**Gender and Bodily Difference FRAN 6200**

**FRAN 6200, 2011-2012**  
*Course: Gender and Bodily difference*

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**Course Time:** Wed 11:30AM - 02:20PM  
**Course Location:** MACS, Room 331  
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**Course Description**  
This course examines the dynamics of gender and physical differences across the life span, focusing on understanding and positively intervening in misconceptions and marginalization of people living with differences in social and health care encounters. Drawing on feminist phenomenological and poststructuralist perspectives, it introduces the concept of bodily difference and examines the implications of the concept for individual embodiment and social experience. Key concepts and theoretical frameworks approach the body and embodiment in a developmental, critical, and systemic way. Myths and misconceptions of differences that circulate throughout popular and professional cultures, and inform health and social care policies and practices will be emphasized. Course readings and visual texts highlight issues of obesity and fatness, disability, facial and physical difference, illness and disease, aging and racialized bodies, eating disorders, cosmetic and plastic surgery, and gender, sex, and sexual variance.

**Course Objectives**  
This course has eight objectives:

1. For students to become familiar with important questions and concerns on gender, embodiment, and bodily difference⁠¹ in contemporary feminist and critical theory and praxis
2. For students to examine cultural representations, social relations, and lived realities of difference from the perspectives of those who embody differences

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⁠¹ This includes people with mobility and sensory disabilities, chronic illness, facial and physical differences such as a birthmark or burn injury, size differences, sex and gender variance, as well as those perceived as racially or ethically different from the dominant unmarked norm. Because what counts as ‘difference’ from the culturally idealized or normalized body varies across time and place, broad definition has been adopted.
For students to understand the inter-subjective dynamics of differences in social and health care interactions between those who perceive themselves to embody and not embody differences

For students to examine the psychological, social, and cultural roots and consequences of exclusionary attitudes and actions, and to identify possible pathways for change with practice implications

For students to examine themes of the body and embodiment across the life span highlighting embodied experiences of children, youth, adults, and elders in social and medical encounters

For students and instructor to contribute to a community of learners engaged in critical and respectful dialogue on issues of bodily privilege, marginalization, and exclusion

For students and instructor to practice critical self-reflectivity in order to uncover some of the ways that issues of power, identity, and physical difference shape how they think, feel, act, and interact in their bodies and daily lives

For students to develop critical reading, writing, communication, presentation, facilitation, and self-evaluation skills

Course Themes and Topics
Themes examined in the course include: feminist theoretical foundations of differences; dynamics of difference in social and health care interactions; making and unmaking differences in cultural and scientific representations and social relations; critical and systematic perspectives on the development of bodies and bodily selves; understanding, experiencing, and responding to differences; and re-visioning differences in popular and professional cultures. Throughout readings, visual texts, and classroom discussions, we consider how social institutions and symbolic systems shape the embodied experiences of diverse subjects across the life span. Also highlighted are some of the ways that individuals and groups resist imposed meanings to create preferred accounts of themselves. The course is organized into three parts:

Part 1 Histories and Approaches
Theoretical Frameworks I: In the Shadow of Difference
Theoretical Frameworks II: The Lived and Biological Bodies
Theoretical Frameworks III: Approaching and Escaping Abjection

Part 2: Dynamics of Bodily Differences
Fat or Fiction? The Making of an Epidemic
The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity
Envisioning and Re-visioning Disability and Physical Difference
Racialized, Ill, and Aging Bodies
Part 3: Body Projects
Eat and Disorder
Plastic/Cosmetic Surgery, Body Modification, and Normalization
Beyond the Binaries: Gender, Sex, and Sexual Variance

Required Texts
We will work with four texts and a course kit. The following course readings will be available for purchase from the Bookstore and/or accessed through the library:

*Gender and bodily difference* Reprotext, (2011-2012). Developed by Professor Carla Rice. (To be accessed through D2L and the Guelph library system)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Reflection Due</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Oct 12 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Reflection Due</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Nov 9 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20% (Self Evaluation)</td>
<td>As assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>As assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Nov 30 (in class)</td>
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Explanation of Assignments
Students are expected to do assignments using interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches to feminist and critical scholarship in undertaking course work. These involve:

- Understanding theories of difference and ability to use social difference variables such as gender, disability, and race in analyses.
- Emphasis on complexity in analyzing topics, demonstrating proficiency in applying theories introduced in the course.
- Considering agency, capacity, and creativity of individuals and groups in responding to social privilege / suffering / exclusions and in constituting alternative accounts of themselves.

Class Presentation (Self Evaluation)
Topics assigned in week 2
This assignment is mandatory. Choose a topic that engages you. Develop and facilitate a workshop that includes your reflections on the topic and selected readings for the week. Your facilitation should include a brief introduction to the topic, an outline of feminist/critical/social justice critiques of conventional approaches to the topic, and a discussion starter. You can use visual aids, short films or film clips, small group exercises, and/or questions to engage the class. Presentations should be well researched and well organized. The assignment is intended for you to enter into generative conversations and get valuable feedback about key theoretical issues and practice dilemmas in your area of interest. As such, you are strongly encouraged to present on a topic related to your final writing project.

Self Evaluation: As part of the assignment, you will be asked to submit a one-page written self-evaluation of your presentation along with a letter grade. Along with this, submit an outline of your presentation, a copy of the visuals, discussion questions or exercises you use, and copies of handouts given to the class.

Reflection Papers
Write two polished reflection papers of 4 to 6 pages each on the readings you completed during the previous section of the course. Choose themes that interest, engage, move, challenge, puzzle, or bother you and/or associations and connections the readings have triggered for you. Reflections will be graded on writing quality, originality, synthesis skills, and sensitivity of analyses. I strongly advise that you draft responses when you are immersed in the readings and then edit and synthesize your reflections before submission. Demonstration of reading comprehension, writing clarity, and consistency of effort is critical to success in this assignment.

Paper/Project
In this assignment, students are required to write an 12 to 15 page project focused on themes introduced the course, bringing together at least one of the theoretical frameworks with a topic of your choice (one which is addressed or related to course content). Your assignment could entail a conventional academic research paper or a creative project. A creative project may be a program, education, or artistic intervention into a course theme combined with a theoretical case for the proposed intervention. You are encouraged to write on issues that engage – or plague – you! and to use your creativity in designing your project. I highly recommend that you consult with me and class members prior to defining your project.
Participation
Regular attendance is required and students must demonstrate they have done the reading.

Commitment to Class Discussions and Course Materials
The course is structured as a weekly 3-hour seminar, which works best when students are prepared to participate fully in discussions. Course assignments emphasize student engagement with course material.

Note on Difficulty of Course Content
In this class, we explore the intellectual, emotional, and social terrain of anomalous embodiments including weight, physical, mobility, sensory, age, race, sex, gender, and other visible and invisible differences. Some of the readings we take up and films we watch can challenge and evoke strong responses in audiences. You are in the best position to decide whether this is right course at this time. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to me before deciding on this class.

Course Policies on Late Submission of Work
Assignments are accepted before or on the due date. Extensions are provided only if you contact me ahead of time or provide documentation of a medical or life emergency. Otherwise, there is a 2% penalty per day for late assignments.

Academic Misconduct
All members of the University of Guelph community are required to be familiar with what constitutes academic misconduct. Students are encouraged to become familiar with academic integrity issues and to consult the University of Guelph’s policy regarding academic misconduct, which is available in the University Graduate Calendar at: www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1340.shtml Pursuant to University policy, suspected cases of academic misconduct will be forwarded to the Department Chair.

Email Contacts
Every student is expected to have a Guelph email address and to check it regularly. If a class has to be cancelled, or if there is any other matter that you should know about prior to class, you will be sent an email on your Guelph account. It is your responsibility to attend class and if you have missed a class, seek out one of your classmates to inquire about missed course material. Email can be used to set appointments with me, or to ask practical questions that require brief
answers. You are welcome to ask questions requiring detailed responses during class or office hours.

**Classroom Interactions**

This is a feminist classroom, where we engage with each other in respectful and thoughtful conversations about differences. Because a significant part of the course will be classroom discussion, a major assignment is keeping up with readings, participating in dialogue an informed way, and providing ethical feedback to other students. Your responses to other students should not be negative. As an engaged participant, your job is to enter into conversations about what was read/heard, and your responses to the ideas presented. You are asked to structure your responses along the following:

**Identifying the ideas that engage you:** As you read texts or listen to the lectures, presentations, and discussions which ideas caught your attention or captured your imagination? Which ones stuck a chord for you?

**Describing the intentions of the writer:** What values and principles regarding people, their differences, identities, selves, actions and interactions, and the social world more generally do these ideas evoke? What do the ideas suggest to you about the writers’ purposes and commitments?

**Situating your responses:** What is it about your own life experiences or interests that account for why these ideas caught your attention? Do you have a sense of which aspects of you own experiences resonated with these ideas?

**Identifying gaps and spaces:** What are some gaps and spaces that you notice in each reading? What areas do you think need further exploration in this topic area? What remains confusing, unclear, or underdeveloped? What suggestions in the form of other authors and ideas can you offer to help the analysis along?

**Recognizing your movement:** How have you been moved on account of engaging with these ideas? Where have these ideas taken you? How have you shifted as a result of listening to and participating in the development of these ideas?

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Gender and Bodily Difference
Schedule of Topics and Readings Fall 2011

Part 1: Histories and Approaches

Sept 14
Introductory class
Review of course syllabus, grading system, and major assignments for course

Sept 21
Theoretical Frameworks I - In the Shadow of Difference
Gives a short history of the construction of bodily normalcy and difference in western science and society


Catherine J., Kudlick (2005). Disability history, power, and rethinking the idea of 'the other.' *Publication of the Modern Language Association, 120*, 2, pp. 557-561.


Optional Film Resources: Directed by Peter Cohen *Homo Sapiens 1900*, (First Run Features, 1999), 85 mins

Assignment of topics and texts for student presentations

Sept 28
Theoretical Frameworks II - The Lived Body and The New Materialism: Bringing the Biological Back In
Introduces contemporary feminist scholarship on the lived and the biological bodies, and explores how phenomenological and new materialist writers theorize bodily difference.


Young, Iris Marion (1990). Breasted experience: The look and the feeling. In Throwing like a girl and other essays in feminist philosophy and social theory (pp. 189-205). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. (Kit)

Devaney, Julie (2011) My leaky performances. Canadian Theatre Review, 146(6), 6-11. (Kit)


Optional Film Resources:
Directed by Roz Mortimer, Gender Trouble. (Seventh Art Releasing, 2002), 24 min. Directed by Jonathan Karsh, My Flesh and Blood (Docurama), 83 mins.
Directed by Meema Spadola & Thom Powers, Breasts: A Documentary (First Run Features, 1997), 50 mins.
Directed by Ngozi Onwurah, Body Beautiful, (Women Make Movies, 1991), 23 mins.

Oct 5
Theoretical Frameworks III - Approaching and Escaping Abjection
Introduces Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection and implications of the concept for individual embodiment and social experience.


**Optional Film Resources:** Directed by Kim Farrant, Naked on the Inside (Australia, Madma. Mad for Entertainment, 2006), 82 mins.

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**Part 2: Dynamics of Bodily Differences**

**Oct 12**

**Fat or Fiction? The Making of an Epidemic**

*Explores ideological assumptions underlying 'the obesity epidemic’ and considers their ethically questionable consequences*


Rice, Carla (2007) Becoming “the fat girl”: Acquisition of an unfit identity, Women’s Studies International Forum 30(2): 158–74. (Kit)

**1st Reflections Due (including current week)**

**Oct 19**

**The Struggle to Refine Fat Identity**

*Introduces fat studies and shifts the focus from obesity/overweight as a medical condition to fatness as a cultural and political identity*


**Optional Film Resources:**

Directed by Julie Wyman, Bouyant (Women Make Movies, 2004), 28 mins

Directed by Betty Ann McPherson and Beth Mairs Does This Canoe Make Me Look Fat? (BAM North Productionss, 2011), 53 mins.
Directed by Shereen Noon, *BODY: The Value of Women* (Elemental Films, 2005),

**Oct 26**

**Envisioning and Revisioning Disability and Difference**

*Introduces critical disability studies and examines cultural constructions of disability as a moral problem, a medical condition, and as an embodied difference and political and social identity*


**Optional Film Resources:**

Directed by Josh Aronson *Sound and Fury*, (Santa Monica, CA: Next Wave Films, 2000), 55 mins.


Directed by C Rice, *Elephant in the room*, (Toronto: *Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference*), 3 mins. Plus other films from the *Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference* Project

**Nov 2**

**Racialized Bodies and Boundaries**

*Analyzes processes of racialization and theorizes the construction and regulation of racialized bodies and identities in white societies*


**Optional Film Resources:**
Directed by Tracy Deer, *Club Native* (National Film Board of Canada, 2008), 78 mins.
Directed by Anne Marie Nakagawa, *Between: Living the Hyphen* (National Film board of Canada, 2006), 42 mins.
Directed by Mark Sandiford, *Qallunaat: Why white people are funny* (National Film Board and Beachwalker Films, 2006), 50 mins.

**Nov 9**
**Ill and Aging Bodies**
*Considers the politics and poetics of illness and aging bodies*


**Optional Film Resources:**
Directed by Mike Nichols, *Wit* (HBO Films and Avenue Pictures Production, 2001), 99 mins.
Directed by Cynthia Scott, *Company of Strangers*. (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1990), 100 mins.

**2nd Reflections Due (including current week)**

**Part 3: Body Projects**

**Nov 16**

**Eat and Disorder**

*Explores how gendered power relations structure treatment regimes in hospital-based eating disorder treatment programs, and reveals the ways in which these “feed” anorexia and bulimia*


**Optional Film Resources:** Excerpts from Directed by Lauren Greenfield, *Thin: Death By Eating Disorder* (HBO Documentary Films, 2004), 103 mins.
Directed by Andrea Levy, *This is My Body: A Film by High School Girls*, (National Film Board of Canada and TRUE Power Media, 2006), 34 mins.

**Nov 23**

**Plastic/Cosmetic Surgery, Body Modification, and Normalization**

*Examines feminist debates on plastic/cosmetic surgery and other body modification as acts of conformity or agency*


Bordo, Susan (2009). Twenty years in the twilight zone. In Cressida Heyes and Meredith Jones (Eds.) *Cosmetic surgery: A Feminist primer* (pp. 22-33). Burlington, VT: Ashgate. (Kit)

Davis, Kathy (2009). Revisiting feminist debates on cosmetic surgery: Some reflections on suffering, agency, and embodied difference In Cressida Heyes and Meredith Jones (Eds.) *Cosmetic surgery: A Feminist primer* (pp. 35-47). Burlington, VT: Ashgate. (Kit)

**Optional Film Resources:**

Directed by Anne Shin, *Western Eyes* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2000), 40 mins.
Directed by Spohie Bissonnette, *Sexy Inc, Our Children Under the Influence* (National Film Board of Canada), 35 mins.

**Nov 30**

**Beyond the Binaries: Gender, Sex, and Sexual Variance**

*Explores the pathologization of gender, sex, and sexual diversity within dualistic systems and moves beyond binaries by centering the embodied experiences of people with gender and sex variance*

Gonzales, Maya Christina (2010). *Gender now: A learning adventure for children and adults*. San Francisco: Reflection Press. (pp. 2-7). (Kit)


**Optional Film Resources**


Excerpt from Directed by Alain Berliner, *Ma Vie En Rose (My Life in Pink)*, (Haut et Court, 1997), From “Start” to “Snow White” 46 mins.


Directed by Brooke Sebold, Benita Sills & Todd Sills, *Red Without Blue* (Indiepix & Cinema Libre), 74 mins.


Directed by Kate Davis, *Southern Comfort*. (Santa Monica: Next Wave Films, 2003), 90 mins.

Directed by Tom Murray, *Fish Can’t Fly, Conversations about God and struggling to be gay*, (T. Joe Murray Productions, 2005), 83 mins.

Directed by Peter Barbosa, *I Exist: Voices from the Lesbian and Gay Middle Eastern Community in the US* (Arab Film Distribution and Eye Bite, 2004), 90 mins.

**Final Project Due**