**THE NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS**

**Faculty of English Studies**

**BODILY FICTIONS: THE BODY IN MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

7thsemester 2020-21

Dr. Christina Dokou

Fridays, 12:00-15:00, Room to be announced; for now we will be on Zoom:

Topic: Christina Dokou's Zoom Meeting

Join <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4360127294?pwd=QUxLUnlMdWYzL05zSUJ4bnBCOUJnZz09>

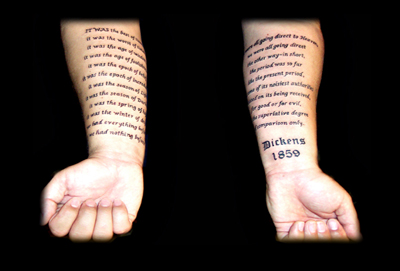
Meeting ID: 436 012 7294

Passcode: 821147

E-class: <https://eclass.uoa.gr/courses/ENL532/>

Office Hours: by e-appointment or right after class

Office: 703, 7th floor or through a screen

**Welcome** to a course that goes from the flesh made word and vice versa! Our course focus is on the critical examination of various works of (mostly) contemporary American fiction dealing with the literary explorations of the human body in all its variables, and the theoretical (mostly feminist) substratum that will enable such examinations. The body, being an all-pervasive presence in human affairs and the source of many existential parameters (including pleasure, pain, identity, procreation and mortality), features large in literature worldwide, but especially in America, where the cult of the body is an ever-increasing, distinctive cultural factor. The tribulations and the transformations bodies undergo within the endless realms of fiction em-body metaphorically and metonymically the myriad questions of theme, form, philosophy and function in the said art form, as a subject as well as a tool. Although the instructor will provide introductory and analytical lectures for each item, your strong participation is indispensable for the implementation and assimilation of this course. Should any problems arise during the semester, please see the instructor as early as possible.

**Course objectives**:

* to familiarize you with engaging texts of US literature, and their analyses
* to connect the body/matter to textuality/thought and show their reciprocal creative interaction (bodies engendering texts, but texts culturally “creating” bodily views)
* to create a foothold on various philosophies, theories and critiques that have centred on, or been related to, the body, and to show their importance
* to aid you in evaluating your own cultural scripts as regards body politics and fictions.

**Coursework includes:**

* Weekly **readings** and **participation**
* **Four (4) class journals** on the dates designated on the schedule below. Each journal should be a 1-page minimum reaction papers, written right after your readings and reflecting your own personal thoughts on, or analyses of, **one** of the texts assigned for the given date. Journals must be typed, with 1.5 space and 12-pt. font regular letters. Please, no cover pages or plastic sheaths (spare the environment!). You are responsible for missed class material and journals: in case of absence on a journal date, either submit your paper early, or electronically. A hard copy of your journal should also be present at the start of the class on their due date, as students may be asked to read aloud their entries for the benefit of their peers. Journals selected by the instructor (whole or parts) may also be posted on the website for peer-sharing, with the author’s permission. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Journals are collectively worth one (1) final grade point.
* **A body project**, which will be a **team effort** (2-4 members) and involves the literary/artistic examination of a body part (your choice, but please see me to avoid overlap). It could be a short film, a performance, a collage, a bricolage, a painting/drawing, or a sculpture commenting and positioning itself creatively and critically on the way a body member has been treated in a specific piece of American literature, or by a specific American author/poet. It could also be a project that creatively responds to a current body-related issue (think, e.g., the AIDS quilt). Proposals for the body project are to be submitted as early as possible and the project itself will be submitted during the final class. For ideas, please see previous noteworthy entries on my website (<http://users.uoa.gr/~cdokou>) under “The Body Project”
* A **final written exam**, worth 7 points.
* There is also the **option** of a **final research paper**, worth 2 points, 1.800-2.000 words, with at least 10 items of bibliography (including your main text), due on the day of the final exam in ELECTRONIC form (1.5 space, 12-pt. font, latest MLA citation style—available at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). The scanned first page of each paper source must be submitted for the final draft to be considered valid. The paper will analyze a case of U.S. literary treatment of the body, using tools taught in class. The topic may be of the student’s choice or taken from the list below (see me first to avoid double bookings!). All parts of the paper process must be submitted on time and in valid form for the final project to be considered. ANY plagiarism discovered will result in an automatic and terminal fail for the project.

**Course material:**

* A *Bodily Fictions Reader* and various essays, in PDF form, available on the instructor’s website at <http://users.uoa.gr/~cdokou>
* Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1988). You may either buy the book, or download it from my website on your computer/smartphone. However, to read the mobi file on your pc, you must first download a free mobi reader programme (like Mobipocket Reader).
* Two films, which will be watched via shared screen during class.

**Course schedule**:

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| **Date** | **Subject** | **Readings due** |
| Week 1 | Introduction | the (meta)body in biology and culture; basic concepts |
| Week 2 | Gendered afflictions | *Fried Green Tomatoes*, pp. 1-82 (book) or up to “JULY 18, 1924” (mobi); Bordo. |
| Week 3 | Race, disability, class | *FGT*, pp. 83-181/up to “OCTOBER 17, 1940”; Lorde; **JOURNAL 1** |
| Week 4 | Gender and sexuality | *FGT*, pp. 182-282/ up to “SEPTEMBER 7, 1986”; Rich |
| Week 5 | Meta/physical dimensions | *FGT*, pp. 283-end; **OPTIONAL PAPER** **THESIS DUE** |
| Week 6 | Sexual/Textual Politics | Halberstam; Jones; Friedman*;* **BODY PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE** |
| Week 7 | Apocrypha: taboos | Irigaray; Ensler; Salazar; **Film**: *The Vagina Monologues*; **JOURNAL 2** |
| Week 8 | Medicinal Narrative | Crimp; Manning; Mueller |
| Week 9 | Mortality | Selzer; William Carlos Williams, “The Dead Baby” and “Death”; **JOURNAL 3** |
| Week 10 | “Immortality in Culture” | **Film**: *W;t* by Mike Nichols**; BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OUTLINE DUE** |
| Week 11 | Manhood | Theroux; Dorris; Pyke; **JOURNAL 4** |
| Week 12 | Beauty | Sontag; Walker;Baudrillard |
| Week 13 | Mutation and Future Flesh | Zingsheim; Cruz; **BODY PROJECTS DUE** |

**Suggested Literary Texts:**

Margaret Atwood*, Oryx and Crake*

David Berry, *The Whales of August* (play)

William Peter Blatty, *The Exorcist*

Rita mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*

Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (graphic novel)

Michael Crighton, *Westworld*

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*

Percival Everett, *Erasure*

Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* OR *The Virgin Suicides*

William Gibson, *The Miracle Worker*

Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories*

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* OR *The Old Man and the Sea*

Ken Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (play)

Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* OR *Child of God*

Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* OR *The Bluest Eye*

Marsha Norman ‘*Night, Mother* (play)

Lynn Nottage, *Intimate Apparel* OR *Ruined* (play)

Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*

Annie Proulx, *Brokeback Mountain*

Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*

Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*

Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint* OR *The Breast* OR *The Counterlife*

Sarah Ruhl, *In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)* OR *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* (play)

John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row*

Craig Thompson, *Blankets* (graphic novel)

Dalton Trumbo, *Johnnie Got His Gun*

Brian K. Vaughan, *Y: The Last Man* (graphic novel)

Alice Walker, *Meridian*

John A. Williams, *The Man Who Cried I Am*

Hanya Yanagihara, *A Little Life*