

# The Body in Global History

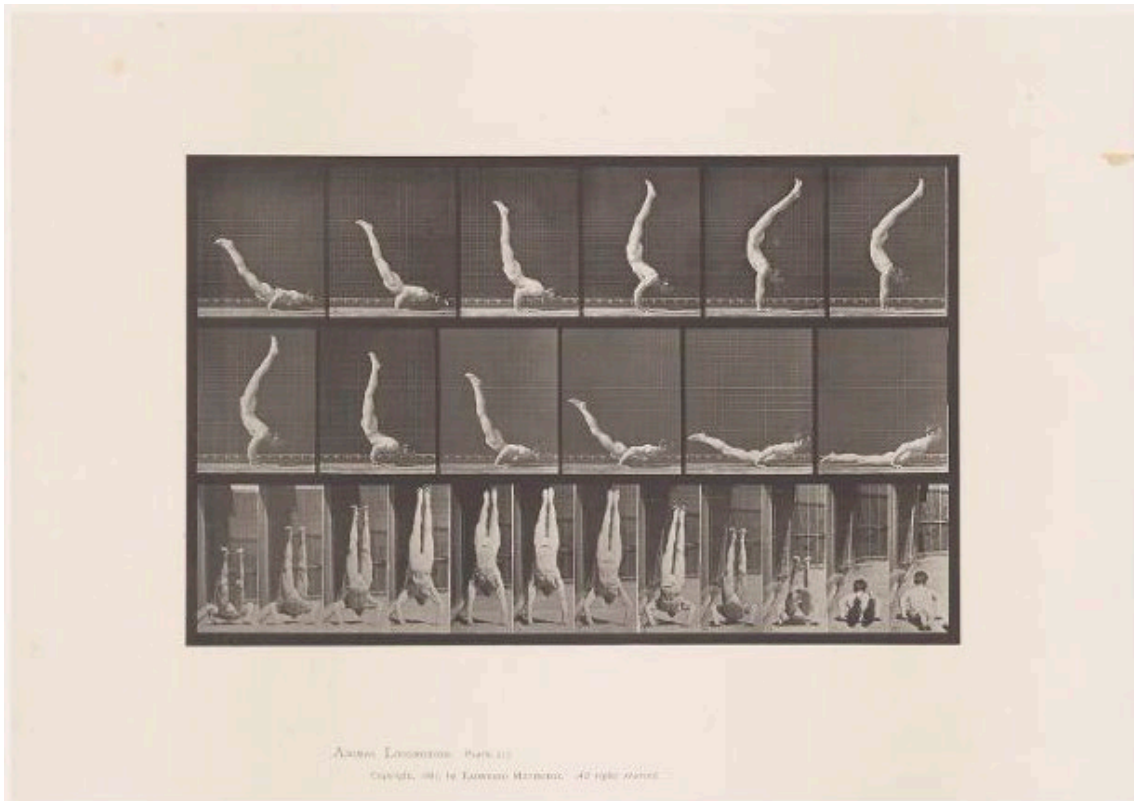
Seminar

Professorship for the History of the Modern World

D-GESS, ETH Zürich

Dr. Elena Valdameri

[elenav@ethz.ch](mailto:elenav@ethz.ch)



A man standing on his hands from a lying down position, 1887 (Wellcome Collection)

**Time:** HS 2022, Wednesday h 10–12

**Venue:** HG G 26.5

**Learning materials:** For each session, readings (♥ = mandatory) are available on Moodle at the following link <https://moodle-app2.let.ethz.ch/course/view.php?id=18706>

**Course requirements:**

- A) Attendance of the sessions (min 80%) and active participation;
- B) Regular reading of the mandatory texts (a course reader with selected texts will be provided online) and submission of a critical question/comment for each reading to me prior to each class (one mandatory reading = one question/comment; two mandatory readings = two questions/comments) (min 80% of the sessions);
- C) Group/individual presentation on a session topic, based on the readings listed below, and followed by a class discussion;
- D) Short final paper providing a critical review of a session (this must be different from the one chosen for the presentation). Papers must be between 1200 and 2000 words long and submitted until **10 January 2023** (samples will be provided on Moodle).

**Final seminar grade**

A + B = 25%

C = 40%

D = 35%

Bachelor students can choose between C and D, which, in their case, constitute 75% of the seminar grade.

**Class discussions:**

Rules to ensure an inclusive and respectful environment can be found on Moodle.

**Summary**

While being the universal constant which is common to every human being, the body is also culturally and historically specific. Taking into account this inherent ambiguity, in this seminar we learn to critically understand the body beyond its biological nature by examining how notions of it and explanations of its shape and conditions have changed throughout history.

The course explores the history of the body from mid-eighteenth century onwards through case studies taken from the multidisciplinary scholarship on the body with a special focus on colonial and postcolonial contexts. Adopting a humanities perspective on topics like anatomy and surgery, the treatment of the insane, sexuality, physical culture, eugenics, and body productivity, the course looks at shifting attitudes to body perceptions and the ways these have been shaped by considerations of gender, race, and class as well as by socioeconomic circumstances of modernity. Participants will be encouraged to relate the historical case studies to several debated contemporary issues such as assisted reproductive technologies, robotics, and wearable systems of surveillance of the worker fatigue in the workplace.

At the end of the course, students will be able to develop new perspectives on their understanding of the body. In particular, through the analysis of both historical sources as well as state of the art research literature, they will learn to a) ask critical questions about the body, b) examine the relationship existing between bodies, culture, and society, c) assess the historicity of issues surrounding the body.

## Outline of the Sessions

### Session 1 – 28 September

#### Welcome, introduction, requirements

- ♥ Fay Bound Alberti, *This Mortal Coil. The Human Body in History and Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York 2016, pp. 1–19 and 205–12.

### Session 2 – 5 October

#### What is the body? Themes and concepts in the history of the body

- ♥ Willemijn Ruberg, *History of the Body*, Red Globe Press, London 2020, pp. 1–22.
- ♥ Antoinette Burton, ‘The Body in/as World History’, *A Companion to World History*, ed. by Douglas Northrop, Blackwell Publishing 2012, pp. 272–84.
- Kathleen Canning, ‘The Body as Method?’ *Gender & History*, (Nov. 1999): 499-513.

### Session 3 – 12 October

#### Colonized bodies, science, and exploitation

- ♥ R M Packard, *A History of Global Health: Interventions into the Lives of Other Peoples*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2016, pp. 1–46.
- David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, pp. 200–239.
- Rebecca Hodes, ‘The “Hottentot Apron”: Genital Aberration in the History of Sexual Science’, in *A Global History of Sexual Science, 1880–1960*, ed. by V. Fuechtner, D. E. Haynes and R. M. Jones, University of California Press, Oakland 2018, pp. 118–38.
- Prakash Kumar, Projit Bihari Mukharji and Amit Prasad, ‘Decolonizing Science in Asia’, *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, Vol. 4, n. 1 (2018), pp. 24–43.

### Session 4 – 19 October

#### The ‘science of race’ and anatomies of difference

- ♥ Angela Saini, *Superior: The Return of Race Science*, Beacon Press, 2019, pp. 1–24.
- Sally Markowitz, ‘Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference’, *Signs*, 26, n. 2 (2001), pp. 389–414.
- Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body. Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick: NJ 2013 [2004], pp. 115 – 42.

Susan M. Reverby, 'Ethical Failures and History Lessons: The U.S. Public Health Service Research Studies in Tuskegee and Guatemala', *Public Health Reviews*, 34.1 (2012), pp. 1–18.

Yuehtsen Juliette Chung, 'Better Science and Better Race?: Social Darwinism and Chinese Eugenics', *ISIS*, Vol. 105, n. 4 (2014), pp. 793–802.

Linda Villarosa, "Myths about physical racial differences were used to justify slavery – and are still believed by doctors today", *New York Times Magazine*, 14 August 2019

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/racial-differences-doctors.html?mtrref=timesevents.nytimes.com&assetType=PAYWALL&mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=8A3D1BF0097C94B4B6E8254A0EA0ADE6&gwt=pay&assetType=PAYWALL>

### Session 5 – 26 October

#### **'Mind the brain': mental illness and the Other**

♥ Fay Bound Alberti, *This Mortal Coil*, pp. 111–35.

James H. Mills, *Madness, Cannabis and Colonialism. The 'Native-Only' Lunatic Asylums of British India, 1857–1900*, Palgrave MacMillan, London 2000, pp. 43–65.

Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology," *American Quarterly*, 52:2 (June 2000), 246–73.

### Session 6 – 2 November

#### **Sexing the body: the body between gender and sexuality**

♥ Willemijn Ruberg, *History of the Body*, pp. 57–72.

Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body, Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, Basic Books, New York 2000, pp. 1–29 and 45–77.

Howard Chiang, "Transgender History in Sinophone Taiwan", in *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, ed. by C. Shields and D. Herzog, Routledge, Abingdon and New York 2021, pp. 264–73.

Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin*, Harvester, Brighton 1980, pp. vii–xvii and 124–144

Claudia Lang and Ursula Kuhnle, 'Intersexuality and Alternative Gender Categories in Non-Western Cultures', *Hormone Research in Paediatrics*, Vol. 69, n. 4 (2008), pp. 240–50  
<<https://doi.org/10.1159/000113025>>.

"Transgender in Latin America: Unfolded from Otherness", *El Universal*  
<https://interactivo.eluniversal.com.mx/2019/transgenero-transfronterizo/index-english.html>

### Session 7 – 9 November

#### **Body Politics: shaping bodies, making nations**

- ♥ Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine, Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire*, New York University Press, New York 1997, pp. 1–10.
- ♥ Sebastian Conrad, “Globalizing the Beautiful Body: Eugen Sandow, Bodybuilding, and the Ideal of Muscular Manliness at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 32, No. 1(2021), pp. 95-125.
- Carey A. Watt, « Physical Culture and the Body in Colonial India”, *Routledge Handbook of Colonialism in South Asia*, ed. by Harald Fischer-Tiné and Maria Framke, Routledge, Abingdon 2022, pp. 345–58.
- Olag Stieglitz, “‘Mentally superior children are born of physically superior people’: Bernarr Macfadden’s *Physical Culture* World and the Influence of Eugenic Thought in American Fitness Culture, 1900s-1930s’, *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, Vol. 64, n. 2 (2019), pp. 241–64.
- Jennifer Robertson, ‘Japan’s First Cyborg? Miss Nippon, Eugenics and Wartime Technologies of Beauty, Body and Blood’, *Body & Society*, 7.1 (2001), pp. 1–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X01007001001>>.

## Session 8 – 16 November

### **The beautiful female body: big boobs or showy muscles?**

- ♥ Fay Bound Alberti, *This Mortal Coil*, pp. 39–70.
- Patricia Vertinsky, “Gender Matters in Sport History” *Oxford Handbook of Sports History*, ed. by Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson, Oxford and New York 2017, pp. 445 – 460.
- David L. Chapman Patricia Anne Vertinsky, “Introduction”, *Venus with Biceps: A Pictorial History of Muscular Women*. Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 2010, pp. 1–19.
- Judith/Jack Halberstam, “An Introduction to Female Masculinity”, in *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press, Durham 1998, pp. 1 – 44
- [Why do we find muscular women wildly perplexing?](https://theconversation.com/womens-idealised-bodies-have-changed-dramatically-over-time-but-are-standards-becoming-more-unattainable-64936)  
<https://theconversation.com/womens-idealised-bodies-have-changed-dramatically-over-time-but-are-standards-becoming-more-unattainable-64936>

## Session 9 – 23 November

### **(Neo)-eugenics and assisted reproduction**

- ♥ Carolin Schurr, ‘From Biopolitics to Bioeconomies: The ART of (Re-)Producing White Futures in Mexico’s Surrogacy Market’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 35.2 (2017), 241–62 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775816638851>>.
- Philip K. Wilson, “Eugenics”, *Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/science/eugenics-genetics>)
- Angela Saini, *Superior*, pp. 38–86.

Bernard M. Dickens, 'The New Eugenics—Selective Breeding in an Era of Reproductive Technologies: A Review Essay', *Population and Development Review*, 44.3 (2018), pp. 627–38 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12191>>.

C. Thompson, "Skin Tone and the Persistence of Biological Race in Egg Donation for Assisted Reproduction," in *Shades of Difference. Why Skin Colour Matters*, ed. by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2009, pp. 131-147.

Renata Klein, "Can Surrogacy be Ethical?", *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 18 May 2015  
<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/can-surrogacy-be-ethical/10098290>

## Session 10 – 30 November

### **The productive and efficient body: between 'science of work' and yoga**

♥ Christopher O'Neill, 'Taylorism, the European Science of Work, and the Quantified Self at Work', *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 42.4 (2017), pp. 600–621 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243916677083>>.

Steffan Blayney, 'Making the Body Productive/Making "the Body" Productive', *The Body in History, Culture, and the Arts*, ed. by J. Jajszczok and A. Musial, Routledge, New York and Abingdon 2019, pp. 55–68.

Alexa Geisthövel, 'Regaining Sufficiency: Work Therapy in 1930s German Internal Medicine', in *Histories of Productivity. Genealogical Perspectives on the Body and Modern Economy*, ed. by P. Banziger and M. Suter, Routledge, New York 2016, pp. 136–55.

Farah Godrej, "The Neoliberal Yogi and the Politics of Yoga", *Political Theory*, Vol. 45(6), 2017, pp. 772–800.

Andrea R. Jain, 'Neoliberal Yoga', in *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies*, ed. by S. Newcombe, K. O'Brien-Kop, Routledge 2020, pp. 51-62

## Session 11 – 7 December

### **The 'disabled' body**

♥ Lennard J. Davis, "Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power," from *Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis, Routledge, New York and Abingdon 2017 (5th ed.), pp. 1–14.

Marsha Saxton, "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion," from *Disability Studies Reader*, pp. 73–86.

Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism. The Production of Disability and Aabledness*, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, pp. 3–15.

Michelle Jarmin, "Coming Up from Underground: Uneasy Dialogues at the Intersection of Race, Mental Illness, and Disability Studies," from *Blackness and Disability* (2011), 9-30.

<https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-history-of-indias-disability-rights-movement/>

<https://historicingland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/>

**Session 12** – 14 December

### **The dead body: a person, a corpse or a thing?**

♥ Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead. A Cultural History of Mortal Remains*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2015, pp. 1–27.

D Gareth Jones and Maja I Whitaker, ‘The Contested Realm of Displaying Dead Bodies’, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 39.10 (2013), 652–53.

Deborah Posel and Pamila Gupta, ‘The Life of the Corpse: Framing Reflections and Questions’, *African Studies*, 68.3 (2009), 299–309.

Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004, pp. 13–43.

J. T. H. Connor, ‘Exhibit Essay Review: “Faux Reality” Show? The “Body Worlds” Phenomenon and Its Reinvention of Anatomical Spectacle’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 81.4 (2007), 848–62.

Natasha Mikles, ‘Indians Are Forced to Change Rituals for Their Dead as COVID-19 Rages through Cities and Villages’, *The Conversation* <<http://theconversation.com/indians-are-forced-to-change-rituals-for-their-dead-as-covid-19-rages-through-cities-and-villages-160076>> [accessed 7 September 2021].

<http://deadandaliveproject.com/>

**Session 13** – 21 December

### **Final discussion on the course**