

Bodyworks: Body, Medicine, and Technology in the 21st Century

AS 211 358

Wed 2-4:30pm

Hodson 203

Prof. Bernadette Wegenstein

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Course organization:

During every session students will engage in class-discussions of readings and screenings; every session, two to three students will kick off on class readings and initiate the class discussion; by October 7th students will have formed five groups of around four students to work on an individual topic (topic list will be discussed in class); on December 2nd each group will present their topic in class with the help of a visual presentation technology (ppt, website, etc.); in addition, every student will hand in a final paper of twenty (>) pages on the course readings by December 9th (questions will be distributed at the latest on November 18th, but may be requested earlier by students, who want to get an early start on their final assignment). Grading policy: 50 % class participation, 25% kick-off and group presentations, and 25% final writing assignment. Course readings will be online one week before each session. Books will be available at Barnes & Noble as of Sep 6.

Syllabus

- Sep 2 *Introduction to Syllabus*
- Sep 9 *Cyberspace and the Body — Classics and Definitions*
Readings:
William Gibson: *Neuromancer* (excerpt from Neil Spiller, *The Cyber Reader*)
Jewelle Gomez: Lynx and Strand (from Booth/Flanagan *re:skin*)
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun: Why Cyberspace? (from Chun, *Power and Freedom*)
Bernadette Wegenstein: Making Room for The Body: From Fragmentation to Mediation (from *re:skin*)
Donna Haraway: Cyborg Manifesto (excerpt from *The Cyber Reader*), (Optional)
Slavoj Zizek: Cyberspace, Or, the Unbearable Closure of Being (optional)
- Sep 16 screening *Cremaster 3* by Matthew Barney (2002), 151 min.

Sep 23

Prosthetics, Monsters and Disabilities

Readings:

Michel Foucault: Abnormal (chapters 2 and 3)

Vivian Sobchack: A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality (from *The Prosthetic Impulse*)

Marquard Smith: The Vulnerable Articulate: James Gillingham, Aimee Mullins, and Matthew Barney (from *The Prosthetic Impulse*)

David Sterlin: Disability, Masculinity, and the Prosthetics of War, 1945 to 2005 (from *The Prosthetic Impulse*)

Sep 30

Lucy Grealy: *Autobiography of a Face* (available at Barnes & Noble) — Discussion of novel

Oct 7

Skin and Visibility

Readings:

Sander L. Gilman: Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward and Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Technology

Zine Magubane: Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the “Hottentot Venus”

Claudia Benthien Blackness: Skin Color in African-American Discourse (from *skin*)

Keith + Mendi Obadike: The Black.Net.art Actions: Blackness for Sale (2001), The Interaction of Coloreds (2002), And The Pink of Stealth (2003) (from *re:skin*)

Students will form groups and choose topics for final 20 minute presentations to be held on December 2.

Oct 14

21st Century Technologies of Beauty

Readings:

Bernadette Wegenstein: Machinic Suture: 21st Century

Technologies of Beauty (from Wegenstein, *The Cosmetic Gaze*)

Meredith Jones: *Makeover Culture's Dark Side: Breasts, Death, and Lolo Ferrari*, Body and Society, 2008 (pdf)

Screening: *Made Over in America* by Wegenstein/Rhodes (2007)

Oct 21

Cosmetic Surgery and Film

Readings:

Vivian Sobchak: Scary Women: Cinema, Surgery, and Special Effects (from Sobchak *Carnal Thoughts*)

- Bernadette Wegenstein: Editing Women: The Cosmetic Gaze in Contemporary Cinema and Art (from Wegenstein, *The Cosmetic Gaze*)
 Screening: clips from *Eyes Without a Face* (Les yeux sans visage, 1960) and *The Face of Another* (Tanin no kao, 1966)
- Oct 28 Screening *Shi-gan* (Time) by Ki-duk Kim (2006), 97 min.
- Nov 4 ***Genetic Testing and Designer Babies***
 Readings:
 Masha Gessen: Blood Matters (part 2) (available at Barnes & Noble)
 Jessica Queller: Pretty is What Changes (available at Barnes & Noble)
 Ronald M. Green, Babies by Design: The Ethics of Genetic Choice (chapters 7 and 8: *Playing God, The Choices Ahead*)
- Nov 11 Richard K. Morgan *Thirteen* (available at Barnes & Noble) —
 Discussion of Novel
- Nov 18 ***Body Imaging Technology: Field Trip to JHU Medical Campus***
 Readings:
 Lisa Cartwright: The Real Life of Biomedical Body Images (pdf)
 Christina Lammer: Eye Contact: Fine Moving Hands and the Flesh and Blood of Image Fabrication in the Operating Theatres of Interventional Radiology (from *re:skin*)
 Other readings from *The Visible Woman*, ed. Paula E. Treichler, Lisa Cartwright, Constance Penley
- Final Paper questions will be distributed.
- Nov 25 Thanksgiving
- Dec 2 Wrap-up and presentations of group topics
- Dec 9 Final Paper due (by email)

Bodyworks Final Paper Questions due by email Dec 9

Please answer these questions by relating them with each other, but keeping them in separate sections. The length is open, but a minimum of 7 pages (double-spaced) is required.

- 1, Discuss all technologies (of augmentation) of the body from this semester's class in terms of the control- and freedom-paradigm in Wendy Chun's *Control and Freedom*. Think about personal examples (e.g., the autobiographies), as well as institutional examples (medical procedures, legal situations).
- 2, Apply the notion of cyborg elaborated by Donna Haraway in the 1980s to the replicants in *Blade Runner* and the Thirteens in *Thirteen* by Richard K. Morgan. What are the problems of the cyborg, how does h/she compare to being human, what are his/her (dis)advantages? You can compare the figures of Roy Batty and Merrin, if you have seen *Blade Runner*.
- 3, In *Autobiography of a Face*, Lucy Grealy confesses her damaged body image. Explain the psychiatric notion of body dysmorphic disorder in relation to Grealy's autobiography. What can you say about the literary component in this narration?
- 4, What does blackness have to do with visibility? Compare the black.net.art projects with the post-racial dystopia of Carl Marsalis in *Thirteen/Black Man*. What is the difference between Marsalis' engineered DNA and his blackness, and how (if at all) can you relate this issue of otherness to your own worlds?
- 5, Explain the phenomenon of cosmetic surgery in the context of reality television makeover shows. What is makeover culture's ultimate goal? What does "bettering" oneself mean in the context of makeover culture (*Made Over in America*)? Do you personally think that cosmetic surgery is a technology of augmentation? What are the ethical implications of a culture looking younger and younger and more and more "beautiful"?
- 6, Compare the role of doctors and patients in the films *Eyes Without a Face* (Les yeux sans visage, 1960) and *The Face of Another* (Tanin no kao, 1966) with the Korean film *Shi-gan*. Who is at fault in these old and the new films for the failed makeovers? What historical development can you detect in these old and this new film?
- 7, What are the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes? Describe and compare the conflicted stories of Jessica Queller's and Masha Gessen's decisions for mastectomies; how has their sense of femininity and beauty played into their decision-making process? Do you think a person has the duty to inform their family about carrying a "bad gene"? What is the "selfish gene" (from Ronald Greene's *Babies by Design*)?
- 8, What does it mean that bodies, like the ones of the visible human "family," or the fetuses in a women's uterus get assessed visually, and used as representations on computer screens? What are the ramifications of turning bodies inside out and experiencing "insides" like "outsides"? How are bodies and screens connected with digital X-Ray technology (Lammer)?