Course Syllabus (subject to Change)

**Feminist Biopolitics and Cultural Practice**

MA 4 Credits, 8 ECTS, VTP Elective

Winter 2020-21, Time and Place TBA (On-Site)

Instructor: Hyaesin Yoon ([YoonH@ceu.edu](mailto:YoonH@ceu.edu))

Office Hours: TBA

Teaching Assistant: Petar Odak (Odak\_Petar@phd.ceu.edu)

Office Hours: TBA

What do the medical and political tropes of “immunity” tell us about our understanding of the self, other, and community? How do performances of dancers and other artists with disabilities challenge the normative perception of racialized and gendered desire/desirability? How does pharmaceutic capitalism refigure the politics of gendered embodiment and sexual practices? This course examines the nexus of power and life as they materialize through various forms of cultural practice at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, species, and disability. For this purpose, the course enters the conversation between feminist and queer theories and canonical biopolitical theories, which concern the relevance of biological life and death to the realms of the political. In this, we will pay particular attention to entwinement among the biological, technological, and cultural as important constituents of biopolitics. From this perspective, the course explores a number of sites of cultural practice, including performance, eating (and starving), biometrics, prosthetics, reproductive technology, and graphic medicine as sites of feminist criticisms and creative interventions.

**Course Requirements and Assessment**

1. Attendance and Participation (20%): Please complete the reading and screening assignment each week and come to class prepared for class discussion. Curiosity, humility, generosity, respect, and risk-taking are expected for our collective journey. Attendance is mandatory. Absences due to a medical issues or family emergency will be excused in principle (if possible, you’re advised to have your absences due to illness officially documented). However, in case of repeated and prolonged absence (due to illness or family emergency), you might be asked to do a make-up assignment depending on the situation. Otherwise, missing a class will negatively affect your grade, and missing more than two weeks (four classes) might result in failing the course. Repetitive lateness will also negatively affect your grade. If you are late, it is your responsibility to notify Petar or Hyaesin after the class.

2. Key Term Entry (10%): You will write two 300-word key term entries. For an entry, choose a major term in one of the reading assignments (underlined) and write a concise yet elaborate explanation of the chosen term without any critique. The first entry should be submitted by Week 4. Please submit an entry under the corresponding week’s thread in the course e-learning site, by *8am on the day of discussing the text in class.* Key term entries will not be graded (technically, all accepted entries will get an A), but will be asked to resubmit if it is seriously mistaken the job or done carelessly. Tips for the assignment:

* Identify a main concept in the text. And imagine that you’re explaining it to a fellow student who is interested in the subject but hasn’t read the text.
* What does the author mean by this concept, and how does it fit into the main argument of the text?
* What is main significance, according to the author? (What does it allow us to see, criticize, or re-examine and how so?)
* Paraphrase in your own words, minimize quoting, and avoid referring to other texts.

3. Media/Art Presentation (15%): You will give a small group presentation on the assigned media and art pieces. The main purpose of this presentation is to learn collaboratively and to enrich cross-readings among media, art, and performance pieces and more academic texts. The role of each presentation will differ depending on the materials, texts, and the theme of the week. That said, usually, the presenters will offer relevant background knowledge about the media/art pieces and discuss them in conversation with the texts and theme from that week. Each presentation should be 15-20 minutes long (mainly depending on the length of the clips included in the presentation). You’re encouraged to consult Hyaesin in advance during my office hours. The group should email me a brief plan for the presentation *by noon the day before the presentation*.

4. Conference presentation and response (15%): You will give a presentation that is directly relevant to your upcoming term paper. You are welcome to present the work-in-progress that you are developing into the paper, but you may also present a media, art, or performance project that will be complemented by the paper. The point of the class conference is to have the opportunity to share your work and offer collective input into each other’s projects. Therefore, your active and thoughtful responses to fellow students’ presentation are also important contributions to the conference and will be factored into the grade.

5. Term Paper (40%): You will write a term paper (around 2500-2700 words) on a topic of your choice that is directly relevant to the theme of the course. The term paper is not a standard research paper, and should demonstrate conceptual, methodological, and epistemological engagement with the course materials and discussion. You may write the paper as part of a larger research project of yours, but you should nonetheless focus on course materials in a significant manner.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will familiarize themselves with the major concepts and arguments in biopolitical theories, and their connections to and implications for gender studies in particular and critical theories in general.
2. Students will better understand and be able to analyze some of the important ways in which biopolitical power relations substantiate and operate through cultural practices in the contemporary world.
3. Students will be able to experiment with transdisciplinary theories and methods in order to engage with various forms of cultural practice, such as dance, tactical arts, cloning, and drone wars.
4. Students will improve their skills in analytical reading and writing, verbal discussion, and other forms of presentation.

**Course Policies and Logistics**

1. Please arrive on time and turn off or silence all cell phones before class begins. Please remember that vibration can disturb others, too. You may use tablets and laptops *only to refer to the course materials.* Cell phones are not allowed even for the purpose of reading. No recording, please. However, if you need any device for disability-related (or other comparable) reasons, you’re welcome to use it – but please let me know in advance.

2. Hyaesin and Petar will hold office hours throughout the semester. Everyone is welcome to visit to go over classroom discussions, assignments, or any thoughts you might have about the course. To reserve a time slot with Hyaesin, please sign-up online at https://bit.ly/YoonH2021. No prior communication is needed. Please sign-up for, change, or cancel appointments by 8am that day. If it is necessary to change after 8am, please email me. If all my regular office hours conflict with your class schedule, please send me an e-mail to make an appointment. To reserve a time slot with Petar, please sign-up online at <https://meet-with-petar.appointlet.com>. If all my regular office hours conflict with your class schedule, or if time slots are taken for the week and you have a pressing issue to discuss, please send me an e-mail.

3. I’ll be communicating with you by e-mail during the term, and you’re responsible for knowing what is in those emails. When you write, please use the subject line [Biopolitics] to ensure that your email catches my attention.

4. If you have any disability-related access needs, please discuss them with me ASAP. Access needs can be shared with the class without shame. We, as a learning community, will try to support each other’s access needs.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1. The Birth of Biopolitics**

Day 1 Course Introduction

Day 2 ·Michel Foucault, lecture eleven (17 March 1976), in *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège De France 1975-1976* (Picador, 2003).

· Clare O’Farrell, “Theoretical Puppets: Foucaut on the Coronavirus, Biopolitics, and “Apparatus of Security,” 2020 (video): https://michel-foucault.com/2020/04/12/theoretical-puppets-foucault-on-the-coronavirus-biopolitics-and-the-apparatus-of-security-2020/

**Week 2. Bare Life and the Force of Flesh**

Day 1 · Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford University Press, 1998), excerpts.

Day 2 · Alexander G. Weheliye, “Pornotropes,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 7(1), 2008.

**Week 3. Horizons of Death**

Day 1 · Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15 (1), 2003.

Day 2 · Suvendrini Perera, “Oceanic corpo-graphies, Refugee Bodies and the Making and Unmaking of Waters,” *Feminist Review* 103, 2013.

**Week 4. Precarity of Life and the Limits of Humanity**

Day 1 · Judith Butler, “Violence, Mourning, Politics,” “Precarious Life,” *Precarious Life* (New York: Verso, 2006)*.*

* Media & Art presentation 1: AIDS Memorial Quilts (or other relevant project)

Day 2 · Cary Wolfe, “Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Context,” *Law, Culture, and the Humanities* 6 (1), 2010.

**Week 5.**

Day 1 · Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, and Lateral Agency),” *Critical Inquiry* 33 (4), 2007.

Day 2 · Sarah Lochlann Jain, “Living in Prognosis: Toward and Elegiac Politics,” *Representations* 98 (1), 2007.

· Julie Livingston, “Suicide, Risk, and Investment in the Heart of the African Miracle,” *Cultural Anthropology* 24(4), 2009.

* Media & Art presentation 2: Michelle Dizon, *Ex Utero* (2015), in-class screening.

**Week 6. Molecular Biopolitics**

Day 1 · Nikolas Rose, “Molecular Biopolitics, Somatic Ethics, and the Spirit of Biocapital,” *Social Theory and Health* 5 (1), 2007.

Day 2 · Beatriz Preciado, “Pharmaco-Pornographic Politics,” *Parallax* 14 (1), 2008.

**Week 7. Affect and Biopolitcs**

Day 1 · Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, “Biopolitical Production,” *Empire* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Day 2 · Elspeth Probyn, “Eating Disgust, Feeding Shame,” *Carnal Appetites* (Routledge, 2003).

· Kyla C. Schuller, “Taxanomies of Feeling,” *American Quarterly* 64 (2), 2012.

* Guidelines for Final Conference and Paper

**Week 8. The Self, Other, and the Immunity Paradigm**

Day 1 · *Roberto Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” Angelaki 18(3), 2013.*

· “The Biopolitics of Immunity in Times of Covid-19: An Interview with Roberto Esposito,” June 16, 2020, *Antipode Online.*

Day 2 · Lauren Wilcox, “Embodying Algorithmic War: Gender, Race, and the Posthuman in Drone Warfare,” *Security Dialogue* 48 (1), 2016.

* Media & Art Presentation 3: Critical Art Ensemble (on art and terror, *Strange Culture*)

**Week 9. Disability and Debility**

Day 1 · Robert McRuer, “Compulsory Ablebodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence,” in Lennard J. Davis ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2006).

· Liat Ben-Moshe, “Disabling Incarceration: Connecting Disability to Divergent Confinements in the USA,” *Critical Sociology* 39 (3) 2011.

* Media & Art Presentation 4: Sins Invalid

Day 2 · Jasbir Puar, “Bodies with New Organs: Becoming Trans, Becoming Disabled,” *The Right to Maim* (Duke, 2017).

**Week 10. Post/socialist Biopolitics**

Day 1 · Sergei Prozorov, “Foucault and Soviet Biopolitics,” *History of the Human Sciences* 27(6)

2014.

Day 2 · Kateřina Kolářová,“The Inarticulate Post-Socialist Crip. On the Cruel Optimism of Neoliberal Transformations in the Czech Republic,” *Cripistemologies. Special Issue of The Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies (JLCDS)*, Guest Editors: Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer. 8(3), 2014.

**Week 11. Geontologies**

Day 1 · Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Geontologies: The Figures and the Tactics,” *e-flux journal* 78 ,2016).

Day 2 Film Screening

**Week 12. Final Conference**

Day 1 Final Conference Group A

Day 2 Final Conference Group B

**\*\*\* Final Paper Due TBA \*\*\***