

# Sociology 190: Popular Culture: Bodies as Power, Oppression, and Resistance

## Spring 2021

INSTRUCTOR Jill Bakehorn, Ph.D. (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)

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**Drop-in Office Hours:** Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm

**Sign-up Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11:15am-12:15pm

Wednesdays 12:30-2:00pm

**Sign-up:** <https://calendly.com/bakehorn/office-hours>

CLASS MEETING Wednesdays 10:00-11:59am

## Course Description

This course will explore how bodies are represented in popular culture, drawing upon theories in sociology, cultural studies, and feminist studies to make sense of these representations. A sociological perspective starts from the position that bodies, embodied experiences, and the meanings attached to bodies are socially constructed, not biologically determined. We will begin the course with an examination of the sociology of the body and feminist theoretical perspectives on the body.

Bodies are important as signifiers of identity and thus are sites of power, oppression, and resistance. We will be attending to differences in bodies: gender, ethnicity, race, class, age, ability, and size. What are the different meanings attached to different bodies, to different body parts?

We will also address the ways in which the body is a site of social control, coming under the purview of authorities like the church, medical practitioners, psychiatrists, and the state. What types of bodies experience social control? What acts are restricted and which are permitted?

The ways in which bodies can be manipulated, molded, transformed, and modified will also be discussed. What types of value are placed on these modifications? How do we define healthy and unhealthy? Where is the line between exercise and dieting and a disorder, for instance? Beautification and mutilation? Medical necessity and elective enhancement?

We will analyze popular cultural representations from a range of genres that demonstrate oppression and domination of certain groups, as well as exploring examples of resistance.

This class will be **challenging** on a number of levels:

- ❖ You will be expected to keep up with a number of readings for each class meeting.
- ❖ These readings will be challenging not only in terms of their length and number, but also in terms of the subject matter presented and the complex theories proposed.
- ❖ We will be challenging common sense, taken-for-granted notions of bodies.
- ❖ We will be speaking frankly about issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Some topics may be challenging in the sense that you may find the subject matter embarrassing or difficult to discuss. Some of these topics will be graphic, controversial, or explicit. Frank discussions and presentation of material may include things that some find offensive or that differ greatly from your own experiences, preferences, and beliefs. It is important that we are non-judgmental.

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Disagreements and debates are expected and welcome in this class, however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

## Course Goals

- ❖ Introduce you to theories of the body and embodiment
- ❖ Explore how gender, sexuality, race, ability, body size, and class are represented in popular culture
- ❖ Discuss how representations of bodies challenge hegemonic norms and how they uphold them
- ❖ Provide a safe space to discuss issues related to bodies in popular culture

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Synthesize theories and scholarship on bodies and embodiment
- ❖ Lead discussions in a productive and thoughtful way
- ❖ Research a topic of your choosing and write a research paper
- ❖ Engagingly present research findings

## Required Texts

All course readings are available on bCourses; there are no books you need to buy.

## Assignments

### Participation

This is a seminar course which means attendance and participation are important components. Come to each class having completed the readings and ready to discuss. I will help facilitate discussion, providing context and elaboration when needed, but the primary responsibility for discussion is on you, the students. Be ready with comments, interpretations, critiques, and questions for each class period. Everyone should be actively engaged in discussion during each class.

Active engagement includes being prepared to discuss, active listening, asking and answering questions, and sometimes, being quiet to allow others a chance to participate.

We will work together to establish ground rules for frank, but respectful, discussions where everyone has space and feels safe to talk.

You are also required to attend the presentations at the end of the semester so you can provide feedback on everyone's research project.

Missing more than one class will negatively affect your grade.

## Reading Reflections

To assist you in preparing for discussion, you will write 6 reflections/critiques of the week's readings—you can choose which 6 weeks you want to cover. Do not simply summarize the readings, critically engage with them. Consider the following questions:

- \* How do the readings relate to one another? Are there points of disagreement? Are there connections to previous readings?
- \* Can you apply the readings to current events?
- \* How do the readings contribute to our understanding of the popular cultural representations of the body? What is left out or left unanswered?
- \* Include in your reflection any questions that arose for you while reading

Reflections should be two pages double-spaced and are due on Tuesdays (before the session they will be discussed) at 11:59pm.

I will grade reflection papers on a scale of 1-5 with a 1 representing a paper that is primarily summary with little critical engagement to a 5 representing a paper that is thorough and thoughtful and engages critically with the materials.

## Discussion Facilitation

Each week 2-3 students will be responsible for leading discussions on that week's topic and readings. You are expected to provide a brief summary and overview of the readings, being sure to tie the readings to one another. Come prepared with discussion questions. You may find that a handout is useful, but this is not required. (If you do decide to use a handout, e-mail it to me ahead of time so I can distribute them).

You are also free to use any media or additional information that you feel is relevant, including slide decks. Short video or audio clips, images, memes, etc. could really liven up the discussion and provide context. Be as creative as you like!

You will need to coordinate with one another about your presentation. Be sure to start this early. You may decide to split up the readings or present all the material together.

## Research Paper and Presentation

Your research paper assignment is to investigate a topic we have not covered during the semester, or to go into more depth with one that we have. Choose a topic related to the body, engage in academic research on the topic, and investigate the popular cultural representations by viewing movies, watching television, readings books, examining social media, etc. Whenever possible, include images and links to video in your paper to illustrate your argument.

Your paper should be 12-15 pages, double-spaced.

You will submit a topic, an annotated bibliography, and an outline. You will also need to schedule time to meet with me to discuss your paper.

You will give a 15 minute presentation of your research during the last 4 weeks of the semester. This will give you an opportunity to present your findings and theoretical framework and receive constructive feedback before turning in your final paper.

Due dates:

<b><u>Topic:</u></b>	Friday, February 12
<b><u>Annotated Bibliography:</u></b>	Friday, March 12
<b><u>Detailed Outline:</u></b>	Friday, April 23
<b><u>Presentation:</u></b>	Wednesdays, April 7—April 28 in class
<b><u>Final Paper:</u></b>	Friday, May 14

## Grade Breakdown

Participation	20%
Reading Reflections	20%
Facilitation	10%
Paper Topic	5%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Paper Outline	5%
Paper Presentation	5%
Final Paper	30%

## Course Format and Policies

**Email:** Clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

**Names and Pronouns:** You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected.

You can refer to me as Prof. Bakehorn, Dr. Bakehorn, or Jill. My pronouns are she/they.

## Grading Policies

No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval. Grades are not curved.

All assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well as searching the internet.

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link “View Feedback”** which may not be visible if you are not in full-screen mode.

To request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, not about effort. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so. **You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

## Academic Dishonesty

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers and exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a failing grade for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

## Office Hours

Please see Page 1 or [this link](#) for information about my office hours.

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation. You do not need to be struggling or have course-specific questions to go to office hours.

## Student Support Services

### Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](#). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

### Student Learning Center

"The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the [SLC](#) helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals."

### Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate](#).

### Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [the Basic Needs Center](#). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [Calfresh](#) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please contact our UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](#). More information can be found [here](#).

### Technology and Internet Support

Please see [this page](#) for the latest information on university-provided support.



## Course Outline

Complete readings on the day listed below. Course schedule is subject to change.

**Wednesday, 1/20**                      **Week One: Introductions**

**Wednesday, 1/27**                      **Week Two: Theorizing Bodies**

Morris, Amelia. 2019. "The Dichotomy of Power: Feminist Debates on the Body." Pp 35-72 in *The Politics of Weight: Feminist Dichotomies of Power in Dieting*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Fiske, John. 1993. "Bodies of Knowledge." Pp 57-80 in *Power Plays, Power Works*. New York: Verso.

Somerville, Siobhan B. 2000. "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body." Pp 15-38 in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

**Wednesday, 2/3**                      **Week Three: Gendered, Racialized, and Sexualized Bodies**

Harris-Perry, Melissa V. 2011. "Chapter Two: Myth." Pp 51-97 in *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

**Recommended:** Harris-Perry, Melissa V. 2011. "Chapter One: Crooked Room." Pp 28-50 in *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Guzman, Isabel Molina. 2010. "Disciplining the Ethnic Body: Latinidad, Hybridized Bodies and Transnational Identities." Pp 206-229 in *Governing the Female Body: Gender, Health, and Networks of Power*. Edited by Lori Reed and Paula Saukko. New York: State University of New York Press.

Shimizu, Celine Parreñas. 2006. "Queens of Anal, Double, Triple, and the Gang Bang: Producing Asian/American Feminism in Pornography." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 18 (1):235-276.

**Wednesday, 2/10**

**Week Four: Resistive Bodies in Sports**

Andrews, Vernon L. 1996. "Black Bodies—White Control: The Contested Terrain of Sportsmanlike Conduct." *Journal of African American Men* 2 (1):33-59.

Finley, Nancy J. 2010. "Skating Femininity: Gender Maneuvering in Women's Roller Derby." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39 (4):359-387.

Richardson, Niall. 2008. "Flex-Rated! Female Bodybuilding: Feminist Resistance or Erotic Spectacle?." *Journal of Gender Studies* 17 (4):289-301.

Rahbari, Ladan. 2019. "Pushing Gender to its Limits: Iranian Women Bodybuilders on Instagram." *Journal of Gender Studies* 28 (5):591-602.

**Wednesday, 2/17**

**Week Five: Drag: Performative Subversion?**

Butler, Judith. 2006. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions." Pp 175-193 in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Halberstam, Jack. 1998. "Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance." Pp 231-266 in *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Upadhyay, Nishant. 2019. "'Can You Get More American than Native American?': Drag and Settler Colonialism in *Rupaul's Drag Race*." *Cultural Studies* 33 (3):480-501.

Wilcox, Melissa M. 2018. "'We ARE Nuns, Silly!': Serious Parody as Activism." Pp 67-103 in *Queer Nuns: Religion, Activism, and Serious Parody*. New York: New York University Press.

**Wednesday, 2/24**

**Week Six: Disciplining Asian Men's Gender/Sexuality**

Han, C. Winter. 2015. "Being an Oriental, I Could Never be Completely a Man: Gendering Asian Men." Pp 27-56 in *Geisha of a Different Kind: Race and Sexuality in Gaysian America*. New York: New York University Press.

—. "Sexy Like a Girl and Horny Like a Boy: Contemporary Gay 'Western' Narratives about Gay 'Asian' Men." Pp 57-92 in *Geisha of a Different Kind: Race and Sexuality in Gaysian America*. New York: New York University Press.

**Wednesday, 3/3                                    Week Seven: Queer Bodies in Porn**

Butler, Heather. 2004. "What Do You Call a Lesbian with Long Fingers? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography." Pp 167-197 in *Porn Studies*. Edited by Linda Williams. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Barriault, Marcel. 2016. "Bucking Heteronormativity: Buck Angel as Porn Performer, Producer and Pedagogue." *Porn Studies* 3 (2):133-146.

Hill-Meyer, Tobi. 2013. "Where the Trans Women Aren't: The Slow Inclusion of Trans Women in Feminist and Queer Porn." Pp 155-163 in *The Feminist Porn Book*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Jones, Angela. 2020. "Cumming to a Screen Near You: Transmasculine and Non-Binary People in the Camming Industry." *Porn Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/23268743.2020.1757498.

**Wednesday, 3/10                                    Week Eight: Transition Narratives, Cisnormativity, and "Authentic" Trans Bodies**

Wilcox, Annabelle. 2003. "Branding Teena: (Mis)Representations in the Media." *Sexualities* 6 (3-4):407-425.

Miller, Lucy J. 2015. "Becoming One of the Girls/Guys: Distancing Transgender Representations in Popular Film Comedies." Pp 127-142 in *Transgender Communication Studies: Histories, Trends, and Trajectories* edited by Leland G. Spencer and Jamie C. Capuzza. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Mocarski, Richard, Sim Butler, Betsy Emmons, and Rachael Smallwood, 2013. "'A Different Kind of Man': Mediated Transgendered Subjectivity, Chaz Bono on *Dancing With the Stars*." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. 37 (3):249-264.

Lovelock, Michael. 2017. "Call Me Caitlyn: Making and Making Over the 'Authentic' Transgender Body in Anglo-American Popular Culture." *Journal of Gender Studies* 26 (6):675-687.

**Wednesday, 3/17**                      **Week Nine: Constructing and Depicting Disability**

Whittington-Walsh, Fiona. 2010. "From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1939) to Sling Blade (1997)." *Disability & Society* 17 (6):695-707. DOI: 10.1080/0968759022000010461

Malinowska, Anna. 2018. "Lost in Representation: Disabled Sex and the Aesthetics of the 'Norm'." *Sexualities* 21 (3):364-378.

Barounis, Cynthia. 2009. "Crippling Heterosexuality, Queering Able-Bodiedness: *Murderball*, *Brokeback Mountain* and the Contested Masculine Body." *Journal of Visual Culture* 8 (1):54-75.

Rubin, Henry Alex, Dana Adam Shapiro, Jeffrey Mandel, Keith Cavill, Andy Cohn, Scott Hogsett, Christopher Igoe, Bob Lujano, Joe Soares, and Mark Zupan. 2005. *Murderball*. United States: Lions Gate Home Entertainment.

**Wednesday, 3/24**                      **Spring Break—No Class**

**Wednesday, 3/31**                      **Week Eleven: Wellness, Self-Care, and Empowerment?**

Bordo, Susan. 2003. "'Material Girl': The Effacements of Postmodern Culture." Pp 245-275 in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Press.

White, Michele. 2018. "Beauty as an 'act of political warfare': Feminist Makeup Tutorials and Masquerades on YouTube." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 46 (1/2):139-156.

Neil, Latisha and Afiya Mbilishaka. 2019. "'Hey Curlfriends!': Hair Care and Self-Care Messaging on YouTube by Black Women Natural Hair Vloggers." *Journal of Black Studies* 50 (2):156-177.

Zavarrato, Staci M. 2020. "Taking the Social Justice Fight to the Cloud: Social Media and Body Positivity." *Public Integrity* DOI: 10.1080/10999922.2020.1782104

**Wednesday, 4/7**                      **Presentations**

**Wednesday, 4/14**                      **Presentations**

**Wednesday, 4/21**                      **Presentations**

**Wednesday, 4/28**                      **Presentations**