

HIST 315/AMST 301/WGSS 390 American Beauty
Fall 2019: T/Th 12:00-1:15, WALC 1121
Course Credit Hours: 3 (HUM core)

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The course syllabus and other course materials are posted on Blackboard.

Description

This course explores twentieth-century gender history in the United States through beauty and its intersections with politics, economics, technology, medicine, and nation building. Modern womanhood, everyday life, and identity will be explored through advertising, pageants, and material culture.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- appreciate the ways that beauty has been pursued by individuals, health practitioners, corporations, and media cultures since 1900.
- understand and recognize how assumptions about gender have influenced the way that beauty is constructed and experienced at different places and times.
- think historically and critically about the cultural consequences of technologies related to beauty.
- think historically and critically about approaches to the study of beauty in modern American history.
- understand the difference between secondary and primary sources. They will analyze and interpret primary documents related to beauty cultures. They will understand the competing and conflicting nature of historical interpretation.
- sharpen critical reading, thinking, writing, and discussion skills.

Assignments (200 points):

Individual Work

- 15% Homework (5 + 1 optional) 30 points
- 15% Midterm Essay – Speculative Design (individual research) 30 points
- 20% Individual Final Project (15% paper, 5% Topics & Sources) 40 points
- 10% discussion support (including leading a discussion and weekly participation) 20 points

Group work

- 15% Deep Dive into the week's issues 30 points
- 5% evaluation of and by team members 10 points

15% Beauty Devices (building on individual research + group “lab” work) 30 points
5% evaluation of and by team members 10 points

Grade Scale

A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%; C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 60-66%; F 0-59%

Course Materials

Articles available as pdfs through Blackboard.

Purchase: Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (University Press of Kansas); 978-0700623044

<https://www.amazon.com/Getting-Physical-Fitness-Culture-America/dp/0700623043>

Purchase Beauty device to test

Useful link:

[Writing Lab at Purdue](#)

Participation

Just showing up is not enough. Your participation grade will reflect your overall participation in class discussions. I will also take into account office visits in which we discuss course material.

Criteria for grading this assignment: frequency of your participation (this includes asking intelligent questions); quality of your comments; your ability to get other students talking by raising questions or debating other students directly. **Regular and alert attendance is expected and will not qualify you for full participation points.**

Policies

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. THERE ARE NO LATE GRADES OR INCOMPLETES. You will need a note from the Dean to explain extenuating circumstances.

Missed classes: You are not eligible for an A with more than 3 absences. You may use your 3 however you wish. Attendance is required by university policy and is expected by me.

Academic Honesty

Student-teacher relationships are built on trust. For example, students must trust that teachers have made responsible decisions about the structure and content of the courses they teach,

and teachers must trust that the assignments that students turn in are theirs. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational process.

In this class, all assignments that are turned in for a grade must represent the student's own work. In cases where help was received, or teamwork was allowed, a notation on the assignment should indicate with whom you collaborated. If you have any questions concerning this policy before submitting an assignment, please ask for clarification.

The following will be considered instances of academic dishonesty: copying a paper from another student; recycling one's own or others' papers from other courses; obtaining part or all of a paper from another source other than your own research without providing quotations and citations; direct quotation from printed, electronic or online sources without providing a citation (including rewording or "patchwork plagiarism"); and the use of specific ideas and interpretations of printed or electronic sources without citation ("theft of ideas"). Any material that you quote should be placed under quotation marks and cited with a footnote or reference immediately following the quoted portion that provides the source. Do not hide plagiarism by quoting material and then adding a vague reference at the end of the text. You may discuss homework assignments with other students, and you may prepare for papers and class with other students, but the writing assignments should be your own work. If you quote any source or even take ideas from that source, the source should be referenced completely. The penalty for plagiarism can be an F in the course.

Copying of class notes: You may make a photocopy of written class notes for friends who have been absent from class for their personal use only. Any wider distribution outside the classroom, such as posting on the Internet or via a list to anyone not in this class, is prohibited and will result in an F in the course.

In case of emergency:

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course.

Course web page (via Blackboard)

Instructor's email (svostral@purdue.edu)

Instructor's phone (History Department, 765 494-4132)

Schedule

*Indicates a scholarly article; others are mixed media

8/20

Introductions

Three areas of inquiry to historicize, contextualize, and interpret ideas of beauty:

APPEARANCES, PRACTICES, POLITICS

- [Poses](#)

- [Carrie Fisher](#)
- [What would you change?](#)

8/22

Beauty & Politics

- *Rose Weitz, "A History of Women's Bodies," in *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior* (1-12)
- *[Timothy Lukes, Politics and Beauty in America: The Liberal Aesthetics of P.T. Barnum, John Muir, and Harley Earl, Introduction](#) (1-14)

8/27

Cleanliness & Civilization

- *Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising" in Jennifer Scanlon, ed., *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, p. 129-152.
- In-Class: [Ad*Access](#) at Duke University Libraries

8/29

Cosmetics

- *Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*; intro, chap 5, chap 7
- Allison McCann, [World Cup Players Say Muscles and Makeup Mix Just Fine, Thanks](#)
- In-Class Video: Hope in a Jar (A&E)
- **Homework (*Peiss, McCann)**

9/3

Technology

- Teresa Riordan, *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations that Have Made Us Beautiful*, chap 7 "Hands" 203-223.
- Scroll Through: [Different Strokes for Different Folks: A History of the Toothbrush](#)
- OPTIONAL: Sarah Lewis, ["The Racial Bias Built into Photography"](#)
- In Class: Google Patents
- In Class: Dan Formosa, [Anatomy of a Patent](#)

9/5

Breasts, Bras & Fitness

- Listen: Only a Game, 2/24/17, ["From the 'Jockbra' to Brandi Chastain: The History of the Sports Bra"](#)
- Listen: ["The Athletic Brassiere" 99% Invisible #278](#)
- In-class: Title 9 & *Dare to Compete*
- In-class: Speculative Design & Midterm Essay

9/10

Pageantry

- Kate Shindle, *Being Miss America* (2014); chap. 2
- *Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "'Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!': Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant," *Journal of Social History* 31:1 (September 1997).
- In class video: "Miss America" PBS The American Experience
- Homework (*Wu, Shindle)

9/12

Pageantry

- *Valerie Felita Kinloch, "The rhetoric of black bodies: race, beauty, and representation" in Elwood Watson & Darcy Martin (eds.), *'There She is Miss America': The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant* (New York: Palgrave, 2004): 93-109.
- [Roxane Gay, "Fifty Years Ago, Protesters Took on the Miss American Pageant and Electrified the Feminist Movement, Smithsonian \(January 2018\).](#)
- In class video: "Miss America" PBS The American Experience
- Deep Dive: Politics of Miss America

9/17

Hair

- *Lisa Jean Moore and Monica J. Casper, eds. "Hair," in *The Body: Social and Cultural Dissections*, (Routledge: 2014)
- *Rose Weitz, "Women & Their Hair: Seeking Power Through Resistance and Accommodation" in *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior* (214-231).
- Deep Dive: Hair

9/19

Hair

- Listen: [The Hair Chart, 99% Invisible](#)
- [Tiya Miles, "Black Hair's Blockbuster Moment," NYT \(2/23/2018\)](#)
- Read/Listen: ["Is Beauty in the Eyes of the Colonizer?"](#)
- [In class: Our Hair-itage](#)

9/24

Hair

- *Herzig, *Plucked: A History of Hair Removal*, intro, Chap 4
- Deep Dive: Hair Removal

9/26

Beauty as a Constructed Concept: Myth

- *Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*
- Garnace Franke-Ruta, "The Natural Beauty Myth"
- Alia Dastagir, [You're sexist. And so am I.](#)

- [Listen: "Double Standards," 99% Invisible](#)
- Homework (*Wolf, Franke-Ruta OR Dastagir, Double Standards)

10/1

Beauty as a Constructed Concept: Media

- *Susan Douglas, "Narcissism as Liberation: The Power of the Media," in Jennifer Scanlon, ed., *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2000).
- [Amanda Mull, "There's no such thing as a 'Real' Woman," *The Atlantic* \(3/8/2019\)](#)
- In Class Video: "Killing Us Softly"
- In Class: The Gaze
- Group Project Assignments
- Self-Reflection due

10/3

Archives: Purdue Connection, Miss America

- Guest: Tracy Grimm and presentation of archival project
- Hold Cart Item list on BB
- Midterm Essay Due

10/8 – Fall break. No class.

10/10 – Outside class activity

The Makeover

- *Jan Lewis, "Revealing the Makeover Show," *Continuum* 22:4 (2008): 441-446.
- Watch: [Brand New You: Makeover Television and the American Dream](#)
- Homework (*Lewis, Video)

10/15

Body Shape and "Norms"

- *Anna Creadlick, "Model Bodies, Normal Curves," in *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America* (Univ of Massachusetts Press, 2010).
- *Jacqueline Urla and Alan C. Swedlund, "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine body in Popular Culture" in *Feminism and the Body*, 397-428. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/jacqueline_urla/17/
- Neil Katz, [Life Size Barbie](#)
- Deep Dive: Body Shapes (non-surgical)

10/17

Fat

- *Peter Stearns, [Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West](#), ch. 1, p. 3-24.
- [This American Life: "Tell me I'm Fat"](#)

10/22

Purdue-Asian Conference

In-class: Group meeting time and submit update and report

10/24

Drag & Butch

- *Alix Genter, "Appearances Can Be Deceiving: Butch-Femme Fashion and Queer Legibility in New York City, 1945-1969," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2016.
- [Siobhan Somerville, "Queer," Keywords for American Cultural Studies](#)
- OPTIONAL: Jeffrey Williams, "The Drag of Masculinity: An Interview with Judith "Jack" Halberstam," *symploke*, Volume 19, Numbers 1-2, 2011, pp. 361-380.
- **Deep Dive: Fashion as Signaling**

10/29

Men and Beauty

- *Susan Bordo, "Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body," in *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, eds. David Bartholomae, et al. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2014): 129-177.

10/31

Bodies and Fitness

- *McKenzie, *Getting Physical* (1-53)
- **Deep Dive: Fitness**

11/5

Bodies and Fitness

- *McKenzie, *Getting Physical* (54-108)
- [Jonathan Lambert, "Coca-Cola Shaped China's Efforts to Fight Obesity"](#)
- **Homework**

11/7

Bodies and Fitness

- *McKenzie, *Getting Physical* (109-177)
- [Vybarr Cregan-Reid, "Why Exercise alone won't save us"](#)
- **Deep Dive: Fitness**

11/12

Beauty Devices Group Projects

(Slides, summary and team evaluation due)

11/14

Beauty Devices Group Projects

(Slides, summary and team evaluation due)

11/19

Disability

- *Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws* (and online access at Purdue library); intro, Chap 6
- Listen: [Backstory: Body Politics, Disability in America](#)
- Deep Dive: ADA on Campus

11/21

Aesthetic Surgery

- *Sander Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, ch 1-2
- [Snapchat Dysmorphia](#)
- In Class: "[Blood and Guts: Fixing Faces](#)" WARNING: this has limited images of surgery about to take place
- Homework (OPTIONAL)
- Topic & Sources Final Paper

11/26 No class. Thanksgiving

12/3

Breast Implants

- Film: Absolutely Safe and discussion
- Ehrenreich "[Welcome to Cancerland](#)" and "Stamping out a Dreaded Scourge" (pdf)
- [NPR: Breast Implants linked to rare blood cancer](#)
- [Follow up: Reports of Breast Implant Illness Prompt Federal Review](#)

12/5 Discussion and Closing Activity

Final individual project due 12/12

Extra!

Tattoos

- *Derek Roberts, "Secret Ink: Tattoo's Place in Contemporary American Culture," *The Journal of American Culture* 35:2 (2012).
- "[Face Tattoos go Mainstream](#)" (August 4, 2018)
- [Tattoo History](#)