Sociology of the Body
Sociology 444-001 (U/G)
Fall 2017

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Pronouns: he/his/him or ze/zir/zim

About the Course
Why do we divide bodies into two and only two sexed categories, “male” and “female”? Should the pronounced bump of a “Jewish nose” be deemed a “malformation” by plastic surgeons? Why do we call some people “black” when their skin is lighter than that of many people called “white”? Are some physical statuses disabling in some cultures and not in others? When did women develop a “bikini area”? Can my body not be “me”?

In this course we will address the body from a sociological perspective, with some brief excursions into philosophy, as we try to address questions like these. We will look at the body, not as a presocial physical fact, but as produced through an interaction between biology and social forces, and perceived through the lens of culture. We will consider the relationship of the mind and the body from a variety of perspectives. We will examine the link between the body and personal identity, focusing on disability, race/ethnicity, and sex/gender, and considering how identity is enacted through bodily practices and manipulations such as hair pressing, exercise, and plastic surgery. We will also discuss the intensive focus on bodily projects in American society, and the implications of this bodily preoccupation for various social groups.

Course Texts
This is an advanced-level, reading intensive course. You will be required to purchase or access five books, listed below; the remainder of the readings are found under the Content tab of the course D2L site.

Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience* (Amazon Kindle, $15)
Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices* (Amazon Kindle, $15)
Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl* (Amazon Kindle, $10)
Bernadette Wegenstein, *The Cosmetic Gaze: Body Modification and the Construction of Beauty* (available online via UWM library)

Course Philosophy and Assignments
This course employs a collaborative format, rather than just a passive lecture class model. It will be a joint endeavor, in which we should all learn from one another. I will lecture at the
beginning of each class, and will direct discussion, but your contributions of your insights and analyses will all be of great importance. Not only do I look upon the course as a collaboration between myself and you as students, I also hope to assist you in learning to rely upon one another as partners in learning.

The success of this course is directly related to the degree to which everyone is prepared for each class meeting. A typical method of ensuring that students have done the daily readings is to give quizzes. I wish to avoid this method, because of the tension and competition it fosters. Instead, I will require that you to assist in leading course discussion. Three times during the semester, you will be required to prepare a discussion journal and assist in leading the class. The requirements for journaling will differ for graduate and undergraduate students.

I will seek to foster a sense of academic community in which you are all learning partners in several ways. First, I will ask you to think of one another in this light. You should demonstrate your respect for and interest in one another’s ideas through good citizenship in class discussions. If you are a talkative extrovert, monitor yourself to ensure you don’t dominate the conversation. If you are a quiet introverted sort, make the effort to join the conversation. In addition, please ensure that your contributions to class discussion follow the rules of polite conversation: make your comments relevant to the flow of discussion and respectful of your classmates’ contributions. I will introduce course exercises to help spark fruitful discussion. Please enjoy these, but also take them seriously, so that your classmates can benefit from your participation.

Another way I will encourage you to become learning partners is by having you assist one another in editing and improving course papers. It is possible that this may be a novel experience for you, and may make you feel uncomfortable or vulnerable at first. Rest assured that you will learn a lot from the experience, and may even forge long-lasting academic partnerships.

In relating to the body, his course will cover materials that will at times necessarily feel personal. Please be respectful of this in yourself and others—but do always work to connect any personal feelings you have about the materials to the academic theories raised, as we are engaged in an intellectual rather than therapeutic exercise. Be aware that the materials we will cover involve social inequality related to race and color, sex and gender, body size, disability, beauty standards, eugenics, and other topics that may at times feel challenging to consider. Engaging with challenging materials can lead to great intellectual and personal rewards, but is more demanding than studying matters that you can approach with a detached lack of personal investment. If a topic being addressed in class proves very upsetting to you, so that you feel unable to engage intellectually, you may step out of class to protect your wellbeing until discussion has moved on.

Course Grading
You will be responsible for assisting in leading discussion 3 times during the semester. This will involve preparing a discussion journal to turn in and using it to help guide conversation in class (30% of your course grade). Journal entries should be 2-3 double-spaced pages each for undergraduates and 3-4 pages each for graduate students. You will also be required to draft and rewrite an analytic final paper (40% of your course grade); this will be 7-10 pages in length for undergraduates and 10-15 pages for graduate students. Graduate student papers will have an additional research component to assist in the development of professional research skills. You will be required to edit a classmate’s draft paper (10% of your course grade). Finally, you are required to participate in class discussion and exercises (20% of your course grade: 10% based
purely upon attendance, and 10% upon quality of participation). As senior partners in the class, graduate students will bear greater responsibility for guiding discussion. This course is not graded on a curve, but on individual performance—which means you are not competing with your classmates for good grades. The more you collaborate with your peers, the higher your grade will be.

The handouts on journaling, the final paper, and paper editing requirements will explain each of these course components in detail.

I have structured this course to give few opportunities for academic misconduct—but should plagiarism or other academic misconduct arise, be forewarned that it will be taken very seriously and will result in grade penalties up to and including failure of the course. Copying and pasting text from any source, including web content of any kind, constitutes plagiarism unless a citation is included.

**Credit Hours**
Sociology of the Body is a 3 credit course. This means that, on average, you will spend:
- 37.5 hours in the classroom
- 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

**Readings and Assignments**

**Introduction**

5 September: Plato, Descartes, and the classical philosophy of the body

Please read syllabus and discussion-leading guidelines carefully.

**Body Projects, Body Parts and Bodily History**

7 September: Read Jacobs Brumberg, Introduction and Chapter 3. Reflect on the ideal of “good skin.”

12 September: Read Jacobs Brumberg, Chapters 1 and 2. Reflect on the cultural meaning of menstruation.

14 September: Read Jacobs Brumberg Chapter 4, and examine the book illustrations. Reflect on bodily projects.


21 September: Read scanned selections from Linda Blum, *At the Breast*, and from Bernice Hausman, *Mother’s Milk*. Reflect on contemporary ideologies of breastfeeding.
Physical Deviance: Abilities and Appearances


28 September: Read scanned selections from Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism*. Reflect on the mind and the body.

3 October: Read pages 3-72 in Sacks; if you find this too long you may start at page 25. Reflect on how bodily difference can be viewed positively

5 October: Read pages 72-130 in Sacks. Reflect on bodily (dis)abilities and politics. (Final paper to be discussed.)

10 October: Read Wegenstein ch. 2 (and look at the pictures in ch. 1). Reflect on the meanings of beauty, ugliness, and beautification.


17 October: Proposed cultural artifact to be discussed in final paper due. Read scanned selection from J. Eric Oliver, *Fat Politics: The Real Story Behind America’s Obesity Epidemic*. Reflect on health and weight.

Identity and the Body: Sex and Gender, Race and Ethnicity

19 October: Read Karkazis pp. 9-11 and Chapters 2 and 3. Reflect on the medicalization of (inter)sex.

24 October: Read Karkazis Chapters 6 and 7. Reflect on decisionmaking about physical difference.

26 October: View film Intersexions

31 October: Read Serano Chapters 1, 8 and 14. Reflect on cis and trans gender identities, bodily sex and bias.

2 November: Read scanned excerpts from my book *Professional Identity Crisis: Race, Class Gender and Success at Professional Schools*. Reflect on habitus.

7 November: Read Gilman Chapters 2 and 3. Reflect on ideas of the Jewish mind and body.

9 November: Read Gilman Chapters 7 and 8. Reflect on “curing” the Jewish body and mind.
14 November: Read scanned selections by Hunter, and Ingrid Banks on African American history, the body, and hair. Reflect on the origins and manifestations of embodied racism.

16 November: Draft of paper due to editing partner. Read scanned selections by Keith and Taunya Lovell Banks on skin color, discrimination, and self-esteem. Reflect on colorism.


23 November: Thanksgiving Break

**Theoretical Summation**

28 November: Edited paper returned to editing partners. Read Shilling Chapters 1 and 4. Reflect on the body, sociology, and social construction.

30 November: Read Shilling Chapter 5. Reflect on the body and inequality.

**Conclusion: Student Presentations**

5, 7, 12, 14 December: Student Presentations. Turn in your paper on the day you present.

**UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf)

1. Students with disabilities. Notice to students with disabilities that special services and accommodations are provided. Information is available from the Accessibility Resource Center at [http://uwm.edu/arc/](http://uwm.edu/arc/)

2. Religious observances. Information concerning accommodations for absences due to religious observance is available at: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)

3. Students called to active military duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty is available at [http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/](http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/)

4. Incompletes. A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. The policy outlining incomplete grades is available at: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf)
5. Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policy regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf

6. Academic misconduct. Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. The policy and procedures concerning academic misconduct is available at http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/

7. Complaint procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policy may be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf

8. Grade appeal procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the College of Letters & Science or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the sociology department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at http://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades

Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at http://uwm.edu/graduateschool/academic-appeals-procedure /

9. LGBT+ resources. Resources to support inclusivity of students who identify as LGBT+ in the learning environment are available at http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/

10. Final examination policy. Policies regarding final examination requirement can be found at: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm

11. Publication royalties. Royalties from the sale of faculty-authored publications to students in their classes are donated to the UWM Foundation–Sociology account to support activities and awards for UWM Sociology students.

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