

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES
WGS 312: Gender and Embodiment
2016: Semester 2

Course Convenor: Prof Desiree Lewis: dlewis@uwc.ac.za; 0219592403.
Lecture Times: Wednesday, first period.

Human bodies are always performed, experienced and represented in global, national and local relations of power. These relations are connected to capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, dominant sexuality discourses and many other social and cultural systems.

Much of the present research on “embodiment” draws on various disciplinary fields. These include feminist studies, media/cultural studies, psychology, philosophy and social anthropology. This course examines some important interdisciplinary theoretical approaches (exploring subjectivity, performance and identity; racial and gender discourses; and debates about individual agency), and prepares students to use particular tools and theories to “read” the body in different contexts. In developing their analytical skills, students are required to critically view and respond to narrative films and documentaries; engage actively with visual texts in lectures and tutorials; and participate actively in tutorials and group projects.

The course maps out recent constructionist exploration of gender, sexuality, race and embodiment in relation to the following case studies:

- cultural assumptions about race, gender and sexuality in the “marking” of women’s *and* men’s bodies
- the beauty and ‘body perfection’ industry, the “healthy” body and disability;
- the ambiguities of body performance with reference to dress, drag, fashion and self-styling
- heterosexuality, femininities and masculinities in media messages, especially advertising;
- medical discourses, particularly discourses of HIV/AIDs

Lecture Times and Venue: Monday, 3rd period, DL3

Consult Notice Board about Tutorials

Note: There are two sessions per week, 1 lecture and 1 tutorial. Students will need to make arrangements to watch films through their tutors. These film-viewings are compulsory. *NB: Refer to separate outline for details about assignments and tutorials.*

In order to develop analytical skills, students are required to view and incorporate discussion of films and documentaries; engage with visual texts in lectures and tutorials; and participate actively in tutorials and group presentations.

Mark Allocation

Essay 1: 20%
Essay 2: 40%
Group Project: 20%
Tutorial Mark: 20%
CWM Total: 100%

Final Mark:
CWM: 60%
Examination: 40%
TOTAL: 100%

Lecture Outline

Lecture 1, 27 July

Introduction to course and course requirements.

Binary systems and Human Bodies

Ensure that you register for a tutorial (indicated on list available in department's tutors' and postgraduates' room)

Lecture 2, 3 August

Socialization, social constructions and gendered bodies

This lecture introduces students to the basics of feminist constructionist readings of gender with reference to dualisms such as mind-body, nature culture, public-private etc. By considering concrete examples, we will explore how social constructionism opens up ways of thinking through the various agents, geographical spaces and social circumstances that regulate human bodies and social subjectivities.

Reading

- Debbie Epstein, Sara O'Flynn and David Telford, 2003. "Bodies that Learn: Negotiating Education" in *Silenced Sexualities in Schools and Universities*. Stoke on Trent and Sterling: Trentham.
- Barrie Thorne, 2004. "Girls and Boys Together But Mostly Apart: Gender Arrangements in Elementary Schools" in Richardson, L. Taylor, V and Whittier, N, eds. *Feminist Frontiers*, 6th edition. McGraw Hill.

- Michael Kimmel, 2004. "What are Little Boys Made Of?" in Richardson, L. Taylor, V and Whittier, N, eds. *Feminist Frontiers*, 6th edition. McGraw Hill.

Documentary: Sistersong and Trust Black women (NGOs), *We Always Resist*.

Lecture 3, 10 August

Human bodies and the construction of gender, sex and sexuality. How have gendered bodies been defined according to binaries, dualisms and ostensibly objective "scientific" models? How can we use constructionist approaches to analyse conventional definitions of gender, sexuality, as well as the "neutral" notion of "sex"?

Reading

- Raewynn Connell, 2009. Sex differences and gendered bodies" in *Short Introductions: Gender* (second edition)
- Surya Monro, 2005. "Gender Theory" in *Gender Politics: Citizenship, Activism and Sexual Diversity*. London: Pluto.
- Suzanne Kessler, 2004. "The Medical Construction of Gender" in Richardson, L, Taylor, V and Whittier, J eds. *Feminist Frontiers*. 6th edition. McGraw Hill.

Lecture 4: 17 August

Raced bodies

Like gender, race functions as a langue for "scripting" bodies. How can we begin to explore how this "works"? And what are the similarities between gender and racial scripts? How have stereotypes about bodies (essentialist views) justified racial and gender hierarchies? Why is it important to develop a *historical* constructionist approach to questions of embodiment?

Reading

- Frantz Fanon, 2008 (1952), "The So-Called Dependency Complex of the Colonized" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Beverly Daniel Tatum, 1997. "Racial Identity in Adulthood" in *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations about Race*.
- Beverly Daniel Tatum, 1997, "The Development of White Identity: *I'm not ethnic, I'm just normal*" in *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations about Race*.

Documentary: Yaba Badoe, dir. 1991. *Without Walls: I Want Your Sex*.

Lecture 5, 24 August:

Body Performance in Fashion and Self-styling

In view of the overwhelming ways in which bodies are regulated in society, how can we think about individuals or groups' celebrating "agency" through their bodies? We shall explore the ambiguities of self-styling and performativity in considering how individuals use existing cultural resources to "reinvent" their bodies' surfaces.

Reading

- Sarah Nutall, 2009. "Self-Styling" in *Entanglements: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits university Press.
- Desiree Lewis 2009. "Gendered spectacle: New terrains of struggle in South Africa" in Schlyter, A. ed. *Body Politics and Women Citizens*. Stockholm: Sida.
- Kharnita Mohamed 2012. "Refashioning the local: black masculinity, class and clothing, *Agenda*, 25(4): 104-111.

Vacation: 26 August - 5 September

Lecture 6, 7 September: Technologies of Globalization and Body Alteration

Continuing ideas raised in the previous lecture, this lecture focuses on body alteration practices in contemporary globalized societies

How have masculinities and femininities been shaped by a current obsession with bodily alteration and 'perfection'? We will focus on ways in which commercial, racial as well as gendered factors explain the current obsession with "altering bodies". We'll also consider the usefulness - in view of the pressure to conform to social standards about desirable bodies - of the notion of "individual or personal choice".

Reading

- Maurice Patterson and Jonathan Schroeder, 2010. "Borderlines: Skin, Tattoos and Consumer Cultures Theory", 10, 3, 253-267.
- Debra Gilman, 2004. "Cosmetic Surgery: Paying for Your Beauty" in Richardson, L, Taylor, V and Whittier, N. eds. *Feminist Frontiers* 6th Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sarah Dewing and Don Foster, 2007. 'Men's Body Related Practices and Meanings of Masculinity' in *PINS*, 35.
- Blogpost. 2013. "FGM vs "Cosmetic Surgery", and the falseness of "choice" <http://blackfeministranter.blogspot.com/2013/02/fgm-vs-cosmetic-surgery-and-falseness.html>

Lecture 7, 14 September: Race, orientalism and Embodiment: Developing ideas from previous weeks, this lecture deepens explorations of how essentialist ideas about race, especially at particular historical and political moments, have worked to define human bodies and subjectivities in relation to various discourses.

- Saree Makdisi, 2002. "Reflections on 'Imaginative Geography and Its Representation: *Orientalizing the Orient*" in Essed, P and Goldberg, T. eds. *Race Critical Theories*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sara Ahmed, Constructions of Women and/in the Orient in Cosslett, T, Easton, A and Summerfield, P, eds. *Women, Power and Resistance. : An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

- Zine Magubane, 2010. "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Post-Structuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of 'The Hottentot Venus'" in Willis, D, ed. *Black Venus*. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press.

Feature Film: Fabian, A. dir. *Skin*. 2008.

Lecture 8: 21 September :“Dis-abled” and Able Bodies: This session deals with constructions of “disability” in relation to social invisibility and ideas about “abnormality” and “a-sexuality”. What are the foundations of ideas about “normal” and able bodies? How have the perspectives of radical disabled women challenged mainstream ideas about eroticism, sexual desire and pleasure, and intersected with feminist perspectives on women's sexuality?

Reading

- Shelley Barry. 2006. “Disability and Desire: Journey of a Film-maker” in *Feminist Africa*, 6: Subaltern Sexualities.
- Adrienne Asch. 2001. “Critical Race Theory, Feminism and Disability” in *Ohio State Law Journal*, vol 62.
- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 2002. “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” in *Signs*, vol.14, no. 3.

Documentary: Shelley Barry, dir. 2003. *Whole: A Trinity of Being*.

Lecture 8: 28 September: Medical discourses and human bodies: How has the legacy of Enlightenment cultural and philosophical ideas evident in the way that raced and gendered bodies become objects for others' commercial gain, knowledge production or experimentation? How do present-day popular and scientific ideas about diseased bodies, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS, reflect earlier power relations and social discourses?

Reading

- Katarina Jungar and Elina Oinas. 2004. “Preventing HIV? Medical; Discourses and Invisible Women” in Arnfred, Signe, ed. *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Susan Sontag. 1991. Extracts from *Illness as Metaphor & Aids and its Metaphors*. Penguin.
- George Petros et al 2006 HIV/AIDS and ‘Othering’ in South Africa: the Blame goes on In *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, vol 8, no. 1
- Michele Goodwin, 2009. “The Black Body as Medical Commerce” in Jackson, S, Demissie, F and Goodwin, M, eds. *Imagining, Writing, Re) reading the Black Body*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Feature Film: Mereilles, F, dir. 2005. *The Constant Gardener*

Lecture 9: 5 October: Represented bodies in the mass media: reading images

How has the media, especially advertising, represented gendered and sexualized bodies? We will explore topics including hegemonic masculinities, hyper-femininities, the male gaze, objectification, and 'relations of looking and being looked at' to examine how advertisements construct male and female bodies.

Reading

- Nadia Sanger, N. 2009. "New women, old messages? Constructions of femininities, race and hypersexualised bodies in selected South African magazines, 2003-2006" in *Social Dynamics*, 35 (1): 137-148.
- Jean Kilbourne, 1995. "Beauty and the Beast of Advertising" in Dines, G and Humez, JM. Eds. *Gender, Race and Class in Media*. London: Sage.
- Jeanne Prinsloo, 2003. Childish Images: The Gendered Depiction of Childhood in popular south African magazines, *Agenda*, 56, 2003.

Documentary: Sunny Bergman, dir. 2007. *Over the Hill*

Lecture 12: 12 October

Reading sexed bodies in advertising: How is violent patriarchal heterosexuality inscribed into the saying that "sex sells"? How do advertisements construct heterosexist narratives around relationships between feminized (and also racialized) and masculinized bodies? By considering feminist views about pornography, this lecture explores ways in which heterosexuality, gender and race influence fantasy images of "desirable" bodies in the mass media, and also encourages students to reflect critically on how icons in the popular music industry have responded to dominant narratives and images.

- Gabeba Baderoon, 2014. Sexual Geographies at the Cape: slavery, race and sexual violence" in *Regarding Muslims: from slavery to post-apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- bell hooks, *Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Marketplace in Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Cambridge, Mass: Southend Press.
- Desiree Lewis, South African Feminism, Lady Gaga and the Flight Towards queer Utopia, *Los Angeles Review of Books*,

Documentary Film: Jaen Caputi and Susan Rosenkrantz, 2007. *The Pornography of Everyday Life*

Lecture 13, 19 October: Revision and Course Evaluations

