

**media and the body:
twentieth century somatic representations**



This course will focus on constructions of the body in media of the twentieth century. As the physical body is integrated within various cultural contexts of religion, gender, and politics, the somatic is often the vehicle through which media inflects readings of culture, gender, race, sexuality, and politics. Beginning with representations of the body in the early twentieth century, we will survey print media, film, television, and performance art in which the body subverts, and sometimes confirms, popular conceptions of race, gender, and politics. The bodily articulations we will examine through film, television, and advertising print will focus upon various somatic areas of poverty, sickness, science, gender, sexuality, and the “perverse.” We will question the interstitial junctures between the public and private spaces of the body in the twentieth century within both Western and non-Western fronts, ultimately questioning the relationship between cultural interpretations of the body and the very real inflections of race, class, gender, and sexuality that are played out on the physical texture and the performative matrix of the body. Paying particular attention to contemporary issues of the somatic, we will examine how contemporary media represents the human body in terms of religious, social, moral, scientific, and political discourses. Looking at both popular and experimental forms of media, we will investigate how representations of the body construct a monolithic view of the subject which elide the complexity of the interstitial spaces of identity. In turn, we will critique the subversion of popular forms of representation and these newly created spheres for understanding the body as a hybrid space of physical and cultural markings. Some of the specific paradigms we will examine in this course are: technological bodies and nature, race and postcolonial bodies, the homosexual body of desire and abjection, women’s bodies of visibility and concealment, bodies of poverty and terror, embodying and performing gender, the AIDS patient, the “native” body of exoticism, and disappeared and tortured bodies.

course requirements

class participation and preparation: You need to be prepared for class by completing all of the readings and viewings scheduled for each meeting. As well, you are expected to share your ideas and critiques with the class through the many discussions which depend upon your interpretation and dialogue.

position essays: Each week during the semester, you are required to write a one to two page essay in response to the material listed for that session. This will serve as an exercise for you to contemplate and articulate in writing your individual interpretations of the material at hand. It is important to note that these essays are *not* reviews of the entire readings and viewings, but are concise arguments that set out to specifically analyze and critique certain concepts, discourses, or methods of somatic representation.

research papers: You are required to complete a research paper of 15-20 pages in length observing MLA standards. For this paper, you are to critically investigate a theme of body and representation in the contemporary setting of the media using secondary sources to develop your argument. Although you may choose your topic, you are required to hand in a one page typed proposal by 30 October after which we may then individually discuss your proposed work during my office hours. The final paper is due no later than 18 December.

office hours: I have office hours on Thursdays from 7:45 through 9:45 p.m. This is time for you to discuss your work individually. Try to come by my office hours twice during the semester. If, for any reason, you cannot come to see me during my office hours, please talk to me after class and I will gladly set aside a time which is more convenient for you. You may also contact me by e-mail at: vigoj@is3.nyu.edu

evaluation

Class participation, preparation, and attendance	30%
Position Essays	30%
Research Paper	40%

fall 1997 class schedule

social bodies

4 september: introduction & discipline

Foucault, Michel. "Docile Bodies."

11 september: incorporating race & "ethnic skin"

Black Is...Black Ain't. (1994, 88 min) Dir. Marlon Riggs.

Mercer, Kobena. "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe."

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Photography at the Heart of Darkness."

Dyer, Richard. "The Matter of Whiteness."

Print material from Clinique

18 september: starving bodies

Las Hurdes. (1932, 28 min) Dir. Luis Bunuel.

A Season in Hell. (1989, 59 min) Dir. Walter Brock.

Fair, Jo Ellen. "The Body Politic: The Bodies of Women and the Politics of Famine..."

Bell, David and Gill Valentine. "Body."

Print material from Feed the Children

somatic spaces of sex & gender

25 september: the (in)tractable feminine

Juggling Gender. (1992, 27 min) Dir. Tammy Gold.

Vertigo. (1958, 128 min) Dir. Alfred Hitchcock.

Butler, Judith. "Bodies That Matter."

Grosz, Elizabeth A. "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason."

Urla, Jacqueline and Alan Swedlendi. "The Anthropometry of Barbie"

2 october: male bodies & masculine "excess"

Cremaster 1. (1993) Dir. Matthew Barney.

The Lusty Men. (1952, 113 min) Dir. Nicholas Ray.

Bordo, Susan. "Reading the Male Body."

Mitchell, Lee Clark. "A Man Being Beaten."

Saltz, Jerry. "The Next Sex."

9 october: transgender/transsexual

Outlaw. (1994, 27 min) Dir. Alisa Lebow.

Metamorphosis: Man into Woman. (1989, 58 min) Dir. Lisa Leeman.

Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto."

Shapiro, Judith. "Transsexualism: Reflections on...the Mutability of Sex."

Print material

culturalism & ethnographic bodies

16 october: ethnographic bodies

Les Maîtres Fous. (1955, 30 min) Dir. Jean Rouch.

Reassemblage. (1982, 40 min) Dir. Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Lingis, Alphonso. "The Subjectification of the Body."

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body."

Turner, Victor. "Body, Brain, and Culture"

23 october: decolonizing bodies

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask. (1996, 50 min) Dir. Isaac Julien.

Battle of Algiers. (1967, 122 min) Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo.

Fanon, Frantz. Selections from *Black Skin, White Masks*

Vergès, Françoise. "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism: Fanon and Freedom."

Young, Lola. "Missing Persons: Fantasising Black Women in *Black Skin, White Masks*."

somatic spaces of sex & gender

30 october: other(ing) bodies

Not without my Veil: Women in Oman. (1993, 30 mi.) Dir. Mia Grondahl.

Measures of Distance. (1988, 15 min) Dir. Mona Hatoum.

Ahmed, Leila. "The Discourse of the Veil."

Malek, Alloula. "The Orient as Stereotype and Phantasm." *The Colonial Harem*.

Watson, Helen. "Women and the Veil: Personal Responses to Global Process."

6 november: somatic terror

Santa Sangre. (1989, 118 min) Dir. Alejandro Jodorowsky.

Las madres de plaza de mayo. (1986, 64 min) Dir. Lourdes Portillo & Susana Muñoz.
Sçez, äacuüçn. "Torture: A Discourse on Practice."
Taylor, Julie. "Body Memoirs..."
Taussig, Michael. "Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin's Theory of History as State of Siege."

13 november: technological soma as memory

Blade Runner. (1982, 117 min) Dir Ridley Scott.
Total Recall. (1990, 113 min) Dir. Paul Verhoeven.
Cohen, Colleen Ballerino . "Olfactory Constitution of the Postmodern Body"
Canguilhem, Georges. "Machine and Organism."
Landberg, Alison. "Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner."

20 november: biopolitical bodies

Blue. (1995, 76 min) Dir. Derek Jarman.
Silence=Death. (1990, 25 min) Dir. David Wojnarowicz.
Gilman, Sander. "Seeing the AIDS Patient."
Haraway, Donna. "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies"
Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?"

embodying performativity

4 december: visibility and performing bodies

Paris is Burning. (1990, 71 min) Dir Jennie Livingston.
Phelan, Peggy. "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning.*"
Sherman, Cindy. *Cindy Sherman.* [on reserve]
Willis-Thomas, Deborah. *Lorna Simpson.* [on reserve]
Phelan, Peggy. "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction."

11 december: somatic possessions

Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti. (1951, 52 min) Dir. Maya Deren.
Nailed. (1994, 50 min) Dir. Angel Shaw.
Scarry, Elaine. "Pain and Imagining".
Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory."
Deren, Maya. Selections from *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti.*

18 december: desiring/abjecting queer bodies

Cruising. (1980, 102 min) Dir. William Friedkin.
Querelle. (1983, 103 min) Dir. Werner Fassbinder.
Irvine, Janice. "Regulated Passions: The Invention of Inhibited Sexual Desire and Sexual Addiction."
Euss, Diana. "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look."
Shaviro, Steven. "Masculinity, Spectacle and the Body of Querelle."

required texts

(These articles are available for Purchase at East Side Copy, 15 East 13th Street)

- Ahmed, Leila. "The Discourse of the Veil." *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Bell, David and Gill Valentine. "Body." *Consuming Geographies: We are Where We Eat*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*. Ed. Douglas Crimp. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988.
- Bordo, Susan. "Reading the Male Body." *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994.
- Butler, Judith. "Bodies That Matter." *Bodies that Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Canguilhem, Georges. "Machine and Organism." *Incorporations*. Ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter. New York: Zone Books, 1992.
- Cohen, Colleen Ballerino. "Olfactory Constitution of the Postmodern Body: Nature Challenged, Nature Adorned." *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text*. Eds. Sharpe, Patricia and Frances E. Mascia-Lees. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Deren, Maya. Selections from *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. New Paltz: McPherson, 1953.
- Dyer, Richard. "The Matter of Whiteness." *White*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Fair, Jo Ellen. "The Body Politic: The Bodies of Women and the Politics of Famine in the U.S. Television Coverage of Famine in the Horn of Africa." *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication*, 1996: (29-41).
- Fanon, Frantz. Selections from *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1982.
- Foucault, Michel. "Docile Bodies." *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
- Fuss, Diana. "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look." *Identities*. Ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Gilman, Sander. "Seeing the AIDS Patient." *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Grosz, Elizabeth A. "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason." *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Haraway, Donna. "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Constitutions of Self in Immune System Discourse." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Irvine, Janice. "Regulated Passions: The Invention of Inhibited Sexual Desire and Sexual Addiction." *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and popular Culture*. Eds. Terry, Jennifer and Jacqueline Urla. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Landberg, Alison. "Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner." *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*. Ed. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows. London: Sage, 1995.
- Lehman, Peter. "Sexology and the Medical Representation of Male Sexuality." *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Lingis, Alphonso. "The Subjectification of the Body." *Foreign Bodies*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Malek, Alloula. "The Orient as Stereotype and Phantasm" & "Women from the Outside: Obstacle and Transparency." *The Colonial Harem*. Trans. Myrna Godzich & Wald Godzich. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." *Incorporations*. Ed. J. Crary and S. Kwinter. New York: Zone Books, 1992.
- Mercer, Kobena. "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe." *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Photography at the Heart of Darkness." *Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. "A Man Being Beaten." *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Phelan, Peggy. "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning*." & "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction." *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory." *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Sçeç, äacuüçn. "Torture: A Discourse on Practice." *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text*. Eds. Sharpe, Patricia and Frances E. Mascia-Lees. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Saltz, Jerry. "The Next Sex." *Art in America*. 84(Oct.1996):82-91.
- Scarry, Elaine. "Pain and Imagining". *The Body in Pain* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Shapiro, Judith. "Transsexualism: Reflections on the Persistence of Gender and the Mutability of Sex." *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*. Eds. Straub, K. and J. Epstein. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Shaviro, Steven. "Masculinity, Spectacle and the Body of Querelle." *The Cinematic Body*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Sherman, Cindy. *Cindy Sherman*. Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 1996.

- Stone, Sandy. "The *Empire Strikes Back*: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*. Eds. Straub, Kristina and Julia Epstein. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Taussig, Michael. "Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin's Theory of History as State of Siege." *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Taylor, Julie. "Body Memoirs: Aide-Memoires and Collective Amnesia in the Wake of the Argentine Terror." *Body Politics: Disease, Desire, and the Family*. Eds. Ryan, Michael and Avery Gordon. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.
- Turner, Victor. "Body, Brain, and Culture." *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986.
- Urla, Jacqueline and Alan Swedlenti. "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture." *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and popular Culture*. Eds. Terry, Jennifer and Jacqueline Urla. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- VergÅs, Françoise. "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism: Fanon and Freedom." *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Ed. Alan Read. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996.
- Watson, Helen. "Women and the Veil: Personal Responses to Global Process." *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Willis-Thomas, Deborah. *Lorna Simpson*. San Francisco: The Friends of Photography, 1992.
- Young, Lola. "Missing Persons: Fantasising Black Women in *Black Skin, White Masks*." *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Ed. Alan Read. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996.

required screenings

(To be viewed at the Avery Fisher Center, 2nd floor of Bobst Library, NYU)

- Battle of Algiers*. (1967, 122 min) Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo. VCA 4659
- Black Is...Black Ain't*. (1994, 88 min) Dir. Marlon Riggs. VCA 5448
- Blade Runner*. (1982, 117 min) Dir. Ridley Scott. VLD 215
- Blue*. (1995, 76 min) Dir. Derek Jarman. VCA 6079
- Cremaster I*. (1993) Dir. Matthew Barney. *Barbara Gladstone Gallery*
- Cruising*. (1980, 102 min) Dir. William Friedkin. VCA 5925
- Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. (1951, 52 min) Dir. Maya Deren. VCA 2005
- Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*. (1996, 50 min) Dir. Isaac Julien. VCA 6035
- Juggling Gender*. (1992, 27 min) Dir. Tammy Gold. VCA 6162
- Las Hurdes*. (1932, 28 min) Dir. Luis Bunuel. VCA 924
- Las madres de plaza de mayo*. (1986, 64 min) Dir. Lourdes Portillo & Susana Muñoz. VCA 2889
- Les Maitres Fous*. (1955, 30 min) Dir. Jean Rouch. VCA 2730
- The Lusty Men*. (1952, 113 min) Dir. Nicholas Ray. TBA
- Measures of Distance*. (1988, 16 min) Dir. Mona Hatoum. VCA 3087
- Metamorphosis: Man into Woman*. (1989, 58 min) Dir. Lisa Leeman. VCA 1909
- Nailed*. (1994, 50 min) Dir. Angel Shaw. VCA 6447
- Not without my Veil: Women in Oman*. (1993, 30 min) Dir. Mia Grondahl. TBA
- Outlaw*. (1994, 27 min) Dir. Alisa Lebow. VCA 6424
- Paris is Burning*. (1990, 71 min) Dir. Jennie Livingston. VCA 3957
- Querelle*. (1983, 103 min) Dir. Werner Fassbinder. VCA 4576
- Reassemblage*. (1982, 40 min) Dir. Trinh T. Minh-ha. VCA 2286
- Santa Sangre*. (1989, 118 min) Dir. Alejandro Jodorowsky. TBA
- A Season in Hell*. (1989, 59 min) Dir. Walter Brock. VCA 6899
- Silence=Death*. (1990, 58 min) Dir. David Wojnarowicz. VCA 4571
- Total Recall*. (1990, 113 min) Dir. Paul Verhoeven. TBA
- Vertigo*. (1959, 128 min) Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. VCA 6772