Description: “Somatechnics” is a newly coined term that calls attention to the inextricability of bodies and technologies. It suggests that the culturally intelligible body (soma) is inseparable from the techniques and technologies (technics) in and through which bodies are formed and transformed, and by means of which bodies are constituted, positioned, and lived. The term thus reflects contemporary understandings of the body as the incarnation or materialization of historically and culturally specific discourses and practices. It conceives of activities involving bodies—in medicine, information technology, education, the arts, surveillance, science, and law—as fundamentally constitutive of bodily being.

We will read a few heavy-duty theoretical texts on embodiment, technology, and bodily practice. Don’t be intimidated, even though this material might look hard or dry at first—we’ll have fun with it. We will go over it thoroughly in class, and then link it in creative ways to selected (sometimes controversial) topics of interest within contemporary feminist scholarship—the medical ethics of self-demand amputation, for example, or the practice of transsexuality within radical Islam, transnational tissue and organ economies, assisted reproductive technologies, the carceral complex, biometric surveillance, queer disability studies, pop sci-fi culture—as well as student-generated topics, ideas, or interests. We’ll look at some art and surf the web. And somewhat unusually for a humanities class, we will learn some things about somatechnics by actually moving our bodies in simple ways in class, and by bringing our awareness to what our bodies are experiencing. Wear loose clothes and bring a yoga mat if you have one (or a thick comfy towel if you don’t).

Each 4-hour class will be divided up into several sections: we’ll take a short break in the middle, on either side of which will be some movement and conversation, going over the assigned theoretical readings, instructor lecture or student presentation on selected topics, general discussion and synthesis. Be prepared for the occasional guest speaker or film clip.

Assignments:
Attendance is mandatory and participation in class discussion is really important (20% of total grade just for showing up regularly and contributing thoughtfully or actively listening).

You are required to keep a class journal, offering a couple of paragraphs of substantive comment or reflection on each the assigned readings and class discussions, which I will review and comment on periodically throughout the semester (20% of total grade).

You will need to make one class presentation on a topic pertinent to the class, either by yourself or in a group (20% of total grade; more details on this when we meet for class).

You will have to write one short (10-page) midterm paper on a topic of your choosing related to course content (20% of total grade).

For a final assignment, you will have two options. You may either write another 10-page paper on a topic of your choosing, or you may rewrite from your own point of view the “Somatechnics Manifesto” assigned at the beginning of the course, based on what you have learned during the semester (20% of total grade). There will be no exams.

Readings: There will be no assigned books for the class, only a class reader of articles and book chapters (About 700 pages total). A list of the theoretical texts we’ll read begins immediately below. During the first class period we will discuss which “selected topics” we will explore through class discussion over the course of the semester.
The Department of 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.

**WS 405 Reading List**


Susan Stryker, “The Somatechnics Manifesto 1.0.” Draft manuscript.


Iris Young, “Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motitivity, and spatiality,” in *Throwing like a girl and other essays in feminist philosophy and social theory.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 141-159.