

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Department of Kinesiology

KINESIOLOGY 4L03

SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY

Term 2

Winter 2018

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PREREQUISITE AND PREAMBLE

The sociology of the body was introduced in the first module in Kin 3P03 in order to be able to move on to more fully understand the body in the realm of sport. The current course builds on that foundation. The recent emergence of the sociology of the body has many ramifications for students of the body in general. Previously in Kinesiology the body had been seen solely as the preserve of the natural sciences. This course will allow students to engage in advanced study the sociology of the body.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

“Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire” – W. B. Yeats

What is a body, and what is its relationship to the self? What are the social forces that shape human bodies and bodily experience? How do these forces vary in different societies and historical periods? How are different bodies perceived, valued and treated? In this course, we will examine the body not through the lens of the physical or biological sciences but as the product of complex social arrangements and processes. We will study the body as the container and expression of the self, as an object of social control, and as a powerful symbol.

In this class, we will study sociology of the body in four major ways:

1. We will discuss what the body is and how it is understood.
2. We will discuss how the body is experienced.
3. We will discuss how the body varies.
4. We will discuss how the body is controlled.

COURSE READINGS

Kinesiology 4L03, Study Guide and Readings. Available at Custom Courseware

PEDAGOGY

This course follows a seminar format, which means that it is based on problem-based learning, in-depth class discussion and interactive learning.

Because it is an advanced course, I expect you to take much more responsibility for your learning. By this I mean that instead of me teaching you by means of didactic lecture, you will be expected to teach yourselves by means of reading and discussion. More specifically, there will be very few formal lectures in this course. Instead, you will be assigned readings which will guide and provide a context for your learning. For each reading, the procedures outlined below will be utilized:

1. Individual level reading which you will wrestle with by yourself to comprehend and which should inevitably give rise to multiple understandings, confusions, your own questions, etc.
2. Group discussion level of the reading (I will assign you into different groups each week) wherein you - together with the other members of your group - will work toward furthering your comprehension of the subject matter at hand.
3. Class discussion level wherein all of us (including me) will participate.

This pedagogy is intended to produce for each of you a more profound understanding that can only emerge from this co-operative grappling with the material. I wish you to transform information into knowledge. Rather than being your teacher (which implies that I am the fount of knowledge to be imparted to you in the form of information by means of lecture), I am your guide and helper.

In order for each student to make the most of the course they need to read **deeply**. The success of the course depends more on the students than the professor. Being well-versed in the readings will make for more productive discussion and collaboration with fellow students.

Having said that, there will be no extrinsic reward to completing the readings and you are free to attend class (or not) as you desire depending on whether you feel you are prepared to participate in discussion. I will not require any evidence that you have done the readings and there will be no marks given for class participation. There will be no tests/exams on the readings or class discussion.

COURSE FORMAT

The class will be organized as follows:

Tuesday: Readings will be discussed in a seminar format. Each week a student will be assigned responsibility to lead the class. Inventiveness is encouraged on how to engage with the readings and how to stimulate discussion. The assigned student should seek closure to class each week by collaboratively arriving at some ‘what we have learned today’ statements during the last 10 minutes of class.

Thursday: This hour will be devoted to the development of research work by each student on their individual major research project. This project will account for the lion’s share of the grade assigned for the course. Students will periodically be asked to present aspects of their project and seek feedback from classmates.

COURSE EVALUATION

Annotated Bibliography	10%
Class Presentation on ‘body news’	10%
Research Project	
Proposal	10%
Paper	50%
Presentation	20%

a. Annotated Bibliography:

The purposes of this assignment are:

- ✓ To develop your information retrieval skills
- ✓ To enhance your critical reading/analysis skills
- ✓ To enhance your written communication skills
- ✓ To initiate development of a reference list of materials for your research paper
- ✓ To evaluate the validity/strength of the materials being used for your research paper

b. Class Presentation on ‘Body News’:

One of the main themes of the course will be to ponder how and why citizens of the Western world have in recent times come to be preoccupied with their bodies – diets, exercise regimens, diet supplements, cosmetic surgery etc. Previously, the body was thought of as immutable – which means that an individual’s ‘self’ was built around the corporeal ‘hand’ they were dealt. In the current era, the body is considered a changeable ‘project’ and is no longer a constraint to the creation of a ‘self’. Selves and bodies are manipulable. We can both ‘embody the self’ and ‘enself the body’.

For this assignment, each student should be on the lookout for a bodily issue that is reported

in the media. Upon finding an issue to report on, the student should do some background research and prepare a 10 minute presentation to be made at the beginning of class.

c. Individual Research Project

This course will enable each student to conduct in-depth research on a topic of their choice to do with the body. The actual research will involve critically assessing the existing research literature bearing on a ‘research question’ for which there is conflicting evidence or debate. I will lead off this notion of a research question by giving a talk on the ‘obesity debate’. As you may know, while pretty much all lay-people and a good proportion of scientists (including the U.S. Surgeon General, Everett Koop, who declared a “war on fat” in 1997) think that overweight/obesity is a serious social/health problem, there are other academic researchers who think otherwise. There is even a discipline called “Fat Studies”.

Students will prepare proposals on their chosen area of research for presentation to class and for assessment by me. Significant time should be spent researching how to form a ‘research question’ – it must be framed as a question for which the answer is unclear until you examine the evidence as found in the scholarly literature.

Topics can expand upon but should not replicate areas addressed in course readings and discussions. Some topics are listed below, but students are free to propose additional areas:

- Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?
- Does height predict income or vice versa?
- Are fat people subject to discrimination?
- Does poverty lead to fatness or vice versa?
- Why has the idealized female body changed compared to 50 years ago?
- Sport ability by race?
- Eroticization of body parts? – Nature or Nurture
- Is menopause a biological or a social construct?
- Body Therapies (physical therapy, yoga, meditation)
- How do obese people experience their bodies?
- Why is body modification (tattooing, piercing, hair alteration) popular at this point in history?
- Does social class affect how people experience and use their bodies?
- Why are eating disorders primarily considered a psychological problem?
- Why is body hair sometimes stigmatized and sometimes celebrated?
- When is a body diseased?
- How much variation is there in sexual practices between cultures?
- Gay/Lesbian – Genetic or Not?
- Should human cloning proceed?
- How is the internet affecting sexual behaviour?
- How are avatars affecting our lives?
- Is cybersex sex?
- If diets don’t work why are they so popular?
- Why is porno chic popular among young women?
- Is violent behaviour learned or innate?

- Why do some men play sports that are inherently dangerous?
- Why do women get waxed when they know they are consenting to a male-defined standard of what is sexy?

DROP BOXES

Course drop boxes are located on the second floor of the IWC near IWC 224 (please do not place assignments in the administrative drop box located outside IWC 219C).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences (e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript reading "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty", and/or suspension or expulsion from the university). It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/policy/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism (e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained),
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone (905) 525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy of Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

USE OF COURSE MATERIAL

Course materials provided by the instructor are for use by students registered in this class only. Under no circumstances are these materials to be shared, posted or sold to a third party without permission from the instructor. This includes, but not limited to, online posting of instructor provided lecture/lab notes, online lectures, recordings of lectures, or any lab materials on a website other than the Avenue site designed for this course.

MODIFICATIONS TO COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

If you are absent from the university for a minor medical reason, lasting fewer than 5 days, you may report your absence, without documentation, using the McMaster Student Absence Form. Absences for a longer duration or for other reasons (eg. Religious, personal) must be reported to your Faculty/Program office, with documentation, and relief from term work may not necessarily be granted. When using the MSAF, report your absence to pwhite@mcmaster.ca. Then contact the instructor immediately (normally within 2 working days) by email/telephone/in person to learn what relief may be granted for the work you have missed, and relevant details such as revised deadlines.