



COURSE OUTLINE
Anthropology 2263B-650
Bodies: Making, Buying, Living and Dying
Summer 2024 · Distance Studies

This course is a six-week course (June 17 to July 26)



Instructor: Dr. K. Olsen (she/her)
Email: kolsen5@uwo.ca
Office Hours: Online, by appointment

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 you will be provided with recorded lectures, lesson materials, and activities that can be done throughout the week on your own time. There are no synchronous lectures. However, there may be tasks that must be completed by specific times which will be shared as part of weekly instructions.

Course Syllabus

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. 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.

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 bio-archaeological 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. Critically evaluate scholarly sources relevant to the study of the body as well as sources found in popular culture and the media.
5. Reflect on and articulate connections among social constructions of the body, scholarly literature, and your own experiences.

Course Materials

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. Students can expect to read about 4-6 journal articles and/or book chapters per week. In addition to lecture videos, some weeks will also include watching relevant video clips or documentary films. All readings and videos will be available on and accessed through the OWL Brightspace course site. The complete reading/watch list will be available in Week 1 of the course.

Evaluation

Assessment	Weight	Due Date
Quizzes (x12)	15%	Two quizzes per week (see OWL Brightspace site for exact dates)
Reflective Journal 1	30%	Sunday, Jun 30 th by 11:59 pm
Reflective Journal 2	30%	Sunday, July 14 th by 11:59 pm
Body Project	25%	Sunday, July 28 th by 11:59 pm

Quizzes – 15%

The 12 quizzes (worth 1.25% each) will help you to stay on top of the course material. Each quiz consists of 10 multiple choice questions and is based on the readings and resources (e.g., lecture videos, supplementary YouTube videos, etc.) covered since the previous quiz. Quizzes are open book, but each quiz is open for a limited period. If you miss a quiz deadline, you will no longer be able to complete that

quiz. However, the two lowest graded quizzes will be dropped from the overall grade calculation at the end of the course. Students demonstrate learning outcomes (LOs) 1, 4, and 5 by completing the quizzes.

Reflective Journal 1: Body Modification – 30%

This assignment will be completed following the first two weeks of the course. You will get to explore your initial reactions to different forms of body modification based on the readings and lecture videos found in Modules 1-4. For example, do you perceive body modifications as art, self-expression, rebellion, or something else? You will also reflect on how your own cultural norms influence your perception of body modification and consider the ways different groups pass judgement on particular modifications. How have popular body modifications changed over time? You will think about how some body modifications are elected, while others are imposed and what autonomy individuals should have when it comes to accessing and restricting body modifications.

This assignment will include both written and visual components. Learners will respond to questions in a written format. They will also identify examples of body modification (e.g., in art, photos, and/or news stories, etc.) that will be used to help illustrate their responses. More details and full instructions will be available on the OWL Brightspace site. Learners demonstrate LOs 2 – 4 by completing this assignment.

Reflective Journal 2: Curated Bodies – 30%

This assignment will be completed following Weeks 3 and 4 of the course. The reflection will focus on the curated bodies topics outlined in the readings and lecture videos. Human bodies are preserved in whole or in part for museum exhibits around the world. In addition, online DNA databases serve as another means of collecting and curating body information. For this assignment, you will reflect on your personal stance towards curating bodies by considering the ethical issues involved, cultural beliefs and impacts, as well as the emotional aspects of preserving and sharing human remains and/or DNA. You will consider how curating bodies contributes to knowledge about our biology and cultural practices in the past, and how DNA testing is a tool that can solve both family and criminal justice mysteries. Finally, you will identify what responsibilities are key when collecting, sharing, and providing access to human remains/DNA information.

This assignment can be completed in written format or as a recorded PowerPoint presentation. More details and full instructions will be available on the OWL Brightspace site. Learners demonstrate LOs 1, 2, and 4 by completing this assignment.

Body Project – 25%

This assignment is due following Week 6 of the course. The project allows you to focus on a personal area of interest from the second half of the course. Choices include focusing on clothing and identity, racialized bodies, gendered bodies, notions about fat bodies and body positivity, understandings of healthy versus sick bodies, pregnant bodies, and aging bodies. Note: Personal experiences are welcome, but you do not have to focus on your own body for this project. You are not required to share anything about yourself/body that you are not comfortable sharing. You will use the readings and lecture videos to consider how individuals and communities categorize bodies and make assumptions or treat them

differently depending on their features. You will also reflect on how people use aspects of their bodies to embrace/express/resist identity.

More details and full instructions will be available on the OWL Brightspace site. Learners demonstrate LOs 1, and 3 – 5 by completing this assignment.

Assignment Late Policy

Unless a student receives academic consideration, assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5%/day late for up to a total of 5 days (including weekends) following the deadline. Late assignments will not be accepted after 5 days with the exception of notification from Academic Counselling or when the student contacts the instructor prior to the due date to make reasonable arrangements.

Instructor 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 the names and gender pronouns you share with me. I will attempt to foster an environment in which you 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 learners/peer groups. If you have a question about your progress in the course or if you are struggling to meet deadlines, please reach out to me by email.

Engaging in the Online Learning Environment

This course relies on the OWL Brightspace 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 Response Time

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. Please ensure that your emails are worded professionally and include the course number (2263) in the subject line.

Statement on the Use of Generative AI

Cases in which generative AI tools may be used by learners to complete assignments will be clearly identified in the instructions for those assignments. Note, work written, developed, created, or inspired by generative AI without specific permission from the professor violates student academic integrity.

Please do not use generative AI to produce written work for this class unless the instructions provide the go ahead.

Student Success

[The Writing Support Centre](#) is the place to visit the in person or online if you need support with your academic writing skills. 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 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.

[Health and Wellness](#) 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.

Department and University Policies

Academic Policies

All learners 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](#).

Statement on Seeking Academic Consideration for late or missed work

Please contact the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible if you will be seeking accommodation for a late/missed assignment based on medical or compassionate grounds. For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office. For further information, please consult the University's [medical illness policy](#). The Student Medical Certificate is available at [this link](#).

Statement on Plagiarism

Learners must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever learners take an idea from another author, including AI-generated text, 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.

Statement on Turn-it-in

All written assignments 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.

Weekly Breakdown of Topics and Due Dates

DATE	TOPIC	DUE
Week 1: Jun 17 to 23	Anthropological Perspectives on the Body: Mod 1 – Normative bodies and questioning “normal” Mod 2 – Body modification practices in the present	Mod 1 & 2 Quizzes due by Jun 28
Week 2: Jun 24 to 30	Ancient Bodies: Mod 3 – Finding identity through bioarchaeology Mod 4 – Evidence for body modification in the past	Mod 3 & 4 Quizzes due by Jun 28 Reflective Journal 1 due by Jun 30
Week 3: Jul 1 to 7	Curated Bodies: Mod 5 – Cultural displays of human remains Mod 6 – DNA testing, family relationships, and forensics	Mod 5 & 6 Quizzes due by Jul 5
Week 4: Jul 8 to 14	Embodied Identities and Beliefs: Mod 7 – Interpreting belief systems from bodies Mod 8 – Interpreting identity from material culture	Mod 7 & 8 Quizzes due by Jul 12 Reflective Journal 2 due by Jul 14
Week 5: Jul 15 to 21	Mapping Difference onto Bodies: Mod 9 – Racialized bodies Mod 10 – Gendered bodies	Mod 9 & 10 Quizzes due by Jul 19
Week 6: Jul 22 to 26	Changing Bodies: Mod 11 – Cultural perspectives on fat bodies Mod 12 – Getting pregnant, getting sick, and getting old	Mod 11 & 12 Quizzes Due by July 26 Body Project due by Jul 28