ANTH 410
ADVANCED TOPICS IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF BODIES

Instructor: Dr. Lisa M. Mitchell

Course Description and Objectives
This seminar is intended to disrupt, provoke, and enrich how we think about bodies. While we tend to take our bodies for granted, to think about them as natural and self-evident, our goal in this course will be to think deeply and productively about bodies, what they are, how they are meaningful, and how they are socially and politically conditioned. In the first part of the course we delve into historical and contemporary readings from a variety of disciplines to set the stage for problematizing dominant and taken for granted views of the body and for considering how bodies differ across history and cultures. Then, we turn to thinking about bodies through a variety of concepts and analytical frameworks— the experiencing/phenomenological body, Foucault’s biopolitics and biopower; local biologies, biovalue and bodily commodification—and through topics such as sexed and racialised bodies, representations of bodies, desired bodies, and reviled bodies.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
• knowledge of key terms and concepts in anthropological approaches to the body and representation: e.g. embodiment, discipline, techniques, inscription, etc.
• knowledge and skills in thinking critically about bodies
• an understanding of the importance of representations of the human body in relation to debates about sex, gender and sexuality
• think critically about whether bodies are merely “natural”, are socially and textually constructed, or something else entirely
• development and implementation of skills in researching planning and writing a term paper incorporating a critical analytical understanding of relevant concepts and theories.
• work collaboratively with fellow students and present material in class