University of Edinburgh
School of Social & Political Science
Subject Area
2018 – 2019

The Anthropology of the Body
SCAN11026

Key Information

Course Organiser
Dr Laura Major
Email: l.major@ed.ac.uk
Room: 3.20
18 Buccleuch Place, Floor 3, Door 1 (3F1)
Guidance & Feedback Hours: Monday 10-12

Location
Semester 2
Lecture: Wednesday 09:00 – 10:50
Week 1 only: 1.20 Dugald Stewart Building
Weeks 2-10: Seminar Room 2, Chrystal Macmillan
Building
Tutorial: Friday 12:10 – 13:00
Lister Learning and Teaching Centre, Rm 1.9

Course Administrator
Jack Smith
PGTaught.sps@ed.ac.uk
Graduate Office, 1.20 Chrystal Macmillan Building
0131 651 1485

Assessment Deadlines
- Short essay (word-limit: 1500 max) to be submitted by 28th Feb
- Long essay (word-limit: 4000 max) to be submitted by 11th April

Aims and Objectives
The course engages with both established and developing contemporary scholarship and debates concerning anthropological approaches to the body. Now more than ever the body and its forms have become entangled in and around debates across a swathe of academic scholarship and current affairs issues of public concern. From questions around the biological modification and technological transformation of the individual body to moral quandaries around the movement, disappearance, and substantiation of certain kinds of bodies at particular times and places, concern with the body increasingly saturates public debate and activity. Yet, despite its centrality as an object or subject of focus, the body appears ever more unstable and destabilising a presence.

This course links together established scholarship in the anthropology of the body with debates on the issue of the body as it is relevant to broader social phenomena.
The course material will consider core epistemological debates about the body, including work in the fields of phenomenology, embodiment, and biopolitics. We will focus on these core issues as they are embedded in established and contemporary debates which have surrounded the body as an object and as a subject that constitutes and is constituted by broader social phenomena. We will discuss for example, the body in death, the body as a focus of the biomedical gaze; and the body as articulated in contemporary and historical political, economic, and creative movements, including for instance in colonial regimes and as an artefact for museum spaces.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning and Teaching Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar/Tutorial Hours</td>
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<td>Programme Level Learning and Teaching Hours</td>
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<td>Directed and Independent Learning</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>1500 word Short Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4000 word Long Essay</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, the students should:

1. Demonstrate critical knowledge and advanced understanding of the key theories, concepts and issues central to the anthropological study of the body.
2. Critically analyze, synthesize, and evaluate research and contemporary debates about the body as well as navigate complex issues to form informed opinions and analyses.
3. Demonstrate the ability to question, examine, and understand key anthropological issues through independent research.
4. Communicate through empirically grounded and theoretically informed written work their knowledge of issues relevant to the anthropology of the body and its relevance to broader contemporary debates on and in society.

Teaching Methods
The course involves one two-hour session a week for the whole class, together with a tutorial starting in week 1. In the main session, most weeks will involve a mixture of a lecture and some discussion and group work.

The tutorial is held on Fridays at 12:10 – 13:00 in the Lister Learning and Teaching Centre, Room 1.9. They will normally be concerned with one or more readings that illustrate, underpin or extend issues raised in the main sessions. Students should note that participation in the tutorials is compulsory and attendance will be recorded.

Assessment
Students will be assessed by:

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Word count limit</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Submission date</th>
<th>Return of feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short essay</td>
<td>1500 words max (excluding bibliography)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28th February</td>
<td>21st March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long essay</td>
<td>4000 words max (excluding bibliography)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11th April</td>
<td>2nd May</td>
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For Assessment requirements you should consult the Taught MSc Student Handbook 2018-19. This is available on Learn.

Requirements included are:
- Coursework submissions
- Extension request
- Penalties
- Plagiarism
Assessment Criteria
The short essay will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Development and coherence of arguments
- Use of supporting evidence
- Demonstration of an advanced and critical understanding of relevant key debates examined on the course, including reference to at least three articles on the reading list
- Degree of reflexivity and critical thinking in relation to arguments and evidence
- Drawing together major arguments by way of conclusion in relation to the assignment
- Formal presentation of report: correct referencing and quoting; spelling, grammar and style; layout and visual presentation.

The final assignment will be assessed according to the same criteria as the short essay, except students will be expected to demonstrate broad engagement across all weeks of the course.

External Examiner
The External Examiner for this course is Dr Arnar Arnason, University of Aberdeen.

COURSEWORK

Short Essay
For the assignment you will write a 1500-word essay.

Choose a contemporary event or recent experience which raises questions about the body. Write a 1500-word analysis.

Your commentary must refer to one or more of the conceptual themes we raise during the course, for example, debates about the nature of embodiment, the relationship between the body and society, phenomenology and the body, or issues around the surveillance, control and particular forms of the body.

You may frame your work with reference to personal fieldnotes and/or contemporary media and/or historical sources as appropriate.

To receive a pass mark for your essay, you will need to reference at least three texts from the course reading list in a meaningful way.

Long Essay: Questions will be made available in Week Nine

Attendance
Attendance and participation in the lectures and discussion are essential for developing an understanding of the topics.

Readings and Resource List
All students should read the Essential and Discussion readings for every lecture. These readings are necessary to create a thorough understanding of the topic. Further readings listed for each topic are intended to allow students to explore and consolidate their knowledge of particular themes. We have given extensive references in order to help students explore the wider literature if they so wish: we would not expect any
student to read all the references for all of these weeks. However, if you are intending to write an essay on a particular topic, you must demonstrate that you have read many, if not all, the different readings suggested for that topic.

All essential, discussion and tutorial readings, and almost all further readings, should be available as eresources via the Resource List on the Learn page for the course. Please let us know if you notice a problem with the Resource List.
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<td>Embodiment</td>
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<td>23 January</td>
<td>The Social Body</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>The Phenomenological Body</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>The Surveilled Body</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13 February</td>
<td>Gender and the Body (Leo Hopkinson)</td>
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<td>18th February – 22nd February: Festival of Creative Learning</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>Anatomy (Ian Harper)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>The Body and Dance (Inna Yaneva-Toraman)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>The Lives of Dead Bodies</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Commodified Bodies and Tissue Economies</td>
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<td>3-7 April</td>
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Course Lectures and Readings

Week One. Embodiment

In the introductory lecture we will examine the body’s history and position in relation to both the Anthropology of the Body and to its disciplinary precedents, that of the natural sciences and of biomedicine. We will consider biomedicine as emerging from a Western epistemology based on the naturalised oppositions of mind/body, nature/culture, individual/society, amongst others. The body or person that is formed through this interpretation of the world is an individual body-self, a relatively unique concept amongst the many different concepts of the body which occur across the landscape of humankind. We will consider the ways in which anthropology gradually emerged as one of the key challengers to any assumed universalism of the Western conception of the body. A conception which reveals itself to be both a limited and limiting understanding of the body’s relationship to society and to the world in general.

Essential reading


Discussion reading


Tutorial reading


Further Reading


**Week Two: The Social Body**

Bodies are not just significant as physical entities. The body is also a means of representation and a medium of expression, an interlocutor between self and society and between society and self. Early in the study of the body anthropologists such as Mauss, Douglas, and Turner, have recognised and interrogated the manner in which the body is both a mirror of society and a means of negotiating place within it. We will look at some of this foundational theory within this lecture. We will examine how later theorists have used these ideas and built upon them in complicating the relationship between the body, the subject, and the social. Our lecture will focus on the ‘inscribed body’ and a consideration of the boundaries of the body (the social skin).

**Essential reading**


**Discussion reading**


**Tutorial reading**


**Further reading**


Week Three: The Phenomenological Body

Does the body exist? As Merleau-Ponty argues ‘We all have and we all are a body’. Recent work in the field of anthropology and of phenomenology has questioned the logic of this declaration. What if our experience within the body is somehow beyond language, beyond expression. Then our confidence that we know where the edges of the body are begins to fall away. The body as a corporeal, material, object, as a socially or individually constructed subject falls under question. We will explore this concern through a study of the senses and of emotion with a focus on the experience of pain.

Essential reading


Discussion reading


Tutorial reading


Further reading


**Week Four: The Surveilled Body**

Foucault’s discussion of biopower has had a critical impact on the way anthropologists think about the body. Modern disciplinary techniques have institutionalised the ‘surveilled’ body, a surveillance which (arguably) produces the “docile bodies” of contemporary society. This week we will examine Foucault’s ideas and their implications for the way we think about the body in relation to a broader society. We will consider the ways in which the body falls under surveillance in our everyday, particularly through medical and health-related interventions and through practices of self-care. We will discuss how these kinds of activities are linked to emerging forms of biopolitics such as biometric identification and digital monitoring.

**Essential reading**


**Discussion reading**


**Tutorial reading**


**Further reading**


Fassin, Didier. 2009. Another Politics of Life is Possible. Theory, Culture and Society 26 (5): 44-60


**Week Five: Gender and the Body (Leo Hopkinson)**

This lecture will explore anthropological approaches to gendered bodies and experience. We will trace the distinction between sex and gender within feminist scholarship and the anthropology of the body and consider how anthropologists have disturbed the idea of sex as ‘natural’ category of material differentiation. We will also think about how particular relationship of power are implied in and reproduced through embodied gendered experience. The lecture will draw together these themes through a discussion of how gendered and racialized bodies are constructed in transnational industries, in particular considering the sporting body as a site for the production of gendered and racialized norms.

**Essential reading**


**Discussion reading**


**Tutorial reading**

Further reading


Stolcke, V., 2013. Is sex to gender as race is to ethnicity? In *Gendered anthropology* (pp. 29-49). Routledge.

Week Six: Anatomy (Ian Harper)

The ground for interventions in modern medicine is the anatomical body, which is perceived as an objective entity beyond culture and history. This lecture explores the emergence of this anatomical body through a history of dissection, display and art, and asks to what extent the body as we know it in medicine is a social construction?

Essential reading

Discussion reading


Tutorial reading


Further reading


Week Seven: The Body and Dance (Inna Yaneva-Toraman)

In this lecture we will explore what the body does in dance and how scholars have looked at it to explore the meaning of dance. The body is perhaps most central in the study of dance but what kind of bodies are made visible and/or constructed through this art form? Some questions we will explore are: What values are reflected, critiqued, or resisted? What are the differences between dances made for rituals, rites of passage, and mortuary rites and dances performed for festivals or tourists? How does the body in dance exhibit or generate gender, ethnicity, or class conflicts? In what way studies of dance contribute to debates about colonialism and culture, and offer insight about the relationship between native bodies, disorderly practices, and civilising processes?

Essential reading

**Discussion reading**


**Tutorial reading**


**Further reading**


Week Eight: The Lives of Dead Bodies

In this lecture we will consider the ‘problem’ of the dead body. Death marks the transformation of the subjectivity of the corporeal body. A well-established literature documents the inherent risk and uncertainty that surrounds death and its attendant changes in the biological body. Contemporary and emerging ethnographic work further considers the dead body as an important vehicle for power and as a site of special forms of knowledge. We will examine these issues through studying the exhumation and management of politically contentious human remains.

Essential reading


Discussion reading


Tutorial reading


Further reading


Week Nine: Commodified Bodies and Tissue Economies

New technology allows the circulation of organs and body tissues in ways never before possible. This lecture looks at both ‘legitimate’ trade through the entry of human tissue and blood into formal economies and the illegal organ trade. We will consider why the commodification and/or exchange of body parts is considered particularly ethically challenging and why it raises difficult questions about the value attributed to both living bodies and body parts.

Essential reading


Discussion reading


Tutorial reading


Further reading


**Week Ten: Cyborgs**

This lecture will consider the way contemporary advances in technology have affected the constitution of the body and bodies. The future will likely hold the further technological modification of the body and unfolding creative ways of being. These concerns encompass the issue of biotechnology and high-tech bodies, but they also encourage a revisiting of established ideas of kinship and the (re)production of self and others.

**Essential reading**


**Discussion reading**


**Tutorial reading**

Further reading


Constance Penley and Ross, Andrew. Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Harroway. Social Text 25/26 (8): 8-23


Waterton, Claire; Yusoff, Kathryn (ed). 2017. Indeterminate Bodies. Special Issue of Body & Society 23 (3).

Recommended Overview Texts and Handbooks


**Ethnographic reading suggestions (there are many more that could be recommended):**


