

Women's Studies 532
 A HISTORY OF THE (AMERICAN) BODY
 Fall 2007

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Do bodies have a history? What do bodies mean? Are we our bodies? Who decides the value of a body? What are the consequences of having the "wrong" body?

Perhaps it all started with the nature-nurture debate. By dividing the living world into biology (flesh, blood, genes, hormones, germs) and culture (environment, politics, tradition, commerce, history), we have come to regard bodies as objects immune to historical forces. This course challenges this understanding of bodies. By focusing primarily on American bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries, this course demonstrates that human bodies have social and cultural histories. The lived experience and cultural meanings of human bodies are dependent on their social settings. Biology is surely not irrelevant to bodily experience. But the interpretation and valuation of biology—indeed what is considered biological—change over time. Within a larger three-unit framework (outlined below), this course will highlight the social values placed on different bodies and the changing social expectations bodies create. This course will pay particular attention to the following questions: How have cultural and social changes in American history influenced the meaning and experience of bodies? How have attempts to establish social status and difference focused on bodies? How has the social and economic value of bodies differed according to race, class, sex, and "fitness?" How has a focus on bodies individualized social problems?

COURSE TEXTS

Available at History of Science office, 7143 Social Sciences

Course readers
 (No refunds available for course readers)

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation:	20%
Historical Research Project:	20%
Midterm:	20%
Final:	20%
Historical Roots Paper:	20%

Participation:

Because the discussion of readings is a major component of this course, you will be graded on your preparation for and involvement in class. This approach asks that you engage fully with the material and explore your own beliefs about historical events and processes. I evaluate participation by how well you talk about your ideas, listen and respond to others' ideas, remain sensitive to the feelings of other class members, and take responsibility for moving class discussion forward. Expressing one's ideas and getting reactions from others can help you evaluate your own opinions and ultimately sharpen your thinking. Although I set the grading criteria, you assign your own participation grade daily (though I reserve the right to change

them). Please note that the most valuable participation does not necessarily come from the student who speaks most. Students who do not listen to their classmates, who do not make room for various viewpoints and speakers, will not earn the highest participation.

Grading Criteria: See Appendix I.

As part of your participation grade, I expect you to complete reading guides before you come to class and turn them in at the end of the discussion. I will provide the reading guides the class session before they are due. These are to help you approach the reading, provide a starting point for class discussion, and guide your study before the exams. **You will be expected to turn in 14 of these**, but feel free to do them all. For days I do not provide reading guides, I have attached a few general guidelines (Appendix II) to help you think about the texts.

Examinations:

The midterm and the final will be take home essays. I will provide the questions on the midterm on October 8. **It will be due October 25.** I will provide the questions for the final on December 11. **It will be due at 5:05 PM on December 19.**

Grading criteria: See the exams.

Historical Research Project:

Although this course does not require a formal research paper, I would like you to get your hands dirty in the primary sources and learn to make an argument about the past. With these goals in mind, you will embark on a historical research project that examines the cultural gendering of bodies. To do this, first find a set of three documents from an era at least 30 years in the past that provides *advice* on the links between bodies and gender representation (performance, if you will.) **A list of these sources is due September 20.**

What kind of sources will work? As you are no doubt aware, there are cultural texts all around giving us advice about gender, so your choice of texts is really wide open. If you are stuck, look at the syllabus for ideas. There are all sorts of books written to young boys and young girls that would be great. Bride magazines are filled with messages about how women should use their bodies to signal “femininity.” What about “feminine hygiene” advertisements or make-up tips in *Seventeen* magazine? Editions of *Boy’s Life* or *Sports Illustrated* could be useful as might be marriage manuals. You get the idea.

After you identify your sources (and after I approve them), use them to create an argument, a claim, about the relationship of bodies and gender in the past. The best papers will use course materials to provide some background to the paper’s claims. The paper should be between five and seven pages. **Polished first drafts are due October 2.** I will turn the drafts over to your Writing Fellow for her comments. After you have received your draft back from your Fellow, you will meet with her to plan your revision. **Final drafts are due Wednesday, October 16.**

Grading Criteria: See Appendix III.

Historical Roots of Contemporary Issues Paper:

Over the course of the semester, be on the lookout for newspaper or magazine articles that address some aspect of the social and cultural importance of bodies, particularly as it has been presented on this syllabus. I suggest that you collect some that look especially interesting.

Choose one article, and discuss how the history you have learned informs the current issue. Again, you must make an argument about the role of history. You could, for example, create a thesis about how the past helps explain the present or you could argue how the past can help guide the future. Or you could try something else as the issue and article suggest. But your paper must have a thesis and it must connect historical analysis with a current issue. (Aim for about five pages. Eight pages are too many. Three pages are too few.) **The polished first draft is due November 27.** I will turn the drafts over to your Writing Fellow for her comments. After you have received your draft back from your Fellow, you will meet with her to plan your revision. **The final draft is due December 11.**

Grading Criteria: See Appendix III.

GRADUATE STUDENT COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students will be required to attend a separate seminar, read five additional books, write two book reviews (both due by **October 30**), write a 10-12 page research paper (draft due **November 20**; final due **December 11**), and take the final.

Graduate Readings:

- Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
 Johanna Schoen, *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005)
 John Hoberman, *Testosterone Dreams: Rejuvenation, Aphrodisia, Doping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)
 Margaret Lock, *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001)
 Ruth Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)

Seminar Participation, 30%; Book Reviews, 10% each; Final, 20%; Research paper, 30%.

Writing Fellows:

To help with the writing assignments this semester, we have the opportunity to work with the Undergraduate Writing Fellow Program. The Writing Fellows are gifted undergraduates who have received special training to offer critical evaluation and helpful suggestions on your drafts. After you turn in your drafts, I will give them to the Fellows who will read and provide written comments. You will then meet with your Fellow to discuss the paper and strategies for the rewrite. These meetings are mandatory.

This is a terrific opportunity for several reasons. First, our work is always improved by input from others. While the Fellows have no special training in the *content* of the course, they are trained to help you develop a well-constructed and persuasive essay. Second, good writing comes through practice and rewriting. The two-draft policy provides a chance for both. Finally, it helps your grade. Many of you will be writing your first historical research paper for this class, and it can be surprisingly challenging. Getting two chances to get it right will improve the quality of your final product. Our writing fellows are Amanda Harrington (harrington2@wisc.edu) and Camilia Cenek (cenek@wisc.edu).

Late Paper Policy:

Assignments that are late, for whatever reason, will be docked 5 points per day unless I have granted prior approval. This applies to all final assignments, including the take-home exams. Assignments a week or more late will not be accepted.

Late drafts will be accepted only in extraordinary cases and only with my prior approval. If you do not turn in a draft, your final paper will be lowered by a minimum of 10 points.

Do not assume that I will make an allowance in your case. Chances are good that I won't. Only a very few circumstances that result in late papers are completely unforeseeable. Use the phone.

GRADING SCALE

93-100	A
88-92	AB
83-87	B
78-82	BC
70-77	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

If you have questions about a grade, speak first to the instructor (Houck). If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair, Julie D'Acci or Nancy Kaiser. They will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the instruction or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Center will provide useful assistance and documentation.

SCHEDULE

September 4	Introduction
September 6	Biological Bodies
September 11	Sexed Bodies
September 13	Gendered Bodies
September 18	Racialized Bodies I
September 20	Racialized Bodies II (List of sources for Historical Research paper due)
September 25	Feminine Bodies
September 27	Class Cancelled
October 2	Masculine Bodies (Polished draft of Historical Research paper due)
October 4	Sexual Bodies
October 9	Heterosexual Bodies
October 11	Sexual Deviance
October 16	Sexually Defective Bodies (Final draft of Historical Research paper due)
October 18	Intersex/Trans Bodies
October 23	Leonore Tiefer visit
October 25	Religious Bodies (Exams due)
October 30	Commodified Bodies
November 1	Disciplined Bodies
November 6	Plastic Bodies
November 8	Unfit Bodies
November 13	Fit Bodies
November 15	Aging Bodies
November 20	Disabled Bodies
November 27	Reproductive Bodies (Historical Roots paper drafts due)
November 29	Unborn Bodies
December 4	Contagious Bodies
December 6	Diseased Bodies
December 11	Dead Bodies (Final Historical Research paper due)
December 13	Wrap Up and Evaluation
December 19	Final Exam Due, 5:05 PM

September 4 Introduction**BIOLOGICAL BODIES****September 6 Biological Bodies**

Dorothy Nelkin and M. Susan Lindee, "Creating Natural Distinctions," in *A Queer World: The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, Martin Duberman (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 309-317.

Bordo, Susan, and Monica Udvardy, "The Body," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Horowitz, Vol. 1 (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 230-238.

September 11 Sexed Bodies

Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London: 1889), 266-271.

Edward H. Clark, *Sex in Education, Or a Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873), excerpts.

Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science." in *The Racial Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, Sandra Harding, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 359-376.

September 13 Gendered Bodies

Anke Ehrhardt et al, "Fetal Androgens and Female Gender Identity in Early Treated Androgenital Syndrome," *Johns Hopkins Medical Journal* 122 (1968): 160-167.

John Colapinto, "The True Story of John/Joan," *Rolling Stone* December 1997.

Reviews of John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: the Boy Who Was Raised As a Girl* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000) *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 31 (2002): 301-308.

September 18 Racialized Bodies I

Joyce Kaplan, "Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian Bodies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 229-252.

Samuel A. Cartwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *DeBow's Review*, 1851.

September 20 Racialized Bodies II

Bob Wing, "Crossing Race and Nationality: The Racial Formation of Asian Americans, 1852-1965," *Monthly Review* 57 (2005): 1-18.

Pascoe, Peggy, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, And Ideologies Of "Race" In Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 83 (1996): 44-69.

SEXY BODIES**September 25 Feminine Bodies**

Mary Wood-Allen, *What a Young Girl Ought to Know* (Philadelphia: Vir Publishing Co., 1904), 171-187.

Mary Wood-Allen, *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* (Philadelphia: Vir Publishing Co., 1904), 105-116.

William Howard Lee, *Confidential Chats With Girls* (New York: Edward J. Clode, 1911), 14-31.

Olive Richards Landers, "You and Your Looks," in *The Modern Handbook for Girls* (New York: Books Inc, 1933), 20-42.

Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Body Projects," in *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Random House, 1997), 97-137.

October 2 Masculine Bodies

William A. Alcott, *Familiar Letters to Young Men on Various Subjects* (Buffalo, 1849), excerpts.

Bernarr MacFadden, *The Virile Powers of Superb Manhood* (New York: Physical Culture Publishing Co., 1900), excerpts.

William A. McKeever, *Training the Boy* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 147-148, 160-162.

Michael S. Kimmel, "Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 33 (1994): 7-36.

Gail Bederman, "Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation and 'Civilization,'" in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170-215.

October 4 Heterosexual Bodies I

"A Trail for Rape in New York, 1793."

William A. Alcott, "Physical Laws of Marriage," in *The Physiology of Marriage* (Boston, 1866), 111-127.

Evelyn M. Hammonds, "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence," *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 93-104.

Jesse F. Battan, "The 'Rights' of Husbands and the 'Duties' of Wives: Power and Desire in the American Bedroom, 1850-1910," *Journal of Family History* 24 (1999), 165-186.

October 9 Heterosexual Bodies II

Amy DeRogatis, "What Would Jesus Do? Sexuality and Salvation in Protestant Evangelical Sex Manuals, 1950s to the Present," *American Society of Church History* 74 (2005): 97-137.

Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Importance of Being Orgasmic: Sexuality, Gender and Marital Sex Manuals in the United States, 1920-1963," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 447-473.

Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman*, (1973), excerpts.

"How to Get and Keep Boys Interested," in *On Becoming A Woman* (New York: Dell, 1959), 56-72.

October 11 Homosexual Bodies

Jennifer Terry, "Anxious Slippages Between 'Us' and 'Them': A Brief History of the Scientific Search for Homosexual Bodies." in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 129-169.

Garland E. Allen, "The Double Edged Sword of Genetic Determinism: Social and Political Agendas in Genetic Studies of Homosexuality, 1940-1994," in *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 242-270.

October 16 Sexually Defective Bodies

Janice Irvine, "Regulated Passions: The Invention of Inhibited Sexual Desire and Sexual Addiction," in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 314-337.

Jennifer R. Fishman and Laura Mamo, "What's in a Disorder: A Cultural Analysis of Medical and Pharmaceutical of Male and Female Sexual Dysfunction," *Women and Therapy* 24 (2001): 179-193.

October 18 Trans/Intersex Bodies

J. Allen Gilbert, "Homosexuality and Its Treatment," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders* 52 (1920): 297-322.

Bernice L. Hausman, "Demanding Subjectivity: Transsexuals, Medicine, and the Technologies of Gender," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3 (1992): 270-302.

Elizabeth Reis, "Impossible Hermaphrodites: Intersex in America, 1620-1960," *The Journal of American History* 92 (2005): 411-441.

October 23 Leonore Tiefer

Leonore Tiefer, "A New View of Women's Sexual Problems: Why New? Why Now?" *Journal of Sex Research* 38 (2001): 89-93.

Leonore Tiefer, "The Medicalization of Impotence: Normalizing Phallocentrism," *Gender and Society* 8 (1994): 363-377.

Leonore Tiefer, "Social Constructionism and the Study of Human Sexuality," in *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy*, ed, Edward Stein (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1990), 295-324.

BODY TYPES

October 25 Religious Bodies

Janet Moore Lindman, "The Body Baptist: Embodied Spirituality, Ritualization, and Church Discipline in Eighteenth-Century America," in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 177-190.

R. Marie Griffith, "Body Salvation: New Thought, Father Divine, and the Feast of Material Pleasures," *Religion and American Culture* 11 (2001): 119-153.

October 30 Commodified Bodies

Elizabeth Lunbeck, "'A New Generation of Women': Progressive Psychiatrists and the Hypersexual Female," in *Women and Health in America*, 2^d ed., Judith Walzer Leavitt, ed. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 229-249.

Dorothy Roberts, "Reproduction in Bondage," in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1997), 22-55.

November 1 Disciplined Bodies

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *A Red Record* (Chicago, 1894).

Dora Apel, "Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib," *Art Journal* 64 (2005): 89-100.

November 6 Plastic Bodies

- Elizabeth Haiken, "The Lifting of the Middle Class: Aging in Post-World War II America," in *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 131-174.
- Peter Stearns, "The Misogynist Phase: 1920s-1960s," in *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* (New York: New York University Press, 1997, 2002), 71-97.
- Lauren Slater, "Dr. Daedalus," *Harper's Magazine*, July 2001, 57-67.

November 8 Unfit Bodies

- Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson, *Applied Eugenics* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), excerpts.
- Thurman B. Rice, *Racial Hygiene: A Practice Discussion of Eugenics and Race Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 93-97, 108-113.
- Natalia Molina, "Medicalizing the Mexican: Immigration, Race, and Disability in the Early-Twentieth-Century United States," *Radical History Review* 94 (2006): 22-37.

November 13 Fit Bodies

- Edward Frank Allen, *Keeping Our Fighters Fit for War and After* (New York: Century, 1918), 3-17, 40-63.
- David P. Setran, "Following the Broad-Shouldered Jesus: The College YMCA and the Culture of Muscular Christianity in American Campus Life, 1890-1914," *American Educational History Journal* 32 (2005): 59-66.
- Martha Verbrugge, "Stronger in Body as Well as in Mind," in *Able-Bodied Womanhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139-161.

November 15 Aging Bodies

- Judith A. Houck, "Feminine Forever: Robert A. Wilson and the Hormonal Revolution, 1963-1980," in *Hot and Bothered: Women, Medicine, and Menopause in Modern America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 152-187.
- Laura Davido Hirschbein, "The Glandular Solution: Sex, Masculinity, and Aging in the 1920s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 277-304.

November 18 Disabled Bodies

- Susan Cahn, "Come Out, Come Out, Whatever You've Got! Or, Still Crazy After All These Years," *Feminist Studies* 29 (2003).
- Harriet McBryde Johnson, "Unspeakable Conversations or How I Spent One Day as a Token Cripple at Princeton University," *New York Times Magazine*, February 16, 2003.

November 27 Reproductive Bodies

- Theodore Roosevelt, "Race Decadence," *The Outlook*, 8 April, 1911, excerpts.
- Wendy Kline, "'Marriage is Not Complete without Children': Positive Eugenics, 1930-1960," in *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 124-156, 189-19.
- Rickie Solinger, "Race and 'Value': Black and White Illegitimate Babies, in the USA, 1945-1965," in *Women and Health in America*, 2^d ed., Judith Walzer Leavitt, ed. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 371-387.

November 25 Unborn Bodies

Rayna Rapp, "The Disabled Fetal Imaginary," in *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: The Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 129-164.

Katha Pollitt, "Fetal Rights, Women's Wrongs," in *Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 169-186.

Geraldine Lux Flangan, *The First Nine Months of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), excerpts.

December 4 Contagious Bodies

Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Gendered Expectations: Women and Early Twentieth-Century Public Health," in *Women and Health in America*, 2^d ed., Judith Walzer Leavitt, ed. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 612-633.

Amy L. Fairchild and Eileen A. Tynan, "Policies of Containment: Immigration in the Era of AIDS," *AJPH* 84 (1994): 2011-2022.

December 6 Diseased Bodies

Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980),

Diane Price Herndl, "Our Breasts, Our Selves: Identity, Community, and Ethics in Cancer Autobiographies," *Signs* 32 (2006): 221-245.

December 11 Dead Bodies

Roger Cooter, "The Dead Body," in *Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 469-485.

Martin Pernick, "Brain Death in the Cultural Context: The Reconstruction of Death," in *The Definition of Death: Contemporary Controversies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 3-33.

December 13 Wrap Up and Evaluation

Appendix I: How to Grade Your Participation

1)	Attendance points	3
	If you show up on time and stay the whole class period, you earn full credit. If not, adjust accordingly.	
2)	Attention points	2
	If you pay attention to the conversation, give yourself full credit. If you read a magazine, do a crossword puzzle, or take a nap, adjust accordingly.	
3)	Preparation points	2
	If you read all the readings, give yourself full credit. If not, adjust accordingly.	
4)	Participation	
	Participation points gauge several aspects of course involvement. They reflect whether you have understood the basic issues, engaged with the material, volunteered your opinions, and listened to your classmates. Choose the category (and the point assignment) that best fits your situation.	
	Category A—no participation	0
	did not participate in discussion	
	Category B—good participation	1
	answered a question when directly asked volunteered an item for a board list	
	Category C—better participation	2
	asked a question participated in small groups discussion voluntarily offered an interpretation of an event or reading voluntarily responded to a classmates comment voluntarily offered a summary of a reading	

The discussion format is based upon the notion that students can and do learn from each other. To acknowledge this, **one discussion point will be assigned by your peers**. After every discussion, you will indicate which two people you believe contributed most valuably to discussion that day and explain why. Please note that this is not a reward for sheer quantity. Instead, perhaps someone asked one question that you made you rethink an issue. Perhaps somebody brought two disparate strains together in a way that enlivened discussion. So carefully consider which of your classmates helped you engage and analyze the material.

Women's Studies 532
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Fall 2007
Appendix II: Approaching Texts

As you read:

Decide whether the source is a primary source or a secondary source. (In general, a primary source is a text generated at the time of the event or issue or person discussed. A secondary source is a document that analyzes that event, issue, or person from a historical perspective. If the topic of discussion is tuberculosis in the early 19th century, primary sources might include medical literature, newspaper articles, journal entries, short stories, domestic health guides, and personal letters from the early 19th century. Secondary sources might include a historian's account of tuberculosis in the early 19th century that was written in the 20th century. There are cases where the differences are more fuzzy, but start from this rough distinction.

If the source is a primary source:

- a) Note the date. What else happened at the same time? Make sure you understand the chronology of the sources for any given topic.
- b) What perspective does it illuminate? Was it written by a middle-class woman facing childbirth? Was it written by a physician advising women how to cope with childbirth?
- c) What is the author's goal? Is she trying to persuade? Inform? Seduce? Scold?
- d) Who is the intended audience for the piece?
- e) Look up words and phrases you don't know.
- f) Can you identify a take-home message?

If the source is a secondary source:

- a) Figure out the author's argument. Every article has a main point. Make sure you know what it is. (Knowing the argument is different than knowing what the article is about).
- b) What kind of evidence does the author use? (Prescriptive literature, diary entries, medical journals?) Is the evidence appropriate for the argument?
- c) Is the argument persuasive? Has the author proven his or her claim?
- d) Keep track of the chronology. In other words, if the author is describing change over time, make sure you understand how, when, and why things change.
- e) Look up words and phrases you don't know.

WOMEN'S STUDIES 532
A History of the (American) Body
Paper Grading Criteria
Appendix III

Grading Criteria:

The paper will be evaluated on the specificity of its thesis, the soundness of its organization, the strength of its analysis, the effectiveness of its evidence, the originality of its ideas, and the grace of its style.

Thesis: A thesis is the reason a paper exists; it is the point you are trying to make. A thesis should not merely describe what the paper does (“This paper examines the validity of the biological understandings of gendered behaviors”). Instead, your thesis statement establishes your claim (“The efforts to link gendered behavior and biology always rely on culturally and historically specific notions of gender. The failure to recognize the culture-bound definitions of gender weakens the claims that gendered behaviors--such as playing with truck--are biologically based.”)

Organization: The organization of your paper should revolve around your thesis. Each paragraph should build an argument in support of the thesis. Consider every paragraph a mini-argument. It should have one main idea (presented in the topic sentence) and three to five sentences (or so) that clearly support the topic sentence. Each paragraph should be connected to the one above it by a transition. End with a conclusion that explains how your paper contributes to the history of the American body.

Evidence: For the critical reaction paper, your evidence will come from the course reader. For the research project, you will need to track down the evidence yourself. In both cases, I will evaluate the appropriateness of the evidence for the claims you are trying to make.

Analysis: Your paper should analyze and interpret the evidence to support your claim. Imagine for a moment a courtroom drama on TV. The gun, the barking dog, the tire tracks are all deployed by the prosecutor to support her case. But she does not merely describe the evidence; she uses it to make a point. She claims that the fingerprints on the gun, coupled with the tire tracks that match Jane Doe's car prove that Jane murdered Hello Kitty. Or pretend you are the defense attorney who analyzes the same evidence to prove Jane is innocent. The defense attorney notes that the finger prints provided only a three-point match, and besides, Jane shoots regularly at the firing range. Further, he claims that Jane loaned her car to her friend Willy that night so he could attend a “Dance, Dance Revolution” tournament. In other words, evidence does not speak for itself; your analysis gives evidence meaning. In the same way, you must analyze your sources, you must interpret them, to make a convincing case.

Originality: A first-rate essay will not just reiterate the claims made in the readings or the ideas raised in discussion. Instead, the best essays will use the readings and

discussions as the starting point to explore and create your own interpretations of a topic.

Style: The best ideas can fail to impress if packaged carelessly or imprecisely. Vague or messy prose tends to leave the reader puzzled and frustrated rather than persuaded and enlightened. Take care that your prose illuminates your ideas rather than obscures them. Take your work seriously enough to pay attention to the way it is packaged.

Some particular items to keep in mind.

Strive for clarity

If a reader must read a sentence three times to understand it, the writing hinders the idea.

Sometimes hazy prose reflects hazy thinking. Make sure you know exactly what you are trying to say before you say it.

Strive for precision

Avoid claims like “people thought,” “doctors argued,” “women dieted.” Which people, doctors, or women? All of them?

Avoid baggy sentences

Good prose is direct prose. As a result, good writers rid their sentences of all extraneous words. For example, I could advise you that if there is any way at all to get rid of extra words in your sentences that are not absolutely necessary, they should be gotten rid of if you can. Or in the words of Strunck and White, “Omit needless words.”

Use active voice

Instead of saying “The study was conducted,” try “Mr. Smith conducted the study.” This is desirable for several reasons. 1) It often allows you to omit needless words. 2) It forces you to identify the historical actors. “It was generally believed...” is a dead give-away that you only have a vague idea who believed. 3) Active voice forces you to use punchy verbs rather than the drab and generally unhelpful form of the verb “to be.” (See next point.)

Use vigorous verbs

Verbs provide the foundation of good writing. Unfortunately we often use verbs that provide no action such as forms of the verb “to be” or its helper verbs (am, is, was, were, are, be, been, being, have, has, had, do, does, did). These are perfectly fine, but try replacing them with something jazzier or omit them altogether. “She was a good student,” provides basic but bland information. “She excelled in math and science,” adds verve and specificity. Further, “he laughed” can usually replace “he was laughing.” Finally, avoid turning perfectly good verbs into nouns. Consider the following: “The mirror *had* a *reflection* of the lake on it.” “The mirror reflected the lake,” is stronger.

Avoid careless stuff

Run a spell check. Check for run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Proof-read.

What do grades mean?

- A (93-100) For outstanding papers only. Thesis and argument are clear, thought-provoking, and persuasive; research is thorough, appropriate, and creative; relationships drawn between evidence and ideas are sophisticated, subtle, and/or original. The paper also connects to larger trends addressed by the course. Writing is grammatically correct and succinct. The argument flows well from point to point, without any puffery or wasted words.
- AB (88-92) For very good papers that for some reason fall short of the criteria listed above. For example, the argument may be murky in one place; information may be presented that doesn't directly or clearly contribute to the argument; writing style may be awkward here and there, or flawed by one or two consistent (if minor) grammatical errors.
- B (83-87) Your basic good grade. The paper may pursue a straightforward but not especially deep or sophisticated argument; it is okay as far as it goes, but it doesn't penetrate the material very far. It may lack enough primary research to make the argument completely persuasive. It may have a flash of brilliance that is unfulfilled, counterbalanced by minor grammatical problems, a weakness in argumentation, and/or a significant misunderstanding of events or chronology.
- BC (78-82) The paper shows some of the basics of the ideal paper, but is weakened by a lack of serious think-work, evidence gathering, or writing problems. It may make superficial connections without offering sufficient evidence to make the connections plausible or persuasive, or it may have what is in principle a good argument supported by incorrect facts or chronology. Alternatively, it may provide a fairly solid argument with minor flaws, from which the reader is repeatedly distracted by awkward or ungrammatical prose.
- C (70-77) A grade signifying some serious problems in paper design, expository writing, or primary research. It may deliver facts without a recognizable thesis or argument; it may wander away from the point; or it may be a thoughtful attempt so weakened by writing problems (grammar, punctuation, word choice) that it is difficult for the reader to understand a crucial point you are trying to make. Alternatively, it may offer an strong thesis without providing sufficient primary evidence. Also used for papers that do not ask historical questions.
- D (60-69) A marginal grade. This grade usually indicates a paper does not meet the requirements of the assignment in two or more ways: the paper does not ask an historical question, lacks an original thesis, and/or relies almost exclusively on secondary sources. There may be some evidence of reading in the secondary literature, but the paper indicates no effort at synthesis or critical engagement. Also used for essays that are just barely coherent.
- F (0-59) For unacceptable essays. An essay may be judged unacceptable if it contains plagiarism (see below); if it fails to meet three of the major requirements for the paper; if it consists primarily of content inappropriate to the themes of the course; or if the writing fails to meet standard college-level requirements of basic communication in English.

