

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Medical History and Bioethics/History of Science/Gender and Women's Studies 532

A HISTORY OF THE (AMERICAN) BODY

Spring 2023

Tuesday/Thursday: 9:30-10:45

Instructor: Judith A. Houck (she her hers)

Preferred Pronouns: She, her, hers

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Office Hours: Thursday 11-12:30 and by appointment.

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, and sex? How has a focus on bodies individualized social problems?

Requisites: Sophomore standing

Course Designation: Breadth - Humanities

Level - Advanced

L&S Credit - Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S

Grad 50% - Counts toward 50% graduate coursework requirement

The course is eligible for optional honors credit upon completion of an honors project.

Credits: 3

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading,

writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

COURSE DETAILS

This course will be taught in person. Class time will be devoted to lectures and discussions of the readings.

Canvas will be your lifeline in this course. It provides the platform for the readings, videos, occasional lectures, discussion board, and assignments. You can enter the course Canvas site here:

<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/345142>

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify and summarize categories of embodied difference
- Analyze how embodied differences have shaped axes of power
- Understand how the experience of embodiment has shaped personal experience in the American past and present
- Analyze and interpret primary sources within their historical context
- Apply historical understanding to current events focused on the body

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION

This course provides regular and substantive interaction by:

- Providing direct instruction twice weekly through lecture and facilitating group discussion at least once/week on the scheduled and assigned weekly content.
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework throughout the semester based on the expectations of the learning activities described in the assignments section of this syllabus.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation:	10%
Discussion posts	10%
Midterm:	20%
Final:	20%
Body Project:	40%

PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT

Your participation grade will be assessed in two ways for this class. First, 50 percent of your participation grade will be assessed by the quality of your **discussion posts**. In these posts I will look for thoughtful engagement with and reflection on the course readings and other materials.

You will be expected to write 18 discussion posts over the course of the semester.

Another 50 percent of your participation grade will be assessed on your **active participation** in class. During the first few classes, we will discuss what constitutes active

participation. Everyone can miss two classes without penalty for whatever reason. Additional absences should be discussed with me.

Points	3	2	1	0
Quality of contribution	Comments showed critical thought; posed useful questions; moved conversation forward; stayed on topic; explicitly engaged with both instructor and classmates; reflected engagement with conversation; used reading assignments to bolster claims.	Comments reflected engagement with readings and the conversation; on topic but might have been somewhat tangential to the larger conversation; shared confusion or asked for clarification.	Spoke when asked a direct question; contributed one or two word responses; contributed comments that did not seem connected to the larger conversation; repeated someone else's point without elaborating on it; moved discussion off topic.	Did not contribute
Attendance	Arrived on time, stayed throughout class	Arrived late or left early	Missed more than half of the class	Did not attend class
Attention		Paid attention to the lecture and discussion throughout class	Mostly paid attention in class but sometime checked my phone	Spent much of class time distracted.
Preparation		Read all the readings for class	Did some of the readings for class	Did not read the readings before class

BODY PROJECT

This is an assignment in four parts.

Part I: Pick a Body Project

Pick a **body type** that you would like to research over the course of the semester. Ideas are endless. Some ideas include fit bodies, beautiful bodies, tortured bodies, pregnant bodies, abused bodies, athletic bodies, dead bodies, plastic bodies, modified bodies, etc. You may choose a body type already on the syllabus (disciplined bodies, for example), but you must approach it from a significantly different angle.

Due February 9

Part II: Find two primary sources from before 2000 that illustrate something about your body type. In no more than three pages, summarize some of the major themes of the sources.

Due February 23: **10% of final grade**

Part III: Find two historical secondary sources focused on the United States that illuminate two different aspects of your body type. In no more than three pages, summarize the main point of the articles.

Due March 23: **10% of final grade**

Part IV: Write an essay of no more than five pages describing what we can learn about American history by studying your body type based upon your reading and interpretation of your sources. Due April 20: **20% of final grade**

EXAMINATIONS

The midterm and the final will be take home essays. I will provide the questions on the midterm on March 23. **It will be due March 30.** I will provide the questions for the final on May 2. **It will be due at 2:25 PM on May 7.**

Grading criteria: See the exams.

GRADUATE STUDENT COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students will be required to attend a separate seminar, read five additional books, write two book reviews of books read for this class (both due within one week of reading the book for class), write a 15-20 page research paper (draft due April 6; final due May 4), and take the final.

Graduate Readings:

Dan Royles, *To Make the Wounded Whole: The African American Struggle Against HIV/AIDS* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020)

Jaipreet Virdi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History* (University of Chicago Press, 2020)

Sandra Eder, *How the Clinic Made Gender: The Medical History of a Transformative Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022)

David K. Johnson, *Buying Gay: How Physique Entrepreneurs Sparked a Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021)

Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, *Fit Nation: The Gains and Pains of America's Exercise Obsession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023)

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

GRADING SCALE

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

Grade Concerns

If you have questions about a grade, speak first to the instructor (Houck). If the question is not resolved, speak with the chair of the department of History, Anne Hansen. She will

attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Work 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 assignments, including the take-home exams. Assignments a week or more late will not be accepted unless there are extraordinary circumstances AND you have talked with me.

University of Wisconsin-Madison Policies

RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- See: <https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

ACADEMIC CALENDAR & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

- See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. (Source: <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/syllabus-statement/>)

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (Source: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/instructor/>)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. (Source: <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The University of Wisconsin-Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation. Today, UW-Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin.

STUDY DURING AN EPIDEMIC

In the spring of 2023, we still find ourselves in the midst of a deadly epidemic. We all have an obligation to do what we can to keep ourselves and our community infection free. As I write this, an Omicron variant continues its spread. Although vaccinations are preventing most serious illness in individuals, they are not foolproof, and the most vulnerable among us remain at some risk. Please be mindful that people do not share identical risk in this epidemic, and we react to risk differently. Be generous.

For the latest news and campus policies, see <https://covidresponse.wisc.edu/>

PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS & THE USE OF AUDIO RECORDED LECTURERS STATEMENT

See more information about privacy of student records and the usage of audio-recorded lectures.

Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Digital Course Evaluation (AEFIS)

UW-Madison uses a digital course evaluation survey tool called AEFIS. For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. Evaluations are anonymous. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

SCHEDULE

January 24	Introduction
January 26	Biological Bodies
January 31	Sexed Bodies
February 2	Racializing Bodies
February 7	Racialized Bodies I
February 9	Racialized Bodies II (Body topic due)
February 14	Racialized Bodies III
February 16	Feminine Bodies
February 21	Masculine Bodies
February 23	Sexual Bodies (Primary source analysis due)
February 28	Heterosexual Bodies I
March 2	Heterosexual Bodies II
March 7	Heterosexual Bodies III
March 9	Homosexual Bodies
March 21	Intersex Bodies
March 23	Trans Bodies (Secondary source essay due)
March 28	Enslaved Bodies
March 30	Disciplined Bodies (Midterm due)
April 4	Commodified Bodies
April 6	Imprisoned Bodies
April 11	Dieting Bodies
April 13	Trafficked Bodies
April 18	Immigrant Bodies
April 20	Disabled Bodies (Final body project essay due)
April 25	Reproductive Bodies
April 27	Unborn Bodies
May 2	Diseased Bodies
May 4	Wrap Up and Evaluation
	Final Exam Due May 7, 2:25 PM

January 24 Introduction

BIOLOGICAL BODIES

January 26 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.

Tom Shakespeare and Mark Erickson, "Different Strokes: Beyond Biological Determinism and Social Constructionism," in *Alas, Poor Darwin: Arguments Against Evolutionary Psychology*, Hilary Rose and Steven Rose, eds., (New York: Harmony Books, 2000), 229-245.

January 31 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), 11-21, 32-35, 78-95.

Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 1-41.

February 2 Racializing Bodies

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

Jennifer Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 167-192.

February 7 Racialized Bodies I

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

Frederick Douglass, *The Claims of the Negro, Ethnologically Considered* (Rochester: Lee, Mann and Co, 1854), pp. 3-37.

John S. Haller, "The Physician Versus the Negro: Medical and Anthropological Concepts of Race in the late Nineteenth Century," *Medical History* 16 (1972): 238-53.

February 9 Racialized Bodies II

Mathew Frye Jacobson, "Anglo-Saxons and Others, 1840-1924," in *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 139-190, 289-298.

Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Grant Race: or The Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 11-29, 197-200, 227-8.

February 14 Racialized Bodies III

Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, "[The Races of Mankind Download The Races of Mankind](#)" reprinted in *Race: Science and Politics* [pamphlet prepared by the Public Affairs Committee, 1943]: 167-193.

Ashley Montagu, "[The Concept of Race, Download The Concept of Race.](#)" *American Anthropologist* 64 (1962): 919-928.

SEXY BODIES

February 16 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.

February 21 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.

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.

February 23 Sexual Bodies

April Haynes, *Riotous Bodies*, excerpts.

Mary Sargeant Gove Nichols, *Solitary Vice: An Address to Parents and Those Who Have Care for Children* (1839)

February 28 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.

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.

March 2 Heterosexual Bodies II

Thomas W. Murrell, "Syphilis and the American Negro," *JAMA* 54 (1910): 846-849.

H.H. Hazen, "Syphilis in the American Negro," *JAMA* 63 (1914): 463-466.

LaKisha Michelle Simmons, "'To Lay Aside All Morals': Respectability, Sexuality and Black College Students in the United States in the 1930s," *Gender and History* 24 (2012): 431-455.

March 7 Heterosexual Bodies III

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.

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

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

March 9 Homosexual Bodies

Jennifer Terry, "Lesbians under the Medical Gaze: Scientists' Search for Remarkable Differences," *Journal of Sex Research* 27 (1990): 317-339.

George W. Henry, *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1948), 127-147, 522-534.

Thaddeus Russell, "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 101-128.

March 21 Intersexed Bodies

Christina Matta, "Ambiguous Bodies and Deviant Sexualities: Hermaphrodites, Homosexuality, and Surgery in the United States, 1850-1904," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 48 (2005): 74-83.

Sandra Eder, "The Volatility of Sex: Intersexuality, Gender and Clinical Practice in the 1950s," *Historicising Gender and Sexuality* (2021): 166-181.

March 23 Trans Bodies

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

Joanne Meyerowitz, "From Sex to Gender," in *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 98-129, 308-314.

BODY TYPES

March 28 Enslaved Bodies

Susan M. Reverby, "Memory and Medicine: A Historian's Perspective on Commemorating J. Marion Sims," *Perspectives on History*, September 2017.

Stephanie M. H. Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South," *Journal of Southern History* 68 (2002): 533-572.

Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (New York: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 41-52. Reprint.

March 30 Disciplined Bodies

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

April 4 Commodified Bodies

Elizabeth Alice Clement, "The Treat: Transforming Sexual Values at the Turn of the Century," in *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 45-75.

Sarah F. Rose and Joshua A. T. Salzmman, "Bionic Ballplayers: Risk, Profit, and the Body as Commodity, 1964-2007," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 11 (2014): 47-75.

April 6 Imprisoned Bodies

Vivien M. L. Miller, "Reinventing the Penitentiary: Punishment in Florida, 1868-1923," *American Nineteenth Century History* 1 (2000): 82-106.

Regina G. Kunzel, "Situating Sex: Prison Sexual Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (2002): 253-270.

April 11 Dieting Bodies

R. Marie Griffith, "Apostles of Abstinence: Fasting and Masculinity during the Progressive Era," *American Quarterly* 52 (2000): 599-638.

Chin Jou, "The Progressive Era Body Project: Calorie-Counting and 'Disciplining the Stomach' in 1920 America," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 18 (2019): 422-440.

April 13 Trafficked Bodies

Grace Pena Delgado, "Border Control and Sexual Policing: White Slavery and Prostitution along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1903-1910," *Western History Quarterly* 43 (2012): 157-178.

Mary Ting Yi Lui, "Saving Young Girls from Chinatown: White Slavery and Woman Suffrage, 1910-1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18 (2009): 393-417.

Ernest A. Bell, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls: The Great War on White Slavery* (1910), excerpts.

April 18 Immigrant Bodies

Natalia Molina, "Medicalizing the Mexican: Immigration, Race, and Disability in the Early-Twentieth-Century United States," *Radical History Review* 94 (2006): 22-37

William Z. Ripley, "Race Progress and Immigration," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34 (1909): 130-138.

April 20 Disabled Bodies

R. A. R. Edwards, "Sound and Fury; or, Much Ado about Nothing? Cochlear Implants in Historical Perspective," *Journal of American History* 92 (2005): 892-920.

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.

April 25 Reproductive Bodies

Theodore Roosevelt, "Race Decadence," *The Outlook*, April 8, 1911, excerpts.

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.

April 27 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.

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

May 2 Diseased Bodies

Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Gendered Expectation: Women and Early Twentieth-Century Public Health," in *Women and Health*, 612-633.

Richard McKay, Patient Zero: The Absence of a Patient's View of the Early North American AIDS Epidemic, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 88 (2014):161-194.

May 4 Wrap Up and Evaluation

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

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: In your papers and in your exams, your argument must be supported by evidence. For the exams, you should rely for evidence on the course materials, lectures and discussions. In your papers, the course materials will still be useful, but they need to be supplemented by evidence that you collect. This is especially important for the historical research project. In evaluating your written work, I will consider 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 Strunk 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 of 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 a 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.