

POL 100:
Introduction to race, gender, sexuality, & the politics of the body
Whitman College, Fall 2013
T/Th/Fr 10:00-10:50am
Maxey 106

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

- What is the relationship of race, gender, and sexuality to the body?
- How do thinkers from a range of disciplines approach this relationship, and the body itself, as a conceptual puzzle?
- In the tradition of philosophy descended from the Greeks, why do some thinkers oppose the ‘rational’ mind to the ‘carnal’ body? How are race, gender, and sexuality used to illustrate this opposition?
- Are race, gender, and sexuality a function of biology (biologically-determined), or produced through social interaction (socially-constructed)? What are the implications of both perspectives for conceptualizing freedom, agency, and power?
- How do these perspectives inform the decision-making of legal and other institutions?
- How do thinkers push beyond ‘essentialist’ and ‘social constructionist’ analyses, and instead ask how, why, and under what circumstances a body’s race, gender, and sexuality *matter*?

This course examines how scholars in the fields of embodiment studies, critical race and ethnic studies, gender studies, and sexuality studies address these and related questions. We also explore how movements and individuals work to transform racial, gendered, and sexualized social hierarchies.

This course is designed as a primer regarding the multiple analytic frameworks used to conceptualize how race, gender, and sexuality can be mapped in relationship to each other, and to the body. It cannot provide an exhaustive examination of race, gender, sexuality, or the body, and thus should be considered a launching point for further study in these areas.

The course introduces students to the study of *corporeal politics* – an interdisciplinary analytic approach to the intersectional and shifting relations of knowledge and power whose focus is the body. Our animating idea is that race, gender, and sex are neither what one has, nor what one is, but are *norms* through which a body becomes recognizably human.

Classroom-based activities will be supplemented by class trips to the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Pendleton, Oregon, as well as the Fort Walla Walla Museum. In addition, the course will feature numerous guest lectures and performances by visiting scholars and artists, including the novelist Mia McKenzie, the economist S. Charusheela, and the performance artist Sayda Trujillo.

II. PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Time required outside of class: This class involves two required, off-campus educational experiences, in addition to group activities and possible film screenings that will be scheduled outside of regular class meeting times. Students should familiarize themselves with the various commitments expected of them and decide whether this course is an appropriate choice for their schedules.

Flexibility required: This is a somewhat experimental course, given that class trips and visiting speakers are particularly important to the course design. Such activities provide us with unique educational opportunities and expertise that are otherwise unavailable at Whitman College. Given the various schedules that must be accommodated, the syllabus may change. I will make every effort to notify students of impending changes as far in advance as possible.

Format: The course features a combination of brief interactive lectures, large-group discussions, and small group activities. Please approach me as early as possible if you anticipate challenges participating in any of these, so we can work on improving your skills in the areas necessary.

Group work: This class requires students to work on a team for two of its primary assignments. Students and professors alike find that group work presents unique challenges and frustrations. However, working as part of a group is an essential skill that will be expected of you throughout your professional life, with very few exceptions. Working collectively on a project also provides rich opportunities for thinking through the complexities of race, gender, and sexuality in less formal, and more intimate, contexts.

Oral midterm: In addition to developing critical reading, research, and writing skills, this course involves a group oral midterm. The oral exam can be anxiety-producing for some, but it is an essential skill to develop – especially given the importance of the senior oral exam at Whitman. Confidence in public presentations is vital to students' future success, and it is a skill that can be cultivated in the relatively safe confines of Whitman campus.

Trigger alert: Discussion of race, gender, and sexuality – not to mention bodies – can make people feel anxious, afraid, angry, or vulnerable. The experience of physical or emotional violence is a common one, but different bodies experience violence in different ways, and people rarely feel comfortable discussing such experiences openly. Some students may find some course material emotionally triggering. I honor students' need to prioritize their emotional health over any pedagogical objective. I expect us all to care for ourselves and each other during and after difficult conversations. If you find yourself emotionally triggered by the class, please do not

hesitate to talk to me. While I am not a health professional, I can provide support and resources.

III. ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

1. Active reading and participation.....20%
2. Course Journal..... 30%
3. Group Oral Midterm..... 20%
4. Final Project: Research Essay & Oral Presentation...30%

* BE ADVISED: Students who do not complete all of the course assignments will not pass the class.

1. Critical Reading and Active Participation (20% of final grade)

Critical Reading: Students are expected to demonstrate critical reading practices as a central aspect of class participation. Critical reading involves moving beyond reading for information to critically evaluating the author’s arguments, premises, evidence, and rhetorical style. Critical reading also involves actively engaging the texts with other course material.

Active Participation: Active, respectful engagement with the course material and your colleagues is essential for success in the course.

Effective overall participation involves:

- *Seeking clarification* – Prior to class, look up definitions of unfamiliar terminology encountered in the text using the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In class, ask for clarification about these, and about other confusing concepts or passages.
- *Sharing your observations* – You’ve read the text(s) critically, you’ve written a brief journal reflecting on the arguments posed. You should have plenty of thoughts to contribute to class discussion.
- *Listening attentively* to whomever is speaking.
- *Responding substantively, thoughtfully, and respectfully* – especially when expressing strongly divergent views from your colleagues.
- *Awareness of our heterogeneity* – ‘We’ at Whitman are not monolithic in our experience of class, culture, nation, race, gender, or sexuality. Respecting this heterogeneity involves avoiding unqualified use of ‘we’ statements in class discussion.

How much you participate is less important than **how** you participate. To enhance the quality of your contribution to discussion, seek to:

- keep your interventions brief and well-focused;

- clarify issues already under discussion;
- weave earlier comments into the present discussion;
- introduce neglected viewpoints;
- ‘make space’ in the conversation for quieter colleagues by self-regulating over-participation and asking for others’ thoughts.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to email me *in advance* if you must miss class for a Whitman-approved reason (medical or family emergency; religious observance; class trip; debate; or off-campus varsity athletics event). After (2) unexcused absences, your final grade will begin to drop for every unexcused absence thereafter. Absences for illness require a physician’s note to be excused.

2. Course Journal (30% of final grade)

The is a personal, reflective form of writing that resembles a diary, but with the goal of a) preparing you for class discussion and b) tracking the development of your thought over the duration of the semester. I encourage you to be deeply self-reflective, however, your self-reflection *must* also engage substantively with course texts and activities. A strong journal entry will move fluidly between analysis of course material, and your own contemplation of how such material has shaped your thinking.

Please see separate handout regarding the course journal.

3. Group Oral Midterm (20% of final grade)

This assignment tests both your comprehension of central concepts introduced in the first half of the class, and your ability to work successfully in a group.

A detailed handout providing instructions for the group oral midterm will follow.

4. Final Project: Research Essay & Oral Presentation (30% of final grade)

Students will be organized into groups of 5-6 people, depending on class size. Each group will address a general subject area – either (1) Law and Public Policy, (2) Media and Representation, or (3) Art. Each student will conduct individual research on a topic of her/his choosing, in one of these three general areas. Each student will complete a research essay, and an oral presentation summarizing research findings. Both components of the group project are due within the last two weeks of class (refer to Schedule of Assignments, below). A handout providing detailed instructions will follow.

The group project consists of two components, each worth 50% of the total group project grade:

- **A research essay**, which each student will research, write, and submit individually. Essays should be 1800-2300 words in length, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with 1” margins, and carefully edited and proofread before submission. Research essays *must be uploaded to your CLEo Dropbox on the day your group is scheduled to give your oral*

presentations.

- **An oral presentation of key research findings**, created using presentation software such as Prezi, Keynote, or Powerpoint. The presentation should include all group members' voices and input equally; be rich in multi-media content (images; film, video, and audio clips, etc.); and be deliverable in no more than 35-40 minutes of class time.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

The following required texts are available at the Whitman College Bookstore:

- Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco, *The Body: a reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, New Ed (Routledge, 2005).
- Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (South End Press, 2005).

Additional readings will be posted to CLEo, under "Resources." Students are expected to print these and reference them in class on the day they appear on the syllabus.

* BE ADVISED: The use of laptops in class – including to read assigned texts – is prohibited, except for students with special learning needs who have formally requested accommodation.

Schedule of Assignments

Week 1.

9/3

- Mapping the course
- Pedagogical orientations: on the importance of an explicitly anti-racist, feminist, LGBTQ-affirming approach to the study of the body
- 'This body which is not one'

Dualisms: Mind/Body, Nature/Culture...

9/5

- Elizabeth Grosz, Chapter 1: Refiguring Bodies, in *The Body Reader*
- Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 1982) **CLEo**

9/6

- David Theo Goldberg, "Modernity, Race, and Morality," *Cultural Critique* no. 24 (April 1, 1993). **CLEo**

Week 2.

9/10

- Kaila Adia Story, excerpt, “Racing Sex-Sexing Race” in *Imagining the Black Female Body*, 30-37 **CLEo**
- Stephen J. Gould, Ch. 21: “Measuring Heads” in *The Body Reader*
- Londa Schiebinger, “Theories of Gender and Race” in *Feminist Theory and the Body*, 21-28 **CLEo**

9/12

- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “Racial Formation,” in *Race Critical Theories*, Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg, eds. **CLEo**
- Frantz Fanon, excerpt, “The Fact of Blackness” from *Black Skin, White Masks*, **CLEo**
- View http://www.democracynow.org/2013/9/2/questlove_on_police_racial_profiling_hip (0:00-17:00)

Week 2.

9/13

- **Visiting artist: Mia McKenzie, novelist, activist, co-founder of *BlackGirlDangerous* blog**
- Blog excerpts, TBA
- Barbara Creed, Ch. 13: “Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys and Tarts” in *The Body Reader*

Week 3.

9/17

- Thomas Laqueur, Ch. 20: “Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology” in *The Body Reader*
- Toril Moi, *Sex, gender, and the body* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-21. **CLEo**

9/19

- Beverly Skeggs, Ch. 17: “Ambivalent Femininities” in *The Body Reader*
- Toril Moi, *Sex, gender, and the body* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21-30, 59-72. **CLEo**

9/20

- Toril Moi, *Sex, gender, and the body* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78-83. **CLEo**
- Michel Foucault, Ch. 12: “The Political Investment of the Body” in *The Body Reader*
- Judith Butler, Ch. 5: “Bodies that Matter” in *The Body Reader*

On Bodies that Matter

Week 4.

9/24

- Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 1: Why Black Sexual Politics?

9/26

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 2: The Past is Ever Present: Recognizing the New Racism

9/27

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 3: Prisons for our Bodies, Closets for our Minds: Racism, Heterosexism, and Black Sexuality
- **Distribution of Final Project Guidelines**
- **First Journal Submission**

Week 5.

10/1

- Library Research Session with Lynn Vieth – class meets at Penrose

10/3

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 4: Get Your Freak On: Sex, Babies, and Images of Black Femininity

10/4

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 5: Booty Call: Sex, Violence, and Images of Black Masculinity

Week 6.

10/8

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 6: Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology
- **Distribution of Oral Midterm Guidelines**
- **Submission of Finalized Research Project Topics**

10/10

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 7: Assume the Position: The Changing Contours of Sexual Violence

10/11

- *Black Sexual Politics*, Ch. 8: No Storybook Romance: How Race and Gender Matter
- **Brief Oral Midterm Group meetings**

Week 7. MID-SEMESTER

10/15 NO CLASS – October Break

10/17

- **MIDTERM ORAL EXAMS**

10/18

- **MIDTERM ORAL EXAMS**

Week 8.

10/22

- Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, Introduction and Ch. 1: Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide,

10/24

- *Conquest*, Ch. 2: Boarding School Abuses and the Case for Reparations

10/25

- Class Visit to Tamastlikt Cultural Institute

Week 9.

10/29

- *Conquest*, Ch. 4: “Better Dead than Pregnant:” The Colonization of Native Women’s Reproductive Health
- **Submission of Final Project Bibliography**

10/31

- *Conquest*, Ch. 7: Anticolonial Responses to Gender Violence

11/1

- Class Visit to Fort Walla Walla Museum

Week 10.

11/8

- Discussion of causes, and organizing, of anti-racism rally at 11/7/13 Board of Governor’s Meeting

Week 11.

11/12

- Special Q & A with Prof. Michael Jeffries, *Paint the White House Black: Barack Obama and the Meaning of Race in America*
- *Paint the White House Black*, Chapters 1 & 2, Appendix 1, **CLEo**

11/14 Trans Bodies

- Anne Fausto-Sterling, “That Sexe Which Prevaileth” in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, **CLEo**

11/15 What can a body do?

- **Visiting Performer: Sayda Trujillo, with Prof. Jessica Cerullo, Theater, Whitman College**
- Trujillo, Sayda. “LISTENING: Soundscapes from Palestine.” Prepare one question based on text for Ms. Trujillo.

Week 12.

11/19 Catch-up Class

- Discussion, Trujillo & Cerullo performance
- Discussion of ASWC resolution opposing racism at Whitman College

11/21 Masculine Bodies

- Jack Halberstam, “An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men” in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, **CLEo**
- Fung, Richard. “Looking for My Penis,” in *Bad Object-Choices* (1991), **CLEo**

11/22 Imperialism and the Body

- R.W. Connell, “The History of Masculinity” in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, **CLEo**
- Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising” in *The Body Reader*
- **Submit Final Project Outlines**

THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/22 – 12/1

Week 13.

12/3 Imperialism and the Body

- N. S. Balce, “The Filipina’s Breast: Savagery, Docility, and the Erotics of the American Empire,” *Social Text* 24, no. 2 87 (June 1, 2006): 89–110, **CLEo**
- **Final Journal Submission**

12/5

- Final Project Presentations - Arts & Visual Culture: Cade Beck, Mitchell Fujimoto, Sanika Gupte, Kaylee Kautz

12/6

- Final Project Presentations - Arts & Visual Culture: Kels Lund
- Law & Public Policy: Joy He, Robert Maislin, Will Moriarty

Week 14.

12/10

- Final Project Presentations - Law & Public Policy: Caitlyn Smith, Ritti Singh
- News Media & Popular Culture Group 1: Alisha Agard, Sam Grainger-Shuba

12/12

- Final Project Presentations - News Media & Popular Culture Group 1: Dana Matsunami, River Sterne
- News Media & Popular Culture Group 2: Gladys Gitau, Shireen Nori

12/13

- Final Project Presentations - News Media & Popular Culture Group 2: Sam Traylor
- Science & Medicine: Andrew Patel
- **Final Essays Due**
- Evaluations