

## WRTC 426: SPECIAL TOPICS—BODY TALK

SECTION 1 (12577)

TTH 2:00-3:15

HARRISON 2245

Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Klein

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Office Hours<sup>1</sup>: TTH 10:30-11:30; and by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do culture and language affect how we conceptualize and understand how a “normal” body looks? In this seminar, we will examine the ways in which bodies are conceived, examined and understood through the lens of medical and health humanities. We will examine course topics—including gender, sexuality, race, ableism and ageism, among others—through readings drawn from personal narratives in the form of essays, stories and graphic novels. Assignments will include the composition of analytical texts, and the creation of textual and graphic medical narratives, with students free to frame their final project from a disciplinary perspective of their choosing.

From the Catalog: Focused, in-depth study of specific areas or subjects in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication. Topics may pertain to issues relevant to the discipline, to the study of particular theories and practices, or to the study of significant figures in the field. Seminars may be repeated for credit when course content changes. *Prerequisites: WRTC 103 or equivalent and junior/senior status, or permission of the instructor.*

Satisfies: Crossover elective (WRTC); substitution elective (medical humanities); substitution elective, if narrative projects deal with gender/sexuality (WGSS)

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to

- Analyze ways in which language shapes perceptions of bodies;
- Compose a memoir thematically exploring the conceptualization of “normal” bodies;
- Transform a textual document into a graphic one.

### COURSE MATERIALS

All course materials will be available on the course’s Canvas site.

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<sup>1</sup> Office hours are times during the week I set aside to meet with you should you have questions, want to discuss course projects, or just want to talk about the class. You do not need to make an appointment to come see me unless my scheduled office hours do not fit your schedule. If this is the case, contact me and we will work out a time to meet.

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## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University policies on Academic Honesty, Adding and Dropping Courses, Disability Accommodations, Inclement Weather, and Religious Accommodations can be found at <http://www.jmu.edu/syllabus>.

The CAL attendance policy can be found at <http://www.jmu.edu/cal/attendance.shtml>.

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## COURSE POLICIES

In order to get the most out of the class, as well as support the learning efforts of your peers, you need to attend class regularly. However, I understand that unexpected events come up. You will get two “free” absences; there is no need to let me know what happened, though you are welcome to speak with me. Just make sure to **contact one of your classmates** to find out what we covered in class. Each absence after the second will reduce your final grade by 5%.

As we’ll be beginning class and engaging in activities at the regular starting time, arrive on time so you can participate and not distract your classmates. If you do arrive late, come in as unobtrusively as possible.

We will not directly discuss all assigned readings during class (though you are welcome to ask questions if something is not clear). Rather, we will be using what we read before class to complete the activities scheduled on that day. Reading and understanding the material will make the time we spend in class more productive and engaging for you and your peers.

This class will move at steady pace throughout the semester. One project will build upon previous projects. Therefore, you will need to complete and submit your projects when they are due. If you do not turn in your work on time, and you have not discussed this with me previously, then every day late will reduce your project grade by 5%.

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## COURSE RESOURCES

### COURSE WEBSITE

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The course website—located on Canvas—contains readings, project prompts and other materials.

### UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

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For free assistance with writing, consider visiting the University Writing Center, located on the first floor of the Student Success Center, 738 S. Mason Street, MSC 1023. The Writing Center is composed of trained faculty consultants, graduate assistants, and peer tutors who help students with all types of writing. In particular, they can help you brainstorm and find a topic, develop rhetorical awareness, incorporate and document sources effectively, organize your paper, and develop revision strategies. To get more information, make an appointment, or find writing resources, go to [www.jmu.edu/uwc](http://www.jmu.edu/uwc).

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## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Come to class prepared—you’ll get more out of class activities if you’ve done the preliminary work
- Talk to me—if you need help with a project or are unclear about a concept, come see me after class or during my office hours
- Push your boundaries—there may be topics we cover that challenge your beliefs or projects you complete that stretch your perceived abilities; embrace these as signs that you are learning

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## COURSE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. LEADING CLASS DISCUSSION                      WEIGHT 20%                      DUE    VARIOUS

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You will lead class discussion one time during the semester.

2. TEXTUAL NARRATIVE                              WEIGHT 30%                      DUE    FEB 28

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You will write a narrative about the ways in which language shapes conceptions of the body.

3. GRAPHIC MEMOIR                                WEIGHT 30%                      DUE    APRIL 25

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You will develop a graphic narrative about the ways in which language shapes conceptions of the body.

4. REFLECTION ESSAY                              WEIGHT 20%                      DUE    MAY 2

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You will write a reflection essay on your experience in the course.

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## COURSE ASSESSMENT

Your course grade is determined by the compilation of the weighted scores for projects and activities:

	88%-89% = B+	78%-79% = C+	65%-69%=D
94%-99% = A	84%-87% = B	74%-77% = C	00%-64%=F
90%-93% = A-	80%-83% = B-	70%-73% = C-	

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## GRADING CRITERIA

- A      This assignment exceeds all the objectives of the assignment. The content is sophisticated, thorough, and well suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and appropriate; the information and design are well organized, understandable and usable; the mechanics and grammar are correct.
- B      The assignment meets all the objectives of the assignment. The content is well suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and appropriate; the information and design are well organized, understandable and usable; the mechanics and grammar are mostly correct.
- C      This assignment is competent, but requires improvement in style, organization, design; or it contains easily correctable errors in grammar, format, or content; or the content is superficial.
- D      This assignment is unsatisfactory for a college-level course. It may meet some of the objectives of the assignment but ignores others. The project needs significant improvement in concept, details, development, organization, grammar, or format. It may be formally correct but superficial in content.

**COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

<b>Week 1 Bodies and Embodiment</b>	
Thu	Reeve, <i>Nine Ways of Seeing a Body</i>
Week 2	
	Stephens, “The normal body on display”; Bratta, “Rhetoric and event”
<b>Week 3 Narrative and Graphic Medicine</b>	
	Costello, “The implications of plot lines in illness”; Frank, <i>The Wounded Storyteller</i> ; Charon, <i>Narrative Medicine</i>
Week 4	
	McCloud, <i>Understanding Comics</i>
<b>Week 5 Gender and Sexuality</b>	
Tue	NO CLASS—Assessment Day
Thu	Martin, “The egg and the sperm”
Week 6	
	Urla and Swedlund, “The anthropometry of Barbie”; Ciasullo, “Making her (in)visible”
Week 7	
Tue	Atwood, “The female body”; Ephron, “A few words about breasts”
Thu	Meredith Conti Lecture (Madison Union 305)
Week 8	
	Egan, “A fine line between mother and daughter”; Wood, <i>Flutter</i>
<b>Week 10 Race and Ethnicity</b>	
	Nagel, “Constructing ethnicity”; Hammonds, “Toward a genealogy of black female sexuality”
Week 11	
	Márquez, “Juan Crow”; Chun, “The meaning of Ching-Chong”
Week 12	
	Coates, “Letter to my son”; Shields, “36 tattoos”
<b>Week 13 Disability</b>	
	Wendell, “Unhealthy disabled”; Price, “Defining mental disability”
Week 14	
Tue	Colonial Wounds/Postcolonial Repair Exhibit (Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art)
Thu	McRuer, “Compulsory able-bodiedness and queer/disabled existence”
Week 15	
	Ehrenreich, “Welcome to Cancerland”; Kolb, “Seeing at the speed of sound”
Week 16	
	Powell, <i>Swallow Me Whole</i>
Exam Week	

**Reflection Essay due via Canvas by 1 p.m. on Thursday, May 2.**