

BTP2BR\_T\_40, PhD COURSE  
DISABILITY IN LITERATURE AND  
FILM

URECZKY ESZTER  
Tue. 16-17.40; Webex/room 119

OFFICE HOURS:  
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The aim of the course is to provide an interdisciplinary framework for MA and PhD students to explore the historically changing meanings of “ugliness” and bodily “abnormality” in Western culture. The literary and filmic topics to be discussed rely on academic fields of study such as disability studies, biopolitics, as well as the medical humanities, gender and body studies. By focusing on problems such as the dichotomy of “beauty” and “ugliness” in art history, popular culture, literature and film, the pre-modern carnivalistic body, the disfigured male villain and hero, the Victorian freak, images of female monstrosity, the diseased body, the disabled body, the transgender, and the mutant body, the material to be covered systematically combines the aesthetic, the ethical and the political discourses of what various cultural contexts have meant by the “ugly body” in past.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

*Presence at classes:* **no more than three absences are allowed.** In the case of a longer absence (either due to illness, or official leave), the tutor and the student will come to an agreement of how to solve the problem.

*Assigned reading:* The seminar format and the reading requirements suppose that the assigned texts are read/viewed for the classes. Tests on the assigned readings can be expected at each seminar (plot-related questions in the case of fiction and film). The result of these tests contributes to the seminar grade (“minor tests”: **10%**). **If you fail more than three such tests, your seminar is a failure** (the grade is a one). You’ll be granted, though, one chance to make up for the failure of these minor tests as agreed with your course tutor.

*Participation in classroom discussions:* the student is expected to take part in classroom discussions, and this activity contributes to the final seminar grades by **20%** of the overall achievement. (The reader’s journal can be of great help in this respect.)

*Presentation:* every student will give a short presentation (10-15 minutes or so) on a theoretical text related to one of the discussed topics, chosen by the student. If you do not want to present on the text indicated in the syllabus, please let me know, you can also work with a different source. The presenter has to prepare a carefully edited **handout and ppt** for the group. The presentation **cannot be completely read out**, the student can of course check his/her notes while presenting. The student **has to consult with the instructor** one week before the presentation and show her the handout (**20%**).

*Endterm test:* an objective test on the works discussed during the term (**50%**). The test must be written at the time scheduled in the syllabus. Failing to do so will count as course failure, and only one re-sit test will be scheduled to make up for the failure. The test will have a **pass limit** (60%): failing the test will count as course failure, and **only one re-sit test** will be scheduled to make up for the failure.

**Students should be aware that their English proficiency also contributes to their grade.**

## Grading Policy

Course components	
minor tests	10%
presentation	20%
classroom discussion	20%
objective test	50%
total	100%

Grades	
87-100%	5
75-86%	4
63-74%	3
51-62%	2
0-50 %	1

**TEXTS and FILMS: available in the e-learning system.**

Week	Date	Topic
1	09/02	<b>Orientation &amp; introduction to the course</b>
2	16/02	<p><b>Representations of “ugliness” &amp; “beauty” in the fine arts, literature, film, and popular culture in the West</b></p> <p>Umberto Eco: <i>On Beauty</i>, <i>On Ugliness</i> (images, excerpts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the changing ideals of beauty in Western culture</li> <li>• the moral, racial, class, and gender coding of ugliness as otherness</li> </ul> <p><u>Assignment:</u> bring to class 2 images, a “beautiful” and an “ugly” body, be prepared to explain them to the group in about 3 minutes.</p>
3	23/02	<p><b>The carnivalistic body</b></p> <p>François Rabelais: <i>Gargantua and Pantagruel</i> (excerpts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the pre-modern subject, embodiment and ugliness</li> <li>• the subversive notions of power, pollution and boundaries</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Bakhtin, Mikhail. “The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources.” <i>Rabelais and His World</i>. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press [1965] 1984: 303-367.</p>
4	02/03	<p><b>The disfigured villain vs. the hero in disguise</b></p> <p>William Shakespeare: <i>Richard III</i> (Richard Loncraine, 1997)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from Renaissance to 19<sup>th</sup>-century images of male ugliness</li> <li>• the sexualisation of masculine deformity: Quasimodo, The Beast, Cyrano de Bergerac, The Phantom of the Opera, Little Herr Friedemann, etc.</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Valentine, Gill. “What It Means To Be a Man: The Body, Masculinities, Disability.” Ruth Butler and Hester Parr, eds. <i>Mind and Body Spaces: Geographies of Illness, Impairment and Disability</i>. London and New York: Routledge, 1999: 163-176.</p>
5	09/03	<p><b>The freak</b></p> <p><i>Freaks</i> (Tod Browning, 1932)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the institution of the freak show and the society of spectacle</li> <li>• the Victorian discourse of non-human(ized), ugly bodies</li> </ul>

		<p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Kérchy, Anna. "Introduction." Kérchy Anna and Andrea Zittlau, eds. <i>Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows and 'Enfreakment'</i>. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012: 1-19.</p>
6	16/03	<p><b>The mutant body</b></p> <p><i>Frankenstein</i> (Kenneth Branagh, 1994)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• animality and humanity as a biological and affective construction</li> <li>• interspecies relations and ecocriticism</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Agamben, Giorgio. <i>The Open: Man and Animal</i>. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP: 2004. (excerpts)</p>
7	23/04	<p><b>The female monster</b></p> <p>Lucy Grealy: <i>The Autobiography of a Face</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the angel and the monster: female inscriptions of ugliness: Hans Christian Andersen: "The Little Mermaid," Jonathan Swift: "The Lady's Dressing Room," Ovid: "Perseus tells the story of Medusa"</li> <li>• voice &amp; visibility: Lilith, the Hottentot Venus, Frida Kahlo, Tootsie, <i>The Piano</i>, etc.</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory." <i>The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity</i>. New York: Routledge, 1995: 53-74.</p>
8	30/03	<p><b>The trans body</b></p> <p>Chuck Palahniuk: <i>Invisible Monsters</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consumer society and the beauty industry</li> <li>• ugly LGBTQIA identities and violence</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Susan Stryker: "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies." Stryker, Susan and Stephen Whittle, eds. <i>The Transgender Studies Reader</i>. New York and London: Routledge, 2006: 1-18.</p>
9	06/04	<b>No class (consultation week)</b>
10	13/04	<p><b>Disability and identity</b></p> <p><i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i> (Julian Schnabel, 2007)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the cultural invisibility of the ugly, disabled body</li> <li>• between the Hollywood happy ending and death with dignity</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p>

		Barnes, Elizabeth: "Constructing Disability." <i>The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: 9-53.
11	20/04	<p><b>Disability and care</b></p> <p><i>The Fundamentals of Caring</i> (Rob Burnett, 2016)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the labour of love, care, affect</li> <li>• agency, bioethics, intersubjectivity</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Held, Virginia. "Care as Practice and Value." <i>The Ethics Of Care: Personal, Political, and Global</i>. Oxford UP, 2006: 29-43.</p>
12	27/04	<p><b>Disability and love</b></p> <p><i>San Junipero</i> (Owen Harris, 2016)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• love and the ugliness of disabled sexuality</li> <li>• trauma, agency and intersubjectivity</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u></p> <p>Chivers, Sally. "Same Difference? Gerontology and Disability Studies Join Hands." <i>The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema</i>. U of Toronto Press, 2011: 3-30.</p>
13	04/05	<b>End-term test</b>
14	11/05	<b>Evaluation</b>