

Modernity and Body Politics
HIST 615-007 / HIST 635-004 / ARTH 599-004
Syllabus

Prof. Sun-Young Park
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Office hours: M 2-3pm

Spring 2015
R 7:20-10pm
Robinson A 123

(Please always e-mail me in advance if you plan on coming to office hours, as I may have unforeseen commitments on certain weeks. If you are not available during the scheduled office hours, please feel free to get in touch with me to set up an appointment.)

Course overview

This course will interrogate how material practices and spaces have negotiated the relationship between subjects and society in the modern era, focusing on European and U.S. history of the 19th and 20th centuries. By drawing on a range of challenging and influential scholarship from cultural, architectural, urban, art, and design history, we will explore the following questions: How does the body negotiate the relationship between self and society? How have past regulatory practices of the body influenced the design of objects and spaces intended for its maintenance and/or governance? How can we reclaim human agency while acknowledging the limits imposed on the body by social, cultural, and material constructs? The readings for the course will be both historical and theoretical, organized thematically around weekly topics such as: sensibilities; labor; gender; race; technology. The central aim of the course will be to relate the history of material practices to ideas about difference, power, and subjectivity.

Course requirements

Grade breakdown:

Class participation 20%
Response papers 20%
Book review 25%
Historiographical essay 35%

1. *Class participation:* As a graduate seminar, this class will be primarily based around group discussions. You are expected to come to class each week having read the assigned texts and prepared to discuss them with your classmates. Each week, one to two students will work together to prepare questions and thoughts to share with the class in advance of the seminar, and lead the discussion. On your week to lead, you should spend approximately 20 minutes at the start of class briefly summarizing the readings and highlighting key themes and issues you would like to address. You will be expected to do additional background reading on the texts/authors assigned, so that you can provide some historical and historiographical context to your fellow students. During the discussion, you may also want to relate the topic of the week to some aspect of your own research interests, thereby broadening the scope of the discussion.
2. *Response papers:* To facilitate discussions and help you prepare your thoughts on the readings, you will write seven 1-2 page response papers over the course of the semester, to be submitted by 12pm each Wednesday prior to the seminar meeting. These papers should not be summaries of the texts, but

critical reflections on issues, themes, and methods that emerge from the readings. In your papers, you should frame at least 2 questions that can serve as prompts for class discussion. These questions will be shared online with your classmates in advance of the seminar.

3. *Book review* (4-5 pages), due 3/5: During the first few weeks of the semester, you will each select a book published in the past 5 years that you think relates to the theme(s) of the course. You will write a book review of your selection, conforming to a professional journal of your choice (*American Historical Review*, *Journal of Social History*, etc), and prepare a short presentation on it for our meeting on 3/5. You and your classmates will then choose one of these books to read and discuss as a class for 4/9.
4. *Historiographical essay* (12-15 pages), due 5/11: For this essay, you will explore a selection of literature around one of the themes we have discussed in class, to compare and analyze different historical methods and approaches. You will be asked to prepare a brief essay proposal (500 words) and a preliminary bibliography by 3/26. During the last two class sessions, you will each give an oral presentation on your work-in-progress. If you are interested in doing a research paper, please see me in advance.

Reading assignments

The following books are available for purchase at the university bookstore:

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)
- Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (1986)
- Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (1988)
- Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (1990)
- Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (2004)
- Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (2008)
- Edward Slavishak, *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh* (2008)
- Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (2013)

Please purchase the following book separately (used copies are available on Amazon for less than \$1) for our 3/19 class:

- Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (1980)

Other texts on the syllabus will be shared through Blackboard.

Course policies

- *Academic integrity*: The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code (<http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>) with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another

person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or Chicago format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

- *Course communication:* Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.
- *Attendance and conduct:* You are expected to attend and participate in every class session. For justifiable absences (such as illness or other emergencies), you may be asked to provide official documentation. You should e-mail me in advance if you know of an upcoming conflict. Repeated absences will impact your participation grade. Please refrain from eating or sleeping during class time.
- *Use of technology:* Cell phones and other communicative devices must be switched off or put on silent (not vibrate) mode during class hours. If you are seen using your phone during class time, it will be confiscated until the end of the class. As this is a discussion-based seminar, I also ask that you not use laptops/tablets in class (unless you require special accommodations; see below). You should bring a hard copy of the week's readings to class, as we will frequently look at the texts together.
- *Late assignments:* For all written work, lateness will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, A to A-) for every 24-hour period beyond the deadline. Weekly response papers will not be accepted late. If you have extenuating circumstances, you should always get in touch with me directly.
- *Special accommodations:* If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Weekly schedule

1/22 Introduction

1/29 Regulation
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975)

2/5 7:20-8:20pm: Library research session with George Oberle at Fenwick
Sensibilities I
Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant* (1986)

2/12 Sensibilities II
Otter, *The Victorian Eye* (2008)
Daniel Wickberg, "What is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,"
American Historical Review 112, no. 3 (2007)

2/19 Labor I

- Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (1990)
 Due: Book review selection
- 2/26 Labor II
 Slavishak, *Bodies of Work* (2008)
- 3/5 Empire
 Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (1988)
 Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (2002),
 selections
 Due: Book reviews (be prepared to discuss in class)
- 3/12 SPRING BREAK
- 3/19 Domesticity I: Gender
 Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home* (1980)
 Christopher Reed, ed. *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and
 Architecture* (1996), selections
 Due: Final paper proposals
- 3/26 Domesticity II: Race
 Harris, *Little White Houses* (2013)
- 4/2 Technology
 Cogdell, *Eugenic Design* (2004)
- 4/9 Reading: Book selected by the class
- 4/16 NO CLASS (Professor away)
- 4/23 Student presentations
- 4/30 Student presentations and wrap-up