

## **ORGANS: BODIES, MEDICINE, AND HISTORY**

The Term 2 (2012) incarnation of History 586 is a thematic introduction to the body in history. Over the course of the semester, we will dive into some major recent works of the history of science and medicine, supplementing these with more broadly theoretical works, in an exploration of dead bodies, miraculous bodies, virtual bodies, painful bodies, desiring bodies, colonial bodies, barking bodies, cyborg bodies, sick bodies, vibrant bodies, and bodies in parts, among others. The seminar will take a transdisciplinary approach to situating bodies in history, and students will be introduced to a range of historiographical approaches from across history, anthropology, political science, and cultural theory.

This is *not* a broad introduction to the history of medicine, though many of our readings are from that field and most intersect it in some way. This is also *not* an exhaustive summation of the many, many (many!) different approaches and topics that help constitute the full range of humanistic or historical scholarship on bodies and embodiment in history. Instead, each week is designed to help us think through a particular set of issues, cases, and methodologies.

### Let's talk about me.

First, let's get the basics out of the way. My name is Carla Nappi. My email address is [carla.nappi@ubc.ca](mailto:carla.nappi@ubc.ca). My spring 2012 office hours are Mondays 3-4 in BuTo 1109, and by e-mail appointment. It is now the Spring 2012 term. The course meets on Wednesdays from 9:30 - 12:00 in Buchanan Tower 1206.

I am a historian of China and of the history of science and medicine, and I am deeply interested in the history of ways of knowing. My first book was a study of belief-making in early modern Chinese natural history through the lens of a compendium of *materia medica*. My work right now is focused on trying to understand what it has looked like throughout early modernity for people to decide that something was equivalent or identical to something else. While the broad topic lies somewhere within the history of translation, the questions more properly form the scaffolding of histories of identification, sameness, and equivalence: of words, of ideas, of sentences, of objects, of people. I also host the New Books in East Asia podcast.

You'll learn quickly that I have a fairly unorthodox approach to history. I like experiments, risks, and creativity, when grounded in a solid foundation of rigorously defensible evidence. I appreciate hard work (and evidence thereof). I like challenging others respectfully and being respectfully challenged, and I change my mind often and without warning or apology. I support the resuscitation of a less rigidly-specialist approach to historical practice. I watch a lot of TV and read a lot of philosophy and fiction. I lend out my books all the time (so feel free to ask if there's something you'd like to borrow). I don't like unnecessary adjectives. On most days, I still believe in some idealized notion of a life of the mind. I like cheese, and punctuality, and pets. Though the alien queens on the classic and new *V* series both have their virtues, I prefer Diana over Anna. Writing is important to me.

There are ways to contact me that don't involve throwing something loud or bouncy at my head.

I am an email person, not a phone person. The best way to contact me is **always, always** via email: carla.nappi@ubc.ca. Unless I'm traveling, during the term you can usually expect a reply within twenty-four hours. You can try my office phone in an emergency at (604) 822 5176, but email will be quicker (always, always) because I rarely answer the phone. In addition to my regular office hour this term, you can email me any time to set up an appointment, or stop by and chat whenever my door is open. If my door is closed and you hear shuffling sounds in there and you knock but don't get an answer, there are two possibilities: 1) The Doctor, Rory, Amy Pond, and River Song have finally come to whisk me away on time-traveling adventures and the book-piles in my office are spontaneously reorganizing themselves to make way for the Tardis; or 2) I'm in my office working with the sound on my iPod jacked all the way up and I can't hear you. Either way, don't be offended if I don't answer. It's not you, it's me. Or The Doctor.

Now, let's talk about you.

You each have a voice, and my job is to help you inform, refine, and project it this term. Over the course of the semester, you will be developing your own research agendas – thus, it is critical for you to start thinking (from Day One) about how to bring your **own work** into the discussion. Come see me any time to talk about ways to develop your research in directions inspired by our class discussions.

To pass the course, there are some challenging-but-not-overly-onerous requirements to be met.

1. **Reading and Thinking.** All students are responsible for reading the assigned texts thoughtfully and critically before each session of the seminar. Come to class ready to talk about the work. I expect to see you all, each week. More than one absence over the term will start to impact your grade.

2. **Weekly Thinkpieces.** Each week you should post, by Tuesday at 12 PM, one fantastic thing stemming from your reading that you're prepared to talk about in class, if pressed. This can take any number of forms: a question, a paragraph, a sentence, one very very very very carefully chosen word. In any case, it should represent a thoughtful engagement with the reading. As the term progresses, I will refine this weekly assignment as necessary. The point of these is for me to see something of what each of you is thinking about the readings each week, before we come together as a group to talk about it.
3. **Jump-Starting Seminar for One Week as The Seminar Guru.** You will take turns leading a session of the seminar by presenting an overview of the reading, including a discussion of major themes and critiques of the work, and presenting questions for discussion. In preparation for leading seminar, you will be asked to write a 3-5 page (typed, double-spaced) response essay and provide a brief bibliography of any supplementary sources you have consulted for that week's reading, which might include book reviews. Please also come to seminar armed with basic biographical information on the author or authors of the week: Who are they? Where do they currently work? Where (and with whom, and in what field) did they get their PhD? Where do they typically like to go out for a nice dinner? Your 3-5 page response essay should: 1. Provide a brief overview of the major themes in the week's book or other reading. 2. Critique some aspect of the book based on your own reading and whatever supplementary material (reviews, etc) you consulted. You can also use your critique to place the reading in historiographical perspective. See me if you're not sure where to look for major reviews. 3. Present questions for discussion that reflect your careful reading of the book. We will be posting response essays and most other course material (including weekly readings) on our Vista site for the course. Please post your response essay no later than **Tuesday at 12 PM of each week** so that we all have the afternoon and evening hours to read and carefully consider your deep thoughts.
4. **Read the Week's Response Essay.** Everyone should read the weekly response essays carefully **before** the seminar meeting on Wednesday morning. During the seminar the week's leader will (briefly and for no more than 10 minutes!!!) open the discussion, and will be expected to occasionally jump in and lead us all down The Path of Right Thinking when we go astray.
5. **Final Essay.** The final paper will be a 20-25ish-pp critical essay relating the themes of the course to some aspect of your work.

Please check your email.

**IT IS VITAL that you check your email regularly**, as email is the primary medium I will use to contact you about the course.

Please also go and make nice-nice with our course Vista site.

The course Vista site is our virtual classroom for the semester. Log in with your CWL. Click on Tab for “HIST 586D - 201 - Topics in Intellectual History - 2011W - Nappi.” The “Course Menu” on the left side of the page lists all of the course components, including the discussion board, course readings, and other handouts.

To post on the Vista Board:

1. Click “Discussions”
2. Click on the topic for the week (“Week 2,” etc.)
3. To post a new thread, e.g. to post your response paper for weeks in which you’re leading discussion, Click the bar for “Create Message” and follow the directions. You can also post attachments.

And so on, and so on. Lather, rinse, repeat.

You will, eventually, receive a final grade for the course.

The final grades for this seminar will be assessed as follows:

1. Regular and vocal participation in seminar, including your 3-5 pp response essay and participation as seminar guru: 35%
2. Weekly responses: 20% (these will not be individually graded but I will read all of them each week)
3. Final 20-25ish-pp critical essay relating the themes of the course to some aspect of your work: 45% (Quality, not quantity, is primary here. More on this later in the term.) **\*\*Due date TBA. Late essays will be penalized 5 points per day late.\*\***

We will be reading things.

Most weeks, we will be working through an academic monograph. The books available for purchase and on reserve at the library include:

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*

Steven Epstein, *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research*

Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*

Annemarie Mol, *the body multiple*

Margaret Lock, *Twice Dead*

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women*

Keith Wailoo, *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line*

Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*

Read each book or essay actively with the following questions in mind: What is the author's main argument? What kinds of evidence or examples are summoned to support the main argument? What kinds of sources does the author use? How does the main argument of the reading fit into the broader literature on the subject or within the field? Finally, and critically: how does this particular reading engage with a particular way of thinking about bodies and embodiment in history? Reading to answer these questions is more important than obsessing over the details within a given study. Try to find an aspect of the material that you find useful or inspiring. Avoid dismissiveness. Feel free to bring in your own materials that you find to be good to think with.

You'll notice that each week on the schedule that follows is introduced by the first (or in some cases, last or middle) line of a poem. There is a reason for this, and we'll talk about it in class. Think about bodies, and language, and the way they create each other.

Plagiarism is naughty.

Don't plagiarize. Here's how UBC defines it: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/clc/airc.html>

So say we all.

## A SKELETON OF THE SEMESTER

Let us go then, you and I...

Week One (04 Jan)    Introductions

In which we discuss the course and the plan for the seminar.

What are wounds for?...

Week Two (11 Jan)    Painful Bodies

In which we will begin our journey by jumping right into the deep end with Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (1985). Think about materiality, radical trans-disciplinarity, and the relationship between language and the body. Start early. Give yourself time to process. Don't fret if you feel like you don't fully comprehend or can't fully engage with every part of the book: dance with it a while and find a way to develop a dialogue with the aspects of the text that speak to you. Start keeping a 'This Seems Important' list: does Scarry mention texts or authors or theory-lingo that seem important to you, but that you haven't read (or read about) before? No worries: on the list it goes. We'll talk about it in class.

**If when my wife is sleeping and the baby and Kathleen are sleeping...**

Week Three (18 Jan) Gendered Bodies

In which we discuss Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993), a classic in body studies, gender studies, cultural studies – in lots of studies. Again, with this one, start early and take your time and find parts of the book your brain can dance with. We will be working on a close reading exercise in class, talking about the essays, and pulling common and potentially useful themes out of the essays in our discussion. Think about materiality of bodies. Add to your 'This Seems Important' list as necessary and prudent.

**My body holds its shape. The genius is intact...**

Week Four (25 Jan) Opened Bodies

In which we will discuss Katharine Park's *Secrets of Women* (2006). Allow your brain to take a deep breath and exhale as we move from theory- and literature-heavy work to a more explicitly historical approach set in medieval Europe. We'll contextualize Park's study within a larger field of like-minded literature: on anatomy, on women's bodies in medieval Europe, on embodied religion. Use this as an opportunity to appreciate the materiality of Park's work as an object, and take a gander at the Zone Books website to familiarize yourself with this publishing imprint. We'll look at some primary source material in class this week as well, because that's how we roll.

**I've been having these awful dreams, each a little different, though the core's the same.....**

Week Five (01 Feb) Bodies of Difference I: Standard Bodies

In which we will begin our discussion of medical bodies and the categories they create with Steven Epstein's *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research* (2007) and the intersection of history of medicine, policy, and politics. Think about the idea of a standard body and its role in historiography. Think about difference and sameness. Consider integrating sociological modes of thinking into your work. Wishing your professor a happy birthday is optional.

**...Now something was raising a stink...**

Week Six (08 Feb) Bodies of Difference II: Dead Bodies

In which we will continue our discussion of medical bodies and categories with Margaret Lock's *Twice Dead* (2002). Think about the form of Lock's narrative. Think about the idea of locally-situated definitions of death and life, and local experiences of the body. Consider integrating anthropological modes of thinking into your work. Breathe deep in this one: it's a masterful and inspiring work by a foundational anthropologist of locally-situated bodies. In fact, why not take a few minutes and learn something about Margaret Lock and her other work before our class meeting. It'll be good **and** good for you.

**The young composer, working that summer at an artist's colony, had watched her for a week...**

Week Seven (15 Feb) Bodies of Difference III: Colored Bodies

In which we will round out our discussion of medical bodies and categories and politics and with Keith Wailoo's *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line* (2011). We have here a critical intervention into the ways that conceptions of and attitudes toward race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped the modern history of health. What's not to like? Think about Wailoo's methodology, his source base, and his approach to the modern and very recent history of medicine.

**The white light is artificial, and hygienic as heaven...**

Week Eight (29 Feb) The Body Multiple



**I sing the body electric...**

Week Twelve (28 Mar)      Virtual Bodies

In which we discuss Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999). Technoculture, robots, information, and cybernetic bodies in (according to Donna Haraway) "a powerful prophylactic against our most likely alien abduction scenario." No idea who Donna Haraway is? We'll remedy that this week. We'll be situating this one within the broader field of the literary side of STS. No idea what STS is? We'll fix that. Start early on this one, cyborg Cowboys and Cowgals. Yee-haw!

**It was clear when I left the party...**

Week Thirteen (04 Apr)      Non-Human Bodies

In which we conclude our semester's wanderings with Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010). As you read this, think about the aspect of body studies that is about thing-ness, objectification, and materiality. Come to seminar ready to talk about how we might move forward from the state of the field as it is: where have we been, and where might body history go in the future? Think big, think risky, and as they say on *Project Runway*, Don't Bore Nina (with Nina for our purposes = your professor + everyone).