

COURSE OUTLINE

Anthropology 2263B-650

Bodies: Making, Buying, Living and Dying

Summer 2023 • Distance Studies

This course is a six-week course (June 19 to July 28)



Version date: June 19, 2023

Instructor: Dr. Karyn Olsen

Pronouns: she/her

Office: Online

Office hours: Online, by appointment

Email: kolsen5@uwo.ca

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Prerequisite(s): None.

Antirequisite(s): None.

Mode of delivery

This course will be conducted online. It is **asynchronous**, meaning that there are no live lectures in Zoom. Students will be provided with a variety of lesson materials (e.g., recorded lectures, readings and study guides, video clips, etc.) and activities that can be done throughout the week, although there may be tasks that must be completed by specific times.

Course Syllabus

Bodies are physical and sensual, personal, and public, the result of evolution, and yet flexibly attuned to local histories and desires. This course will take a biocultural approach to exploring what bodies are, how they are used, by whom, for what purposes, and how we come to know such things.

Why take this course? This course draws on cultural, medical, archaeological, and biological fields in anthropology to engage students in critical reflections on the human body. We will start by considering how anthropologists contribute to the study of bodies and then examine how body “norms” are constructed and disrupted. We will discuss key aspects of our social and cultural identities that are enacted and resisted through bodies. You will have the opportunity to review ideas on “body image” as we explore perspectives on weight and body modification. We will consider the different ways that anthropologists help us to understand notions of sick and healthy bodies. We will explore representations of the body in the ancient past and how modern anthropologists navigate the ethics of studying and displaying human remains. Finally, you will have the chance to examine how we treat bodies after death across cultures and through time.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define embodiment and other key terminology used to conceptualize the human body physically and socially.
2. Discuss approaches to understanding the human body from various perspectives including, sociocultural, medical, archaeological, and bioarchaeological perspectives.
3. Compare and ask questions about body “norms” and the ways in which bodies are represented and perceived across cultures and through time.
4. Complete the essential first steps of scholarly research, including critically evaluating scholarly sources relevant to the anthropological study of the body.
5. Reflect on and articulate connections among social constructions of the body, the scholarly literature, and your own experiences.

Course Materials

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. All readings will be available as PDF downloads from the Western Libraries Website and accessed through the course OWL site. Students can expect to read 4 journal articles and/or book chapters per week. The complete reading list will be available in Week 1 of the course.

Evaluation

Assessment	Weight	Due Date
Response Assignments 1	33.3%	July 2
Response Assignments 2	33.3%	July 16
Response Assignments 3	33.3%	July 28

Response Assignments are not essays but reflective analyses that ask you to consider your assumptions on a topic and critically articulate what you have learned during the course. You will practice making connections among readings, academic literature, current events, and personal experiences. For each assignment, you will get to choose a focus subject from 2-3 approved options covered in the previous weeks. Response assignments can be 750 word written submissions, or 10-12-minute recorded presentations. Students must submit at least one written and one recorded response assignment during the course. Additional details and instructions on topics for response papers will be provided on OWL.

Note: A 5% late penalty per day (including weekends and holidays) applies to all Response Assignments. Submissions are not accepted after five days.

Weekly Breakdown of Topics and Due Dates

DATE	TOPIC	DUE
Week 1: Jun 19 to 25	Anthropological Perspectives on the Body • Normative bodies and questioning “normal” • Cultural perspectives on big bodies	
Week 2: Jun 26 to Jul 2	Transformed Bodies • Body modification practices in the present • Evidence for body modification in the past	Response Assign #1 due Jul 2
Week 3: Jul 3 to 9	Dead Bodies • Walking dead: vampire and zombie bodies • The study and display of human remains	
Week 4: Jul 10 to 16	Ancient Bodies • Interpreting identity from material culture • Finding identity through bioarchaeology	Response Assign #2 due July 16
Week 5: Jul 17 to 23	Mapping Difference onto Bodies • Racialized bodies • Gendered bodies	
Week 6: Jul 24 to 28	Changing Bodies and Care • Getting ill, getting pregnant, and getting old • Bodies as evidence of care in the past	Response Assign #3 due by Jul 28

Reading/Viewing List

Week 1 - Anthropological Perspectives on the Body

Module 1 - Normative bodies and questioning “normal”

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret Lock. 1987. “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 1(1): 6-41. <https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1987.1.1.02a00020>.
- Lock, Margaret, and Vinh-Kim Nguyen. 2018. “The Normal Body” In: *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*, 29-50. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Module 2 - Cultural perspectives on big bodies

- Brewis, Alexandra A. 2010. “Big-Body Symbolism, Meanings, and Norms.” In: *Obesity: Cultural and Biocultural Perspectives*, 99-124, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Moffat, Tina. 2010. “The ‘Childhood Obesity Epidemic’: Health Crisis or Social Construction?” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 24(1): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1387.2010.01082.x>.
- *Documentary film*: Brumfitt, Taryn, dir. 2016. “Embrace: One Woman’s Journey to Inspire EveryBODY.” *Transmission Films*. Access through Western Libraries.

Week 2 - Transformed: Body Modification

Module 3 - Modification practices in the present

- Edmonds, A. 2007. “‘The Poor Have the Right to Be Beautiful’: Cosmetic Surgery in Neoliberal Brazil.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(2): 363-381.
- *News documentary*: Rhodes, Seyi. 2018. “Making Brazil Beautiful” *Unreported World* <https://youtu.be/INt4S40RwoY>

Module 4 - Evidence for modification in the past

- Williams, Jocelyn S. and Christine D. White. 2006. “Dental Modification in the Postclassic Population from Lamanai, Belize.” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 17(1): 129-151. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536106050267>.
- Lee, Christine and Lei Sun. 2019. “A Bioarchaeological and Biocultural Investigation of Chinese Footbinding at the Xuecun Archaeological Site, Henan Province, China.” *International Journal of Paleopathology* 25: 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2019.03.001>.
- Samadelli, Marco, Marcello Melisc, Matteo Miccolic, Eduard Egarter Vigld, and Albert R. Zinka. 2015. “Complete Mapping of the Tattoos of the 5300-year-old Tyrolean Iceman.” *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 16: 753–758.

Week 3 - Dead Bodies

Module 5 - Walking dead: vampire and zombie bodies

- Gardeła, Leszek and Kamil Kajkowski. 2013. "Vampires, Criminals or Slaves? Reinterpreting 'Deviant Burials' in Early Medieval Poland." *World Archaeology*, 45(5): 780–796.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2013.849853>.
- Adams, Kathleen M. 2018. "Leisure in the 'Land of the Walking Dead': Western Mortuary Tourism, the Internet, and Zombie Pop Culture in Toraja, Indonesia." In *Leisure and Death An Anthropological Tour of Risk, Death, and Dying*, edited by A. Kaul and J. Skinner, 97-120. Denver: University of Colorado Press.

Module 6 - The study and display of human remains

- Lambert, Patricia M. 2012. "Ethics and Issues in the Use of Human Skeletal Remains in Paleopathology." In *A Companion to Paleopathology*, edited by Anne L. Grauer, 47-65. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Joy, Jody. 2014. "Looking Death in the Face: Different Attitudes towards Bog Bodies and their Display with a Focus on Lindow Man." In *Regarding the Dead: Human Remains in the British Museum*, edited by A. Fletcher, D. Antoine and J.D. Hill, 10-19. London: British Museum Press.
- Bates, Stephen. 2010. "Bodies Impolitic? Reading Cadavers." *International Journal of Communication*, 4: 198-219.

Week 4 - Ancient Bodies

Module 7 – Interpreting identity from material culture

- Fisher, Genevieve and Diana DiPaolo Loren. 2003. "Embodying Identity in Archaeology." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 13(2): 225-230.
- Loren, Diana DiPaolo. 2003. "Refashioning a Body Politic in Colonial Louisiana." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 13(2): 231-237.
- *Documentary film*: Bremner, Ian, dir. 2014. "The Emperor's Ghost Army." NOVA. Access through Western Libraries.

Module 8 - Finding identity through bioarchaeology

- Martin, Debra L., Ryan P. Harrod, Ventura R. Pérez. 2013. "Bioarchaeology of Individuals: Identity, Social Theory, and Skeletal Analysis." In *Bioarchaeology: An Integrated Approach to Working with Human Remains*, 151-172. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Duncan, William N., and Charles Andrew Hofling. 2011. "Why the Head? Cranial Modification as Protection and Ensoulment Among the Maya." *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 22: 199–210.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536111000162>

Week 5 - Mapping Difference onto Bodies

Module 9 – Racialized bodies

- Půtová, Barbora. 2018. "Freak Shows: Otherness of the Human Body as a Form of Public Presentation." *Anthropologie*, LVI/2: 91-102. <https://doi.org/10.26720/anthro.17.07.20.1>.
- Hattery, Angela J., and Earl Smith. 2017. "Setting the Stage" In: *Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives Are Surveilled and How to Work for Change*, pp. 1-22. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- *Documentary film*: Officer, Charles, dir. 2017. "The Skin We're In." *CBC Television*. Access through Western Libraries or <https://gem.cbc.ca/firsthand> (Season 2, Episode 14)

Module 10 - Gendered bodies

- Thorpe, Holly, Monica Nelson, Shannon Scovel, and Jaimie Veale. 2023. "Journalists on a Journey: Towards Responsible Media on Transgender Participation in Sport." *Journalism Studies*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2206920>.
- Depelteau, Julie, and Dalie Giroux. 2022. "LGBTQ Issues as Indigenous Politics: Two-Spirit Mobilization in Canada." In *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, second edition, edited by Scott Rayter and Laine Halpern Zisman, pp. 222-237. Toronto: Women's Press.

Week 6 – Changing Bodies and Care

Module 11 – Getting ill, getting pregnant, and getting old

- Singer, Merrill. 2004. "The Social Origins and Expressions of Illness." *British Medical Bulletin* 69: 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldh016>.
- Cidro, Jaime, Rachel Bach, and Susan Frohlick. 2020. "Canada's Forced Birth Travel: Towards Feminist Indigenous Reproductive Mobilities." *Mobilities*, 15(2): 173-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2020.1730611>.
- Kontos, Pia C. 2006. "Embodied Selfhood: An Ethnographic Exploration of Alzheimer's Disease." In *Thinking About Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility*, edited by Annette Leibing and Lawrence Cohen, 195-217. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Module 12 - Bodies as evidence of care in the past

- Krutak, Lars. 2019. "Therapeutic Tattooing in the Arctic: Ethnographic, Archaeological, and Ontological Frameworks of Analysis." *International Journal of Paleopathology* 25: 99-109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2018.05.003>.
- Tilley, Lorna, and Oxenham, Marc F. 2011. "Survival Against the Odds: Modeling the Social Implications of Care Provision to Seriously Disabled Individuals." *The International Journal of Paleopathology* 1: 35-42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2011.02.003>.

Course Specific Statements and Policies

Diversity and Inclusion

I would like to create a learning environment that supports diverse thoughts, perspectives, and experiences. We all bring unique identities to the classroom that reflect differences in age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and class. I will gladly honour any request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. I will attempt to foster an environment in which students are able to express ideas and hear and respect one another. Please let me know if there are ways that you think I could improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students/student groups.

Engaging in the Online Learning Environment

This course relies on the OWL site to connect you with the syllabus, assignment outlines, content, and other course material. Here, you will engage with me and your peers as we progress through the course. Please keep track of weekly tasks and contribute respectfully to online activities.

Email

You may contact me by email, but it may take up to 24 hours for a response. If I cannot provide an immediate response, or if the matter is something that I cannot address easily in an email, we will plan to meet virtually using Zoom or Collaborate. Please ensure that your emails are worded professionally and include the course number (2263B) in the subject line.

Encouraging Student Success

If you need support with your academic writing skills, please visit the [Writing Support Centre](#) in person or online. The Centre aims to (1) enhance your writing and communication skills and build your confidence, (2) equip you with tools, resources and knowledge to effectively communicate through writing, (3) increase your critical analysis abilities to effectively communicate scholarly ideas, (4) convey university level writing expectations, and (5) provide you with the skills you need to navigate academic transitions. [Learning Development and Success](#) supports your development as a student by answering questions and providing advice on how to succeed in your studies at Western. They can help you to develop and strengthen academic skills. [The Wellness Education Centre](#) will help you navigate any kind of mental health issue (e.g., anxiety, stress, etc.) WEC provides free assistance in connecting you with wellness services and resources on and off campus.

Statement on the Use of Generative AI

Please note, you are not authorized to use artificial intelligence engines, software, or similar tools to produce your Response Assignments for this class. Any work written, developed, created, or inspired by AI without professor permission violates student academic integrity. That said, I may identify cases in which use of AI tools is acceptable, but you will receive detailed guidance on how to appropriately use these technologies when the time is appropriate. More information will be provided with the Response Assignment instructions in OWL.

Statement on Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please contact an academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined in Western's academic policies by clicking on this link: [Western's academic policies](#).