

HUMAN KINETICS 580, Section 001

GRADUATE SEMINAR ON BODY, EXERCISE AND SOCIETY

Description of the course

The rise of interest in the body and embodied experiences is closely related to a range of cultural changes in western society. The body - our daily rituals, how we exercise, what we eat, how we present ourselves – is a medium of culture, a powerful symbolic form. It is a surface on which the central rules and power relations and ideas of a culture are inscribed and reinforced. The body also operates as a metaphor for culture – since an ‘imagination’ of body morphology (the normal body, the beautiful body, the toned and fit body, the athletic body, the tattooed body) has provided a blueprint for diagnosis and prescription, as well a visions of group solidarity, ‘healthy, active living’ and athletic performance. Not just a text, the body (as Foucault and Bourdieu have argued) is also a practical, direct locus of control – a docile body. Through the organization and regulation of time, space and the movements of our daily lives, our bodies are trained, shaped and disciplined with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity and femininity. In this course we will examine the ways in which the female, male, youthful, aging and racial body has been fashioned in modern society to express the self through modes of exercise, sport and dance. We will also critique specific representations of bodies in sport and exercise such as drugged bodies, sexualized bodies, disabled and fascist bodies.

Seminar topics will include

- Fit – Episodes in the history of the body
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- The making of the modern body: Exercise and the exercise of power.
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- Health, fitness and gender : the medicalization of the female body
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- Bodies out of bounds: Normalizing the body through exercise
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- Built to Win: Masculinity , muscularity and gender boundaries

- The politics of gymnastics: mass movement and ideology

- The Jew’s foot : the marking of race and gender on the body

- Sites of Sport and Exercise: from the beach to the locker room
- Drugging the athletic body : Issues of health, performance and ethics
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- Schooling the gendered body – Sport, Exercise and Physical Education
- The dancing body : gender and performativity
- Sexualities, sport and exercise
- Stereotypes of exercise: Disability and the aging body