

**ANTH 307: the Human Body in Cultural Perspective**  
**Fall 2014**  
**Tu Th 2:30-3:45**

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Dept of Anthropology, 806 BVM

**Office hours:** Tu Th 4-5 or by appointment  
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*“The body is ... a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside, the public and the private, the self and the other, and all of the other binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition.” – Elizabeth Grosz*

*“... one cannot really gaze disembodied upon another body; when we see or read about another’s pain, we are likely to experience vicarious discomforts; when we read about sex or food, we are likely to experience desire or disgust.” - Judith Farquhar and Margaret Lock*

**Course description:** This course examines the relationship between the human body and culture. Throughout the class, two perspectives will be pursued. First we will ask: how do cultures and societies shape how people experience, understand and use their bodies? How are these bodily understandings connected to systems of power, flows of technology and forms of exchange? Second, we will ask: how are societies and cultures shaped by bodily experiences? Topics include tattooing and body modification, immunology and vaccinations, childbirth, biomedicine and genetics, Afro-Brazilian martial arts and the impact of Barbie dolls. Thinking about bodily experiences can also help us think critically about our own experiences, and can push us to examine some common assumptions about society and knowledge. So the guiding question is: how can we understand embodied experiences, and how can paying attention to bodies help us to think critically about society, culture and modes of knowledge?

**Course objectives:** Student will learn how cultural and social forces shape human bodies; understand how cultural anthropology examines the body; and examine their own assumptions.

**Required Reading:**

Margaret Lock and Judith Farquhar, eds. *Beyond the Body Proper: reading the anthropology of material life*. Duke University Press, 2007.

Margo DeMello. *Bodies of Inscription: a cultural history of the modern tattoo community*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Emily Martin. *Flexible Bodies: the role of immunity in American culture*. Beacon Press, 1995.

Greg Downey. *Learning Capoeira: Lessons in Cunning from an Afro-Brazilian Art Form*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Additional readings (see schedule below): available on Sakai or on-line

## **Assignments and Grading: (out of a total possible 100 points)**

Four short essays (10 points each): 40 points

- These short essays (3-5 pages) are designed to encourage students to keep up with the reading. Topics will be announced in class before the essays are due.

Group project presentation: 20 points

- Students will be divided up into 8 groups, and each group will chose to participate in and learn about a bodily practice that is new to them. At the end of the semester the groups will give class presentations analyzing their chosen practice. Examples of possible bodily practices will be discussed in class.

In-class participation: 10 points

- To earn a good participation grade, come to class having read the assigned material.

Final, individually-written research paper: 30 points

- This paper (6-8 pages) can analyze bodily practice you chose for your group project. Paper topics must be approved by me in advance.

**Grading scale:** A = 100-92; A- = 91-90; B+ = 89-88; B = 87-82; B- = 81-80; C+ = 79-78; C = 77-72; C- = 71-70; D+ = 69-68; D = 67-62; D- = 61-60; F = 59-0

**Deadlines and due dates:** Deadlines for all tests and assignments are absolute. No extensions will be given without prior notification and written verification (e.g., doctor's excuse).

**Class etiquette:** Students must also be punctual for all class sessions. Behavior in class that disrupts fellow students is also strongly discouraged (i.e. turn off cell phones, no text messaging in class, no checking out facebook, etc.)

**Communication:** will occur via the Sakai website and the student's Loyola email address.

**Academic integrity:** It is the student's responsibility to fully understand Loyola's polices on cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. Read your Undergraduate Catalog on Academic Integrity, or see:

[www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

It is mandatory for professors to report any form of academic dishonesty to the Dean's Office. This could lead to failure of the entire course and possible expulsion from the university.

**Contacting me:** If you are having problems with the class or want to discuss the class material, please speak to me during my office hours. I can often meet other times if too, but please email me beforehand to set up an appointment.

**WARNING:** This is a challenging class. You will be responsible for doing the readings and participating in class. If you do not attend class, do not do the reading, or attempt to complete all the readings the day before an essay is due, it is unlikely that you will be successful in this class.

## FALL 2014 SEMESTER SCHEDULE

### Week 1: Culture and Bodies

Tuesday, August 26:

- Recommended: Judith Farquhar and Margaret Lock, "Introduction" in *Beyond the Body Proper* (BBP)

Thursday, Aug 28: what's a cultural approach to human bodies?

- Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System." In Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (on Sakai)
- Robert Hertz, "The Pre-Eminence of the Right Hand," in *Beyond the Body Proper* (henceforth BBP)

### Week 2: Bodies and Society

Tues, September 2: classic analysis: how does society shape the body?

- Friedrich Engels, "On the Part Played by Labor," in BBP
- Marcel Mauss, "Technique of the Body," in BBP

Thur, Sept 4: how do bodies reflect society?

- Victor Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual" in BBP
- Terry Turner, "The Social Skin" in BBP
- Film: excerpts from "the Kayapó"

### Week 3: Defamiliarizing and Historicizing: the Body in Culture and History

Tues, Sept 9: defamiliarizing through historical and cross-cultural comparisons

- E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Time and Space" in BBP
- Henry Abelove, "Some Speculations on the History of 'Sexual Intercourse'" in BBP

Thur, Sept 11: making people up

- Margaret Lock, "Human Body Parts as Therapeutic Tools" in BBP
- Ian Hacking, "Making People Up" in BBP
- **DUE DATE:** Groups must have chosen a bodily practice

### Week 4: Bodies as Social Texts: DeMello's Ethnography of Tattooing

Tues, Sept 16: writing on bodies

- Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription: a cultural history of modern tattoo community* (read: Introduction, Chapter 3)

Thur, Sept 18: bodies as social texts

- DeMello continued, *Bodies of Inscription* (read: Chapters 5, 6 and Conclusion)
- **DUE DATE:** first essay due

## Week 5: Bodies and Everyday Life

Tues, Sept 23: bodies, tactics and terror

- Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City” in BBP
- Michael Taussig, “Tactility and Distraction” in BBP

Thur, Sept 25: urban spaces and contaminating bodies

- Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, “The City: The Sewer, The Gaze, and the Contaminating Touch” in BBP

## Week 6: Bodies, Gender and Sexuality

Tues, Sept 30: embodying gendered difference

- Iris Marion Young, “Breasted Experience,” in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*; pp. 141-159 (avail on Sakai)
- film: excerpts from “Busting Out” or “Private Dicks”

Thur, October 2: bodies of desire and performance

- Gregory Pflugfelder, “Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse” in BBP.
- Judith Butler, “from *Bodies that Matter*” in BBP (a challenging article, read carefully!)
- **DUE DATE:** group research proposals due

## Week 7: Disciplining Bodies

Tues, Oct 7: no class, Fall break

Thur, Oct 9: power, discipline and bodies

- Michel Foucault, “Docile Bodies” and “The Means of Correct Training,” in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 179-205 (avail on Sakai)
- note: these essays are challenging but very influential; please take your time and read them carefully

## Week 8: Gendered Bodies of Bioscience, and Emily Martin’s *Flexible Bodies*

Tues, Oct 14: gendered bodies and science

- Emily Martin, “The Egg and Sperm,” and Barbara Duden, “The Woman Beneath the Skin,” in BBP
- **DUE DATE:** second essay due

Thur, Oct 16: bodies of medicine

- Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies: the role of immunity in American culture* (read: Part Two: Historical Overview)
- Recommended: Bruno Latour, “Do You Believe in Reality?” in BBP

## Week 9: Medicine and Flexible Bodies: Martin's Ethnography of Immune Systems

Tues, Oct 21: Visions of the Immune System

- Martin, *Flexible Bodies* (read: Chapter 2 and Chapter 4)

Thur, Oct 23: Training and educating bodies through vaccines and work

- Martin, *Flexible Bodies* (read: Chapter 10 and Chapter 11)

## Week 10: Bodies Subjected to and Resisting Commodification

Tues, Oct 28: bodies and commodities

- Jacqueline Urla and Alan Swedlund, "The Anthropometry of Barbie," in Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds. *Deviant Bodies*, pp. 277-313. (on Sakai)
- Margaret Lock, "The Alientation of Body Parts" in BBP
- **DUE DATE:** third essay due

Thur, Oct 30: bodies of resistance?

- Aihwa Ong, "The Production of Possession" in BBP
- Katherine Frank, "Body Talk: Revelations of Self and Body in Contemporary Strip Clubs." In Adeline Masquelier, ed. *Dirt, Undress, and Difference* (on Sakai)

## Week 11: From the Body to Embodiment

Tues, November 4: the body as being-in-the-world

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "from The Phenomenology of Perception" in BBP (another challenging but immensely influential reading; please read carefully)
- Thomas Csordas, "Introduction: the Body as Representation and Being-in-the-World." In Csordas, ed. *Embodiment and Experience* (on Sakai)

Thur, Nov 6: embodied suffering

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Nervoso" in BBP
- Jean Jackson, "Chronic pain." In Csordas, ed. *Embodiment and Experience* (on Sakai)

## Week 12: Training the Body to be Cunning: Downey's Ethnography of Brazilian Capoeira

Tues, Nov 11: Stepping into the *roda* and learning

- Greg Downey, *Learning Capoeira: Lessons in Cunning from an Afro-Brazilian Art* (read: Chapter 1 and Chapter 2)

Thur, Nov 13: playing and habits

- Downey, *Learning Capoeira*, continued (read: Chapter 7, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9)
- **DUE DATE:** fourth essay due

## Week 13: Student Presentations

Tues, Nov 18: groups 1 and 2

Thur, Nov 20: groups 3 and 4

**Week 14: Student Presentations**

Tues, Nov 25: groups 5 and 6

Thur, Nov 27, no class: Thanksgiving

**Week 15: Final Presentations and Concluding**

Tues, December 2: groups 7 and 8

Thur, Dec 4: no class (Dr. Penglase at the American Anthropological Association meetings)

**DUE DATE REMINDERS:**

Thurs, September 11: groups must have chosen a bodily practice

Thurs, Sept 18: first essay due at beginning of class

Thurs, October 2: group research proposals due

Tues, October 14: second essay due

Tues, October 28: third essay due

Thurs, November 13: fourth essay due

November 18-December 2: group presentations

**FINAL PAPER:** due by Thursday, December 11 at 11 am