This course combines historical and theoretical perspectives on the place of the body in culture, from early modernity through to modernist conceptions of embodiment. The classes will examine specific literary and philosophical texts, including Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Descartes, Mary Shelley, and Joyce, alongside theorists of the body, including Bakhtin, Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Freud and Lacan. Some questions we will explore include: Is the body a form of knowledge? What part does the body play in the construction of self and other? What makes bodies such compelling objects of desire or repulsion? How is the immediate materiality of the body represented in literary texts? How, conversely, can the body itself be 'written' - marked and changed by ideological and socio-historical forces? What, ultimately, can we say about the enigmatic relation between the body and language?

This course selects some salient writers and thinkers whose relation to embodiment opens up a variety of avenues of interrogation of these questions. It is not conceived of as in any way exhaustive of the topic, nor does it attempt to put across an established theory. The hope is that it will act as an introduction to a set of issues circulating around the ‘backbone’ of embodiment and its theorization; as a provocation to engage with a topic that has become increasingly significant over recent years in a variety of critical disciplines.

The course assumes that you are able to devote between six and eight hours of reading time to prepare for each class. The specified reading for each class is made up of core reading – texts that will form the centre of class discussion each week – and secondary readings, which will offer in-depth critical material on the primary texts and/or suggest further lines of enquiry – ways of opening out broader questions emerging from the week’s main texts. The secondary reading is not compulsory, but to get the most out of the course you will need to explore at least some of this material. Most of the texts are readily available in the various Cambridge libraries, but PDFs of the core reading will be posted on CamTools or emailed to participants. Each week I will ask one of the group to pre-circulate (by e-mail) a response to a core text, and will also ask for presentations in class on material from the secondary list.

I will not be providing a list of essay topics for those wishing to write coursework essays for this seminar. I would prefer you to propose your own essay topics, and to consult me before beginning to write. Essays may employ whatever materials and theories you choose, but should bear a clear relation to the themes central to the course.

My e-mail address is: dah54@cam.ac.uk
Week 1: What is a Body?

Topics and questions we will explore include: Is the body a form of knowledge? What kinds of knowledge can the body provide? Epistemologies of and from the body; subjectivity, objectivity and the body; bodies and/as cultural artifacts; can the body be written (and how are texts bodily)?

Core Reading:

- Michel de Montaigne, 'Of Experience' in the *Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, vol. 3 essay 12 (we'll be using both the Frame and the Florio translations; either is fine, or any other good translation for that matter)
- Marcel Mauss, ‘Techniques of the Body’ [1934], in (e.g.) *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Carey and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 454-77

Secondary Reading:


Week 2: Insides

Topics and questions we will explore include: Does the body have a history? Epistemic shifts; nostalgia and embodiment; vulnerability, power and ideology; the social body; selfhood and inwardness; inside and outside.

Core Reading:

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Oxford or Arden my preferred editions)
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, chapter 1 (‘The body of the condemned’), trans.
Secondary Reading:

- Jean Starobinski, ‘The Inside and the Outside’, *The Hudson Review*, vol. 28 no. 3 (Autumn 1975), 333-51

Week 3: Philosophical Bodies

Topics and questions we will explore include: How do bodies think? Physics and metaphysics; bodies and machines; did the Enlightenment change the body? Secularisation, commodification, textualisation of bodies.

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:


Week 4: Bodies in Parts

Topics and questions we will explore include: bodily disintegration and reintegration; part-whole relations; the (dis)ordered and the disabled body; What makes a body grotesque? The uncanny; monstrosity and humanity; Can there be a mechanical (inorganic) monster?

Core Reading:

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus*
Secondary Reading:


Week 5: **Outsides**

Topics and questions we will explore include: skin and self; surface and depth; the modernist body; bodies in consumer culture; language and the body; psychoanalysis and the body; jouissance, sexuality and the body.

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:

- Christine Froula, Modernism’s Body: Sex, Culture and Joyce (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)
- Richard Brown, James Joyce and Sexuality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- Lindsey Tucker, Stephen and Bloom at Life's Feast: Alimentary Symbolism and the Creative Process in James Joyce's "Ulysses" (Ohio State University Press, 1986)
- Richard Brown, ed., Joyce, ‘Penelope’ and the Body (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005)

Week 6: Touching Bodies

Topics and questions we will explore might include: Presence and absence; bodies and texts; bodies and identities; bodies, biology and technology; body ethics; tact and touch.

Core Reading (provisional):


Secondary Reading:

- Abbie Garrington, Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing (Edinburgh, 2013)
- Gilles Deleuze, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2001)

DAH
August 2014