

body and cinema

Film and Media Studies Program and
Medicine, Science, and the Humanities at
Johns Hopkins University

Fall 2022



Instructor Information

Kyle Stine, PhD
Film and Media Studies Program
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Hours: T 1–3 p.m. and by appt.
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Course Information

AS.220.270
The Body and Cinema
3 credits
TR 10:30–11:45 p.m.
Gilman 313

Course Description

Before film even emerged as a popular entertainment form, motion pictures were used to study the human body for purposes of scientific inquiry and medical practice. The present-day crossovers between imaging science and cinema—the inclusion of medical imaging in movies and television shows, the deployment of informational videos and animations in telehealth, and the myriad ways that digital imaging itself is spurred on by the needs of scientific investigation and the demand for cultural works—suggest that what we know about the human body is caught up in a complex web of technical representations and cultural meanings. This course explores the construction of the human body within this array of cinematic practice. Our approach will be twofold: First, we will consider scientific and medical images not merely as powerful means of seeing what would otherwise be unseeable but also as technically enabled and culturally influenced ways of knowing, that is, images, as in cinema, that are historical and could be otherwise. Second, we will examine representations of the human body in the history of film, focusing on how bodies are represented, what bodies are privileged, and how bodies are figured using medical imaging.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Gain facility with key terms in the literature on cinema and scientific and medical imaging.
- Develop a critical and historical perspective on the cultural values expressed in films and medical images involving issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality.
- Cultivate skills in film analysis.
- Engage in the practice of writing to improve the clarity, force, and impact of ideas.
- Develop editing skills through the process of feedback and revision.

Course Materials

All readings and screenings will be available via e-reserves on Canvas. Most of the films will be viewable on Kanopy (<https://jhu.kanopy.com/login>). Please note that we do not have a screening time for this class, which means that you will periodically need to watch films outside of class.

Evaluation

Grades will be based on completion of all assignments, active and constructive participation in class discussions, and high-level creative and academic thought.

A (94–100): Exemplary
A- (90–93): Excellent
B+ (87–89): Strong
B (84–86): Good
B- (80–83): Satisfactory

C+ (77–79): Adequate
C (74–76): Acceptable
C- (70–73): Minimally Acceptable
D (60–69): Unsatisfactory
F (59–0): Failure

Assignments

Attendance and Participation (20 points)

Attendance is required for all discussions and in-class screenings, and students earn participation points for attending class and engaging in discussions. The course meets twice per week, and students may miss up to two classes with no questions asked. A written response to the course materials will be required for any additional classes missed, up to two, for a total of four absences. A reduction of one-third grade from the cumulative course grade will result from each unexcused absence beyond four. Two unexcused tardy arrivals to class will result in the recording of an unexcused absence. Students should follow all university COVID-19 protocols. Students who have flu symptoms should not attend class and should isolate themselves to the extent possible until they have been fever-free for twenty-four hours. Religious holidays are valid reasons to be excused from class. Students who must miss a class because of a religious holiday must inform the instructor as early in the semester as possible to be excused from class and, if necessary, to make up any work that is missed. Students who must miss class should contact a classmate for lecture notes and information before contacting the instructor with any questions.

Response Papers (48 points)

Throughout the semester students will be expected to complete eight writing assignments worth 6 points each. These short writing assignments should be 2 pages and engage with any combination of the readings and screenings assigned during the week they are due. Response papers should be treated as formal writing exercises and should be typed and have double spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. All papers should be submitted on Canvas as a Word document or text file by Friday at 5 p.m. on the week they are due. It is up to you what weeks you choose, but the weeks of the first four films are required: September 9, September 23, and October 7, and October 28.

Asynchronous Final Exam (32 points)

The final exam will consist of three short essay prompts (2–3 pages per response) covering topics from throughout the semester and emphasizing exploratory, creative connections between the representational practices of medical imaging and cinema. It can be written as a Word document and submitted on Canvas. You will receive instructions on the last day of class and return the document by 5 p.m. on the day of our regularly scheduled final exam, which is still to be determined by the university.

Academic Integrity

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student conduct (or designee) by calling the Office of the Dean of Students at 410-516-8208 or via email at integrity@jhu.edu. For more information, see the Homewood Student Affairs site on academic ethics: (<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/student-life/student-conduct/academic-ethics-undergraduates>) or the e-catalog entry on the undergraduate academic ethics board: (<http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/#UAEB>).

Disability Services

Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, 410-516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

The Counseling Center

If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression or other mental health related concerns, please consider visiting the JHU Counseling Center. If you are concerned about a friend, please encourage that person to seek out their services. The Counseling Center is located at 3003 North Charles St. in Suite S-200 and can be reached at 410-516-8278 and online at <http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>.

Schedule

What Is a Body? What Is Cinema?

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| T 8/30 | Introduction and course overview. How the end-of-cinema debates can be seen as a reverberation of the shifting conceptions of bodies in modern science. In-class screening: <i>Inner Workings</i> , dir. Leo Matsuda, USA, 2016, 6 min. https://vimeo.com/264774069 . What assumptions do films make about bodies? How do films represent minds and bodies? What is the relationship between the human body and the camera? |
| Th 9/1 | Choose one: Jane Bennett, "Edible Matter," in <i>Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 39–51; or Barbara Johnson, "Ego Sum Game," in <i>Persons and Things</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 47–60. |

Seeing Inside the Body

- T 9/6 Catherine Waldby, "The Visible Human Project: An Initial History," in *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–23.
In-class screening: *Organism*, dir. Hilary Harris, USA, 1975, 20 min.
https://youtu.be/FAQVP-3U_UQ.
- Th 9/8 *Strange Days*, dir. Katherine Bigelow, USA, 1995, 145 min.
- T 9/13 José van Dijck, "Mediated Bodies and the Ideal of Transparency," in *The Transparent Body: A Cultural Analysis of Medical Imaging* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 3–19
- Th 9/15 Akira Mizuta Lippit, "Modes of Avisuality: Psychoanalysis – X-ray – Cinema," in *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 35–59.
- T 9/20 Joseph Dumit, "Ways of Seeing Brains as Expert Images," in *Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 109–133.
- R 9/22 *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, dir. Yorgos Lanthimos, Ireland/UK, 2017, 121 min.
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/5324520>.

Scientific Instruments and Film Analysis

- T 9/27 Giuliana Bruno, "Film, Aesthetics, Science: Hugo Münsterberg's Laboratory of Moving Images," *Grey Room* 36 (2009): 88–113.
In-class screening: Marey films, Gilbreth films; how film focuses attention and how medical imaging draws on these techniques to deliver images for analysis.
- R 9/29 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Film and the New Psychology," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 48–59.
In-class screening: Kuleshov effect, early sound examples, moving lips; how disparate parts of cinema come to form one body; then Mulvey shows the opposite, how bodies are fragmented.
- T 10/4 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, revised edition, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 342–352.
- R 10/6 *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, dir. Céline Sciamma, France, 2019, 121 min.
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/11347308>.

Visualizing Microscopic Bodies

- T 10/11 Adam Nocek, "Molecular Entertainment," in *Molecular Capture: The Animation of*

Biology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 27–72.

- R 10/13 Hannah Landecker, "Microcinematography and the History of Science and Film," *Isis* 97, no. 1 (2006): 121–132.
Recommended text: Lisa Cartwright, "A Microphysics of the Body: Microscopy and the Cinema," in *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 81–106.
- T 10/18 Karen Barad, "Agential Realism: How Material-Discursive Practices Matter," in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 132–185. Special focus on pages 153–161.

FALL BREAK 10/20–10/21

Body Genres

- T 10/25 Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 2–13.
- Th 10/27 *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, dir. Ana Lily Amirpour, USA, 2014, 101 min.
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/152888>.
- T 11/1 Eugenie Brinkema, "A Tear That Does Not Drop, But Folds," in *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 1–25.
- R 11/3 Shane Denson, "Introduction: Discorrelation and Post-cinema," in *Discorrelated Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 1–17.
- T 11/8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, edited by Claude Lefort and translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130–155.
- R 11/10 Silvia Casini, "Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) as Mirror and Portrait: MRI Configurations between Science and the Arts," *Configurations* 19, no. 1 (2011): 73–99.
Recommended reading: Casini, Silvia. "Scanning, Framing and Close-Up: Reimaging the Brain in 265 Looping Snapshots." *Leonardo* 50, no. 2 (2017): 127–131. Carina Storrs, "Medical Imaging Goes to the Movies," *Undark*, <https://undark.org/2016/07/01/medical-imaging-cinematic-rendering/>.

Body Politics

- T 11/15 Ronald L. Jackson II, "Scripting the Black Body in Popular Media," in *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 49–71.
- R 11/17 *Get Out*, dir. Jordan Peele, USA, 2017, 104 min.

FALL RECESS 11/21–11/25

- T 11/29 Karen Barad; TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings. *GLQ* 1 June 2015; 21 (2-3): 387–422. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2843239>.
- R 12/1 Eliza Steinbock, "Disjunction and Conjunction: Thinking Trans through the Cinematic," in *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 1–25.
- T 12/6 *Tangerine*, dir. Sean Baker, USA, 2015, 87 min.
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/10494814>.
- R 12/8 End-of-course logistics