GSWS 830-5 – SELECTED TOPICS: DUDE, WHERE’S MY BODY?

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Office hours: TBA  
Lecture: Mondays 13:30 – 17:20; WMC 3533

Course Description:
We live in a historical moment in which cells are technologies, some human genes are intellectual property, organs and tissues are exchangeable, and our limbs, senses, sex, looks, and lives are mutable and extendable. In this context, what is your body? Where does it begin and end? What are your biological properties? How much of your bodily substance and sensation is strictly “yours”?

Starting from feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway’s enduring provocation, “Why should our bodies end at the skin?” (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 1991), we will spend the semester mapping and remapping the contours of this thing we call “a body.” This course traces and interrogates the numerous ways in which our bodies matter – socially, historically, technologically, biologically, politically, and economically. We will begin by reading focused selections from key texts that will help us to develop a shared language for talking about our bodies and their cultural, physical, and historical dimensions. The rest of the semester will be spent on case studies drawn from historical texts, anthropology, science and technology studies, performance studies, and critical cultural studies of race, gender, and sexuality.

Areas of exploration include constructions of sex and gender, drugs and addiction, social inequality, social media, cosmetic surgery, contagion, organ transplantation, prosthetics, cell lines, interspecies relations, genetics, cloning, nanotechnologies, toys, toxins, food, and bioart.

Educational Goals:
• Critical understanding of the multiple social, political, environmental, and technological fields that shape and are shaped by our bodies  
• Ability to approach embodiment as a key site of knowledge, governance, and resistance  
• Capacity to develop critical, theoretical, and creative analyses or interventions based in your own bodily experience  
• Development of effective strategies for teaching and public speaking  
• Enhanced skills in critical and creative thinking; media, cultural, and literary analysis; communication of ideas through speech and writing; and original research design

THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.
Course Texts and Courseware:
1. Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era, Paul Preciado
2. Yellowface, David Henry Hwang
3. Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect, Mel Chen
4. Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetics, Kim Tallbear
5. All other readings and materials will be made available on canvas

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Participation and Attendance – 20%
Body Journal with Analysis – 20%
Guest Lecture – 15%
Op-Ed Piece – 15%
Final Project – 30%