Professor Emanuela Bianchi

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Office Hours: Fri 1 pm – 3:00 pm

**Texts and Ideas: The Body in Philosophy**

Fall 2019, CORE UA.0400

Lecture: T-Th 4:55-6:10 pm, Silver Center 207

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, both subjected to and perhaps also produced by social norms? How are bodies understood through, and fashioned by, modern human practices and institutions such as scientific classification, imprisonment, schooling, military training, and medicine? How might new scientific and philosophical paradigms alter our ideas about the body and its relationship to its environment and world? 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, and works by Elaine Scarry, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Dorian Sagan, and Eli Clare.

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 in time 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 exists in and with a body.

**Recitations:**

Session 1: Friday 8:00 am - 9:15 am 12WV L113

Instructor: Christina Chalmers (cac912@nyu.edu)

Session 2: Friday 9:30 am-10:45 am 7E12 LL31

Instructor: Christina Chalmer (cac912@nyu.edu)

Session 3: Friday 8:00 am - 9:15 am SILV 409

Instructor: Gabriel Quigley (geq201@nyu.edu)

Session 4: 9:30 am-10:45 am 7E12 325

Instructor: Gabriel Quigley (geq201@nyu.edu)

Session 5: Friday 12:30 am – 1.45 pm 25W4 C-8

Instructor: Tuhin Bhattacharjee (tuhin.bhattacharjee@nyu.edu)

Session 6: Friday 2:00 pm – 3.15 pm 12WV L114

Instructor: Tuhin Bhattacharjee (tuhin.bhattacharjee@nyu.edu)

**Required Texts:**

Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation,* (Duke University Press, 2015)

This is on order at the bookstore and available in electronic format on Bobcat. All other readings will be available in printouts made available in lecture. You are asked to read hard copies away from the screen, pen or pencil in hand, making annotations in the text and your own notes 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 discussed, not after.
2. Attendance at recitations, 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 and (paper) notebooks 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:**

Sep 3 Introduction

Sep 5 Eliot Deutsch, “The Concept of the Body”

Sep 10 Plato, “Phaedo”

Sep 12 Plato, “Phaedo”

Sep 17 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* (selections)

Sep 19 Nancy Tuana, “The Weaker Seed”

Sep 24 St. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching,* Ch. 1

Sep 26 Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages”

Oct 1 **\*\* First paper (4-5 pages) due in lecture\*\***

René Descartes, “Meditations” I, II, VI

Oct 3 Drew Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body”

Oct 8 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body,* “The Anatomy of Difference”

Oct 10 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* “The Body of the Condemned”

Oct 15 NO CLASS (Classes meet according to a Monday schedule)

Oct 17 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1,* “The Repressive Hypothesis”

Oct 22 Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Body”

Oct 24 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Chiasmus”

Oct 29 **\*\* Second paper (4-5 pages) due in lecture \*\***

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* “Childhood”

Oct 31 Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”

Nov 5 Gayle Salamon, *The Life and Death of Latisha King*, selections

Nov 7 Anne-Fausto Sterling, *Sexing The Body,* selections

Nov 12 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* Ch. 5

Nov 14 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection,* Ch. 1

Nov 19 Klaus Theweleit “Male Bodies and the ‘White Terror’”

Nov 21 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Ch. 1.

Nov 26 **\*\*Third Paper (7-8 pages) Due in Lecture\*\***

Dorion Sagan, “Metametazoa”

Nov 28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 3 Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory,* “Introduction”

Dec 5 Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*

Dec 10 Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*

Dec 12 Review for Final Exam

**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.