“In the course of almost 40 years of practicing biology and thinking about how it works, I have come to believe in my deepest core that scientific knowledge is a particular form of social knowledge—that the scientific and the cultural are inseparable” (Fausto-Sterling 2003).

Jaita Talukdar, Ph.D.
Class Time: TH 330-600 pm
Office: Monroe Hall 537 E; Office phone: 504-865-2128
Email: jtalukda@loyno.edu [Last Name, Course Title]
Office Hours: TTH 11-12 pm

Course Description

Millions of people around the world take Meridia (an oral drug) to expedite the process of losing weight, even if they are not clinically obese. Obesity rates tend to vary by social class locations (In the US, 35.3 percent of adults earning less than $15,000 per year are obese), and children born as intersex are often subjected to corrective surgery to anatomically resemble a man or a woman. How can we make sense of these diverse bodily phenomena? Sociologists would argue that bodily phenomena---of weight-loss practices, obesity, corrective surgery, eating disorders or drug-dependency---are often tangible manifestations of inequality issues affecting society and more specifically of how material and social resources are distributed in these societies. Even our bodily experiences of health ailments such as AIDS, cancer, or heart diseases differ by the economic and social resources at our disposal. We struggle with our bodies when we fail to satisfy normative standards of a functional body and turn to social institutions of medicine, family, religion or popular media to make sense of our problems. Particularly, this course will focus on the role social institutions of family, religion, medicine, sports, and popular culture play in shaping our bodily experiences centered on both health ailments and social problems of sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism.

Course Objectives

- Examine socio-cultural beliefs of the body, especially the role social institutions of family, religion, sports, medicine, and popular media play in defining the ideal body

1 In the subject box of the email that you send to me, please indicate your last name and the title of the course. That way it is easier for me to locate you and understand your problem/query.
• Examine unequal beliefs about the body as it differs by gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and social class
• Understand how individuals make sense of their bodily and health ailments
• Understand the links between socio-cultural discourses of the body and health issues in contemporary societies
• Develop an understanding of major intellectual debates of the social body and body-related processes in the field

Required Texts

• Additional materials will be posted in the course document folder in Blackboard, and marked as BB.

Course Requirements

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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Discussion Questions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Paper (draft)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Project Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Paper II (final)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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100%

Description of Course Requirements

Critical Discussion Questions: Every alternate week you are expected to bring 2 discussion questions to class on readings assigned for the day. We will use these questions to facilitate class discussions. You are not expected to bring a question on the day you present. By the end of the semester I should have at least 10 questions. They will be worth 2 points each so I hope you take these questions seriously. Please keep in mind that I will not accept questions on readings that we have already discussed in class. In other words, you cannot give me pre-dated questions. Also, please make sure that the questions are typed and dated (I will not accept them otherwise).

Presentation: Students will take turn presenting a pre-assigned article from the readings to the class. You will present the main points of the article followed by your own critique. This will help you learn how to do formal presentations.

Class Project and Paper: This is a project for which you will receive three grades, a grade for putting together a proposal for a project (includes forming a research question, reviewing previous literature and choosing a method for collecting data), a grade for presenting your project (includes
§Option A: You will decide on a larger question or a hypothesis and design a survey of (open-ended, semi structured) questions. Individually you will do the survey with an unknown subject on the pre-determined questions. The identity of the person will remain unknown to everyone (including me). After doing the interviews, you will combine individual findings and come to a conclusion about the question that you had posed at the beginning.  

§Option B: You will decide on a larger question or a hypothesis and design a survey of (open-ended, semi structured) questions. Next, you will subject these questions to a text. That is to say you will treat texts (commercials, pamphlets, magazines, television shows) as subjects of investigation. After analyzing the text, you will combine findings and come to a conclusion about the question that you had posed at the beginning.

§You are encouraged to use research articles used in this course as samples for your own study. This will give you hands-on experience of doing research, but more importantly, it will illuminate some of the (many) ways that social forces affect our understanding of bodies and our health.

Class participation: Class participation is an important part of your overall grade. If you are present in class and do not participate, you will lose sixty percent of the points. In other words, you can expect a 4/10 if you have not contributed to any class discussions. I would thus ask you to contribute in whatever way you feel comfortable; it could be a question, a suggestion, a criticism or an idea, or something you have read/seen outside the class.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>93-90</td>
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<td>89-87</td>
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<td>69-60</td>
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<td>Less than 60</td>
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Class Policies

Disability Statement: If you have a disability that qualifies you for accommodations, please contact Sarah Mead Smith, Director of Disability Services at 865-2990. If you wish to receive test accommodations like extended time you should provide me with an official Accommodation Form from the Disability Services at the beginning of the semester.

Policy on Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, or another person's words. Normally, all work done for courses -- papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations -- is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to me. If the

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2 If you choose to do interviews, you will need to submit a written consent from your interviewee and a letter stating that you (as the interviewer) will not reveal their identity.
work has entailed consulting other resources -- journals, books, or other media -- these resources
must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes
plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.

**Cell phones/Laptops:** Cell phones, pagers and beepers must be turned off during class. Please do
not read “outside” material (newspaper, magazines), listen to music or have personal conversations
in the class. Please do not use your laptops in class. I prefer that you write down class notes and
discussions.

**Controversial Subject Matter:** In this class we will be discussing subject matter or watching
films/DVDs that some students may consider controversial. For both fictional and non-fictional
accounts covered in the films, I expect you to show respect and sensitivity towards the matter. Our
task is to explore the subject matter in-depth and consider multiple perspectives and arguments.
Students are expected to listen to the instructor and to one another respectfully, but are free to
disagree.

**Attendance Policy:** If you have a valid excuse like a medical emergency, death in the family or an
automobile accident, please make sure you have documents to validate your case. If you leave class
before it is time, you will be marked absent for the whole week. It is disrespectful towards your
instructor and lowers the interest of others present in the class.

**Late Papers:** Essays/Papers handed in late will result in points being deducted. You have a week
(from the day the paper was due) to submit your paper, but 25% of points will be deducted from
the grade for this paper. After a week, you will not get any credit for this assignment.

In addition please note: Students must assume that all graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are to
be completed individually unless otherwise noted in writing in this syllabus. I reserve the right to
refer any cases of suspected plagiarism or cheating to the Disciplinary Committee; I also reserve the
right to assign a grade of "F" for the given paper, quiz or test. Finally, please save all your work till
the end of semester in case of a missing paper or a quiz.
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20\textsuperscript{th} January: The Social Construction of Gender


27\textsuperscript{th} January: The Social Construction of Sexuality

- Paris is Burning [Documentary]

3\textsuperscript{rd} February: Social Inequality, Race, Class, and Bodies

10th February: Social Inequality, Gender, and Bodies


17th February: The Gendered Body and Consumer Culture

- Also, Draft of Project Proposal DUE

24th February: Women and the Beauty Myth


3rd March: Women and the Beauty Myth (continued)


10th March: Mardi Gras Break

17th March: Women, Beauty Myth, and Medical Intervention


24th March: Gender, Sexuality, Bodies, and Sports


**31st March: Colonial and Contemporary Masculinities and Bodies**


**7th April: Bodies and Health**


**14th April: Bodies, Gender, and Health**

- Also, *Project Paper Presentations*

**21st April: Easter Break**

**28th April: Project Paper Presentations (contd.)**

**10th May: Final Paper Due @ 10pm [Finals Week]**