

Messy Subjects: Identity and the Body

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M/W 11:10-12:30pm

M/W 3:40-5pm

How do we distinguish human bodies according to categories of identity? How do these distinctions intersect with the culture that constructs them? This course will consider these questions by examining American fiction, film, and academic scholarship from across the twentieth and twenty-first century. These objects of study will come from two historical moments—the 1920s and early 30s and the past twenty years or so.

As we analyze these cultural snapshots, we will think about how identity traffics between notions of the mind and body, individual lives and collective groupings, and corporeal reality and social abstraction. We will think about how different people understand these dynamics and how these concepts change over time, as well as how these relays intersect with other organizations of human experience (e.g., law, religion, socioeconomics). Finally, we will contemplate how recent concerns about embodied identities like #metoo, Black Lives Matter, and LGBTQ rights have been a long time in the making—and are perhaps not as revolutionary as some might wish them to be.

As the final course in the English series at Menlo College, this class is designed to encourage students to engage in original research and writing. Course assignments will support students in producing a final thesis that features original research in its engagement with one or more course concerns.

Prerequisites: Students must have earned a C- or better in English 102.

Course learning outcomes

- Analyze diversely challenging texts.
- Synthesize textual content using evidence-based analysis expressed in writing and in class-based discussion.
- Author effectively written artifacts that demonstrate an understanding of style, grammar, and disciplinary convention.
- Utilize academic and non-academic resources to conduct research that demonstrates metaliteracy.

Required course texts

- Wharton, *Twilight Sleep* (1927)
- Schuyler, *Black No More* (1931)

Assignments and grading

- Participation 15%
- Coursework (oral presentation, reading quizzes) 10%
- Master ePortfolio 5%

- Annotated bibliography 5%
- Literature review 10%
- Thesis draft 15%
- Thesis 40% (includes thesis presentation)

Coursework

The required assignments for this course include regular reading, an oral presentation on one course text, and a Master ePortfolio. The oral presentations will be done in small groups (2-3 students). These 8-10 minute presentations will initiate class discussion of the given work on their assigned day and thus should aim to raise questions rather than provide answers. I will deliver a sample presentation in Week 2. We will discuss the details of the Master ePortfolio in Week 2 as well.

I will also give infrequent reading quizzes. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will feature four straightforward questions about key story elements (e.g., how does the protagonist get to and from work?). So long as you do the reading, you will pass with flying colors. If you miss a quiz on a day when you have an excused absence, your grade will be calculated without it. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Major course assignments

The guidelines for the major course assignments—annotated bibliography, literature review, and final thesis—are already up on MOLE. We will discuss their details as the due dates approach. I will not answer content-related emails in the 24 hours preceding major assignment deadlines (trust me, this policy benefits everyone involved). **Each major assignment is due in hard copy at the beginning of class and / or must be uploaded to MOLE before you arrive that day.**

Over the course of the term, there are five “individual research conference” days on which class will not meet for a regular session. On those days, I will hold individual sessions to discuss your work with you. You are **required to meet with me two times** in this capacity. You are also **required to meet twice, for at least 30 minutes, with a Bowman librarian** to discuss your research. Finally, you are **required to visit the Writing Center to workshop each of three graded components of your thesis** (annotated bibliography, literature review, and thesis draft). These sessions can occur any time **before Week 15**. Visits will be tracked on a Google Doc linked to on our course page. At the end of each meeting, please ask the librarian to update the Google Doc or ask the WOCC consultant to email me confirmation of your meeting. It is your responsibility to double-check the Google Doc to make sure each session gets added.

Major assignments cannot be submitted via email. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade for every day past the deadline, including weekend days. After five days, you will receive a zero for the assignment (note, however, that you must complete all assignments to pass the class). **The thesis and Master Portfolio must be submitted to MOLE on Monday December 9; no late papers will be accepted.**

Participation

The success of our seminar depends on the active participation of every student. Accordingly, participation constitutes a large portion (15%) of the final grade for the

course. I will calculate it as follows: I will not keep track of the number of times you raise your hand; I will attend to the evidence that you actively, regularly engage with the material, share your insights and questions with the class, and incorporate these thoughts as well as my feedback into the course assignments.

I have a no-screens policy in class. If I see you on your phone during class, it will drastically affect your participation grade. The same rubric applies to your physical classroom presence: arrive on time; stay for the entire session; do not engage in side conversations or take bathroom breaks on your own terms. I will pause class after roughly 40 minutes to allow for a collective break, during which time you can use the restroom and catch up on all missed social media. Further behavioral guidelines appear below.

The chance to attend to one subject for 80 minutes, with a community of other people, is a rare opportunity; take advantage of it.

Absences

- Note that absences are *only* excused with medical documentation or prior approval from me (athletic absences are approved provided you contact me 48 hours beforehand.)
- 3 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by ½ of a letter.
- 5 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1 letter.
- **6 unexcused absences will be grounds for failing the course.**

Late arrivals

- **Each tardy arrival will lower your participation grade by 1%.**
- If you arrive without a hard copy of an assignment due that day, that counts as a tardy arrival for the day (owing to the missed time it takes you to go print).

Academic Integrity

Menlo College faculty are committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity for the students of the College. Menlo College expects that students will do their own work and that their quizzes, tests, examinations, laboratory work, research papers, essays, projects, internships, and all other assignments honestly reflect their own learning and knowledge. Academic dishonesty in the forms of cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism, as defined below, are violations of the Academic Integrity Policy and are prohibited. Academic dishonesty in all its variations is a violation of this policy.

A. *Cheating*: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, study aids or submitting another person's written work product (whether "borrowed" or purchased) in any academic course or exercise.

B. *Fabrication*: Falsification or invention of any information or citation in any course or exercise.

C. *Facilitating Academic Misconduct*: Knowingly helping or attempting to help another student to engage in academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, writing a paper or take-home exam for another student, doing the research and/or citations for any other student's academic exercise.

D. *Plagiarism*: Using the words or ideas of another and representing them as one's own in any academic course or exercise, including, but not limited to:

- Failure to use quotes when using the words of another author or provide the proper citation
- Paraphrasing another author's words (or website) without attribution and citation, whether one or multiple other authors
- Presenting or promulgating the ideas of another author as one's own without attribution citation, even when using your own words.

Students found in violation of the Academic Integrity Policy are given a failing grade on the assignment. In any one course, repeat offenders will be given a failing grade for that course. In addition, students found in violation of the Academic Integrity Policy during a final examination, final project, or related final evaluation or assignment, will be given a failing grade for the course. Any student who fails a course as a result of violating the Academic Integrity Policy will not be allowed to withdraw from that course. All violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be recorded through the Office of Academic Affairs. Repeat offenders across courses will be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the Academic Dean or the Dean's designee. Penalties can include suspension, and if the situation warrants expulsion.

Resources

On campus:

- The Writing and Oral Communication Center and Bowman Library
 - The WOCC tutors and librarians are wonderful, helpful people. We will visit the Library twice during the term for research workshops. You are also **required to meet with these individuals** to discuss your research (see guidelines above). I encourage you to make use of these excellent resources throughout the term.

Online:

Be wary of online sources, especially Wikipedia. Always consult more than one source and look for consistency. Here are a few reputable sites for cross-checking purposes:

- CCTC's Grammar Site: cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/index
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: owl.english.purdue.edu
 - Includes MLA and APA formatting and style guides

Weekly schedule

With the exception of Wednesday August 21, all texts should be read and all writing assignments must be completed *prior* to the indicated class.

Week 1-2: Introductions

W 8/21: Course introduction

M 8/26: Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture" (2003)

Weeks 2-5: Feeling

W 8/28: Research question due: review thesis and Master Portfolio guidelines, along with the rest of the content in MOLE's "Writing Materials" folder

W 9/4: Edith Wharton, *Twilight Sleep* (1927) to page 177 (end of Ch. 16)

- M 9/9: Edith Wharton, *Twilight Sleep* (1927) to end
W 9/11: Research workshop @ Bowman: annotated bibliographies; revised research question due
M 9/16: Lisa Mendelman, "Ambivalence and Irony: Gendered Forms in Interwar America" (2015)

Weeks 6-8: Skin

- W 9/18: Individual research conferences
M 9/23: George S. Schuyler, *Black No More* (1931), to page 90 (end of Ch. 6)
W 9/25: Individual research conferences
M 9/30: George S. Schuyler, *Black No More* (1931), to end
W 10/2: Research workshop @ Bowman: literature reviews; annotated bibliography due in hard copy
M 10/7: bell hooks, *Black Looks* excerpt (1992)
W 10/9: Literature review workshop (draft due in class)
F 10/11: Literature review due to MOLE and to my mailbox by 5pm

Weeks 9-10: Sex

- M 10/14: E. Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain" (1997)
W 10/16: Individual research conferences
M 10/21: Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)
W 10/23: John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters* excerpt (2012)

Weeks 11-12: Strength

- M 10/28: Hannah Gadsby, *Nanette* (2018)
W 10/30: Individual research conferences
M 11/4: Gadsby articles, *New York Times* and *The Atlantic* (2018)

Weeks 12-15: Writing intensive

- W 11/6: Thesis outline due
M 11/11: Individual research conferences
W 11/13: Thesis draft due in class
F 11/15: Thesis draft due to MOLE by 5pm
M 11/18: Oral presentation workshop
W 11/20: Thesis presentations, Day 1
M 12/2: Thesis presentations, Day 2
W 12/4: Thesis presentations, Day 3 & course wrap-up

Monday December 9: Thesis and Master Portfolio due to MOLE by 5pm