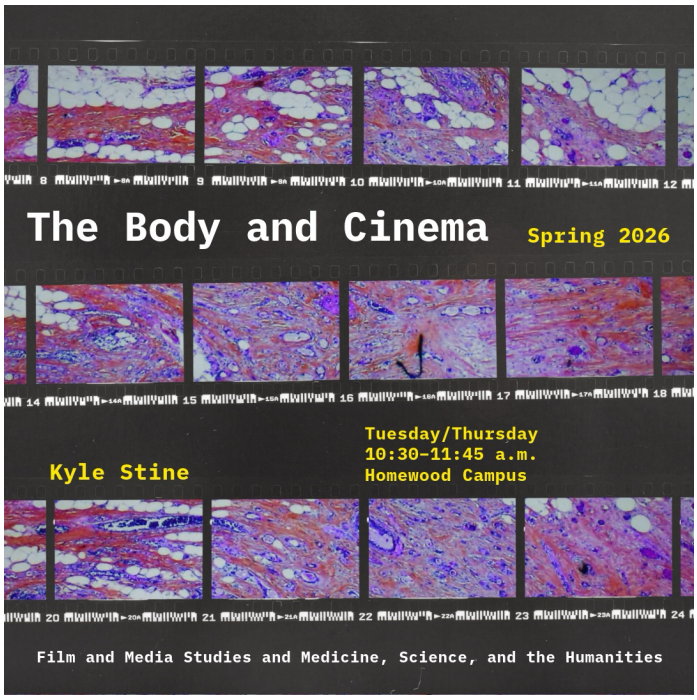
body and cinema

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

Spring 2026



Course Information
AS.061.270
The Body and Cinema
3 credits
TR 10:30–11:45 p.m.
Gilman 413

Instructor Information
Kyle Stine, PhD
Program in Film and Media Studies
Office: Gilman 65
Hours: T 1–3 p.m. and by appt.
kylestine@jhu.edu

Course Description
Even before film 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 (10 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 about 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 illness 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 should 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 discussion notes and information before contacting the instructor with any questions.

Quizzes (20 points)
Over the course of the semester, there will be five (5) quizzes, worth 4 points each, on the readings and screenings assigned for that day. They will be unannounced, or pop, quizzes and occur randomly.

Discussion Questions (10 points)
To help guide our discussion, students will be assigned a day to co-lead the class by providing 3–5 reading questions focused on the main readings listed on the schedule. Questions should be geared toward fostering discussion: exploratory, connective, and open-ended. Please email me your questions the night before class and plan to open the discussion with one of the questions.

Paper 1: Medical Film Analysis 4–5 pages (20 points)
Due February 9. More details to come in assignment sheet to be distributed on January 27.

Film Response Papers, 5 points each (20 points)
Throughout the semester students will be expected to complete four response papers, worth 5 points each, on assigned feature-length films. These short writing assignments should be 1–2 pages and engage with the films in connection with readings, other films, and recurring topics in the course. Our

first feature-length film comes after the due date for Paper 1, on February 12, and the last film comes before the prompt for Paper 2 will be distributed, on April 2. In between, there are seven film to reach the required four responses (Julie Dash's *Illusions*, though shorter than a feature, will count). 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 via Canvas as a Word or text file.

Paper 2: Pharmaceutical Advertising and Images of the Body, 4–5 pages (20 points)
Due April 27. More details to come in assignment sheet to be distributed on April 9.

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).

Beyond the university's statement on academic integrity, I offer additional guidance for this course to ensure clarity. All assignments you submit in this class should be your own original work. Your writing should express your own ideas, composed by your own power, and should not include passages produced by other students or by AI assistants (ChatGPT, Claude AI, Google Bard, Grammarly's AI Writing Assistant, etc.), unless these are put in quotation marks and cited with academic rigor. Scholarly citation is a form of human collaboration, and the crediting of others a vital part of community building and important tool in knowledge creation. In that spirit, I am here to help you in any part of your writing process. If you have any questions about how to handle certain materials in your research, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

You should be prepared to demonstrate the authenticity of your work. A good practice is to always save a record of your writing process, so that you have it on hand in the event questions arise about the originality of your paper. Whether you compose your draft in Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or a special writing app like Scrivener, the application can provide statistics on the amount of time you worked on the paper, how many editing sessions you had, and the dates when the document was created and edited. If your project is suspected of plagiarism or AI creation, these statistics can help support a case that it is your own work.

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

Introduction

W1 The Visible Human Project

T 1/20 Introduction and course overview.

Th 1/22 **Watch:** *The Visible Human Project*, created by the Center for Human Simulation at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and sponsored by the National Science Foundation, 6 min. https://youtu.be/7GPB1sjEhIQ?si=7_8gx_4JOrPHJ0CK
Read: Catherine Waldby, "The Visible Human Project: An Initial History," in *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–23.

Photography and Film of the Body

W2 Medical Films

T 1/27 **Read:** Kirsten Ostherr, "'The Entire Medical Profession Is Becoming "Film Conscious"': How Cinema Became Part of Medical Education," *Medical Visions: Producing the Patient Through Film, Television, and Imaging Technologies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48–80.
Watch: *Acute Appendicitis*, produced by Eastman Medical Films and the American College of Surgeons, USA, 1931, 13 min.
Paper 1 Prompt Distributed

Th 1/29 **Read:** Michael Lynch, "The Externalized Retina: Selection and Mathematization in the Visual Documentation of Objects in the Life Sciences," *Human Studies* (1988): 201–234.

W3 Chronophotography

T 2/3 **Read:** Étienne-Jules Marey, *Movement*

Th 2/5 **Read:** Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "The Image of Objectivity." *Representations* 40 (1992): 81–84 (selection). Mary Ann Doane, "Temporality, Storage, Legibility: Freud, Marey, and the Cinema," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (1996): 313–343.

M 2/9 Paper 1 Due on Canvas by 5 p.m.

Seeing Inside the Body

W4 X-Rays

T 2/10 **Read:** Akira Mizuta Lippit, "Modes of Avisuality: Psychoanalysis—X-ray—Cinema," in *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 35–59.

R 2/12 **Watch:** *X: The Man with the X-ray Eyes*, dir. Roger Corman, USA, 1963, 79 min.
Read: Carina Storrs, "Medical Imaging Goes to the Movies," Undark, https://undark.org/2016/07/01/medical-imaging-cinematic-rendering/.

W5 MRI and PET

T 2/17 **Read:** Kelly A. Joyce, "From Numbers to Pictures: The Development of Magnetic Resonance Imaging and the Visual Turn in Medicine," *Science as Culture* 15, no. 1 (2006): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/09505430600639322. Anne Beaulieu, "Voxels in the Brain: Neuroscience, Informatics and Changing Notions of Objectivity," *Social Studies of Science* 31, no. 5 (2001): 635–644 (selection).

R 2/19 **Read:** Joseph Dumit, "Metaphors, Histories, and Visions of PET," in *Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 22–49.
Screen in class: Examples of advanced medical imaging in popular films.

W6 Ultrasound

T 2/24 **Read:** Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction." *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 263–292.

R 2/26 **Watch:** *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, dir. Yorgos Lanthimos, Ireland/UK, 2017, 121 min. https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/5324520.
Read: 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.

The Body and Film Theory

W7 Bodies Looking and Looked At

T 3/3 **Read:** 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; Lisa Cartwright, "Visual Science Studies: Always Already Materialist," in *Visualization in the Age of Computerization* (Routledge, 2014), 243–268.

R 3/5 **Watch:** *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, dir. Céline Sciamma, France, 2019, 121 min. https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/11347308.

W8 Body Genres

T 3/10 **Read:** Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 2–13.

R 3/12 **Watch:** *Titane*, dir. Julia Ducournau, France, 2021, 108m. https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/12360027

SPRING BREAK 3/16–3/20

W9 Bodies and Visibilities

T 3/24 **Watch:** *Illusions*, dir. Julie Dash, USA, 1983, 36 min.
Read: Janell Hobson "Viewing in the Dark: Toward a Black Feminist Approach to Film," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1/2 (2002): 45–59.

Th 3/26 **Watch:** *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, dir. Ana Lily Amirpour, USA, 2014, 101 min. https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/152888.

W10 Embodied Spectatorship

T 3/31 **Read:** 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 4/2 **Read:** Scott Richmond, "Introduction: Proprioceptive Aesthetics, or in the Cinema," in *Cinema's Bodily Illusions: Flying, Floating, and Hallucinating* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 1–18.
Watch: *Gravity*, dir. Alfonso Cuarón, USA, 2013, 91m.

W11 Discorrelations

T 4/7 **Read:** Shane Denson, "Introduction: Discorrelation and Post-cinema," in *Discorrelated Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 1–17.

R 4/9 **Read:** Joseph Dumit, "Pharmaceutical Witnessing and Direct-to-Consumer Advertising," in *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define Our Health* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 55–85.
In-class analysis of pharmaceutical advertisements.
Paper 2 Prompt Distributed

Zooming Out

W12 Entanglements

T 4/14 **Read:** Karen Barad, "On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am," *differences* 23, no. 3 (2012): 206–223. https://doi-org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/10.1215/10407391-1892943

R 4/16 **Read:** 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.

W13 Final Reflections

T 4/21 **Read:** Peter Galison, "Images Scatter into Data. Data Gather into Images," in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (eds), *Iconoclash*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002): 300–323.

R 4/23 **In-class screening:** *Organism*, dir. Hilary Harris, USA, 1975, 20 min.
End-of-course logistics

M 4/27 Final Paper Due