What is a body, and how has the body been understood in the history of Western thought? In one sense a body is the most natural and self-evident thing in the world, in another it is the object of the most intense scrutiny, subject to various techniques whose aim is fashioning and discipline. Philosophy has often elevated soul, spirit, or mind at the expense of the body; but in more recent thought the body has come to center stage. We trace this devaluation of the body in the Western tradition and examine some of the ways it has returned in 20th and 21st century philosophical thought. How has the body been constituted in relation to what it is opposed to—mind/spirit/soul? How and why have conceptions of the body changed in Western history? How does the body appear as an entity both natural and technological? How do bodies come to bear psychical, social, political and philosophical significance insofar as they are sexed, gendered, raced, abled and disabled, desiring and desired, bearers of ideality or sites of disgust? How are bodies fashioned and produced by personal, cultural and political practices such as dieting, body modification, imprisonment, torture, and medicine? Reading include Plato’s Phaedo, Aristotle’s Generation of Animals, Descartes’ Meditations, Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception, Fanon’s Black Skin White Masks, Foucault’s Discipline and Punish, Young’s Throwing Like a Girl, Lorde’s Sister Outsider, and works by Elaine Scarry, Cressida Heyes, and Tobin Siebers.

The course aims to nurture an expansive understanding of philosophy in both a historical and contemporary dimension, and to develop facility in close reading by working with diverse and at times difficult texts. Course materials range from Greek Antiquity to the 21st century. While we will be reading these materials primarily for what they have to say about the body, we will also be encountering some of the most influential philosophical texts of Western thought in their own right. Reading these classic texts, slowly and carefully, with the body at the forefront of our concerns, will enable us to activate the texts in fresh ways and locate them in relation to our own concerns, from the intimate to the political and philosophical, after all, we all have our own bodies to reckon with, with which we navigate the world.
Texts and Ideas is intended to foster your appreciation of the importance of humanistic learning. It provides the foundation of your liberal arts education through encounters with literary and philosophical works that have been influential in shaping the contemporary world and significant instances in which the ideas in these works have been debated, developed, appropriated, or rejected. As a part of the College Core Curriculum, it is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual and an active member of society – and, in this course in particular, as a person who lives in a body.

Recitations:

All Recitation Sections take place in Silver Center 501

Session 1: Friday 8:00 am - 9:15 am
Instructor: Carlos Aguirre (juan.carlos@nyu.edu)

Session 2: Friday 9:30 am-10:45 am
Instructor: Carlos Aguirre (juan.carlos@nyu.edu)

Session 3: Friday 11:00 am – 12.15 am
Instructor: Giancarlo Tursi (gt505@nyu.edu)

Session 4: Friday 12:30 am – 1.45 pm
Instructor: Giancarlo Tursi (gt505@nyu.edu)

Required Texts:


This is on order at the bookstore and available in electronic format on Bobcat. All other readings will be available on NYU Classes and in printouts made available in lecture. You are strongly encouraged to read hard copies away from the screen, making written annotations in the text as you go.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance at lectures; completion of assigned readings before lectures, that is, for the lecture in which they will be presented, not after.
2. Attendance at discussion sections, and regular participation in discussion. Occasional, unscheduled assignments at the start of lecture, based on readings and lectures. (Excused absences by prior approval only).
3. A final exam.
4. Three papers (First two, 4-5 pages in length; Third, 7-8 pages in length).
5. Check your email! Course instructors will rely on the NYU CLASSES email function to send you important information about the course (these emails go to your nyu.edu email account).
Lecture Policies:

1. Bring readings to lectures and meetings of recitation section.
2. No electronic devices except reading tablets permitted in class. Pen/pencil and paper are the recommended educational technologies for this class.

Grading Distribution:

Final Exam: 35%
Papers: First two: 15% each. Third paper: 20%
Attendance and Participation (including unscheduled assignments): 15%

A Note on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the severest form of academic fraud. A separate handout describing plagiarism, and procedures and penalties at NYU, will be distributed. It is your responsibility to understand and comply with NYU’s policy on academic integrity. If you have any questions or doubts about what constitutes plagiarism please see me.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Jan. 22 Introduction
Jan 29 Plato, “Phaedo”
Jan 31 Plato, “Phaedo”
Feb 5 Aristotle, Generation of Animals (selections)
Feb 7 Nancy Tuana, “The Weaker Seed”
Feb 12 St. Augustine, On Christian Teaching, Ch. 1
Feb 14 Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages”
Feb 19 PRESIDENTS’ DAY - NO CLASS
Feb 21 ** First paper (4-5 pages) due in lecture**
René Descartes, “Meditations” I, II, VI
Feb 26 Drew Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body”
March 5 Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, “The Body of the Condemned”
March 7 Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, “Docile Bodies”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>Klaus Theweleit “Male Bodies and the ‘White Terror’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>** Second paper (4-5 pages) due in lecture **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saidiya Hartman, <em>Scenes of Subjection</em>, Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Simone de Beauvoir, <em>The Second Sex</em>, “Childhood”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Franz Fanon, <em>Black Skin, White Masks</em>, Ch. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Audre Lorde, <em>Sister Outsider</em> (selections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Cressida Heyes, “Foucault Goes to Weightwatchers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>Cressida Heyes, “All Cosmetic Surgery is Ethnic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td><strong>Third Paper (7-8 pages) Due in Lecture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tobin Siebers, <em>Disability Theory</em>, “Introduction”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Tobin Siebers, <em>Disability Theory</em>, “Body Theory”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Eli Clare, <em>Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Eli Clare, <em>Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Review for Final Exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FINAL EXAM Date/time TBD**

**Accommodations**

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented needs. Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of a disability should let me know privately and provide a letter of accommodation from the Center for Students with Disabilities at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 for further information. Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.