young Homeless Women: Femininity, Embodiment, and Vicarious Physical Capital.” *Sociological Review* 64(2): 256-273.

Thursday 11/29: In-class activity

Readings due:

- Sweet, Elizabeth and Escalante, Sara 2015. “Bringing Bodies Into Planning: Visceral Methods, Fear and Gender.” *Urban Studies* 52(10): 1826-1845.

**Week Fourteen: Movements and Resistance**

Tuesday 12/4: **Topical Body Politics Six due, Student led discussion**

Readings due:

- Patterson-Faye, 2016. “I Like the Way You Move’: Theorizing Fat, Black, and Sexy.” *Sexualities* 19(8):926-944.

- Weitz, 2001. "Women and Their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation." *Gender and Society* 15(5):667-686.

Thursday 12/6:

Readings due:

- Reger, Jo. Story of a Slut Walk. Sexuality, Race, and Generational Divisions in Contemporary Feminist Activism." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44:84-112.
- Davis, 2002. "Feminist Body/Politics as World Traveler: Translating *Our Bodies, Ourselves*." *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9(3):223-247.

### **Week Fifteen: The Body Beyond...**

Tuesday 12/11: **Final Research Paper Due, Class reflections**