Week 1 (Contagion) (Martin Crowley)

Contagious Bodies
This lecture considers the use of the figure of contagion as a way of conceptualizing communication. In medical and everyday usage, we talk readily of ‘communicating’ a disease; but to turn this association around, to suggest that verbal or artistic communication be thought along the lines of infection, is to risk lapsing into nonsense: by definition, such communication implies distance and mediation, not contact or immediacy. Avant-garde artists and writers, mostly working from unorthodox versions of Modernism, have consistently and wilfully run this risk, however, proposing that their works and those of others be valued precisely for their ability to function in a manner analogous to contagious disease: namely, to produce in the viewer or reader an immediate bodily response. Specific attention will be paid to the thought of Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud; by way of illustration, works discussed will include the films of Catherine Breillat, as well as examples of performance and body art by such as Stelarc, Jean-Jacques Lebel, and COUM.

Suggested reading/viewing

* Any of the films of Catherine Breillat. The MML library now has many of Breillat’s films including Romance and Anatomie de l’enfer. NB: health warning: these films are sexually explicit. No explicit material will be used in the lecture.

Week 3 (Queer Fellows) (Ina Linge)

The aim of this lecture is to explore the queer body as it was theorized and constructed in early twentieth century narrative. It will introduce queer theory, which arose in the 1990s principally but not solely around the work of Judith Butler and addresses the construction of gender and sex by seeking to problematize essentialities of identity. With this methodological approach in mind and also briefly turning towards Michel Foucault’s writing about how sex is put into discourse, the lecture will then investigate the sexual sciences of the early twentieth century to exemplify how the queer body has been medicalised and categorised, but also given new opportunities and circumstances in which it can appear. This methodological and historical context will provide a lens through which we can then assess the attempts to situate queer lives and bodies in early twentieth century culture. How is queerness rendered visible? What are the potentialities released by its recognition? The final part of the lecture will discuss two examples of queer life writing – N. O. Body’s Aus eines Mannes
Mädchenjahren (A Man’s Maiden Years, 1907) and Radclyffe Hall’s The Well of Loneliness (1928) – in order to show how literature and life writing contribute to the creation and critique of sexual knowledge, with the queer body at the centre of the discussion.

**Recommended reading:**


**Relevant Primary reading:**


*Week 5 (Violence)* (Pierpaolo Antonello)

This lecture discusses some of the key issues related to the representation of violence in contemporary cinema, from a variety of critical perspectives: historical, thematic, formal, theoretical and anthropological. A specific case study that will be examined is Quentin Tarantino’s diptych *Kill Bill*, while René Girard’s theory of violence and reciprocity will provide the bulk of the main theoretical argument.

**Suggested reading/viewing**

S. Prince (ed.), *Screening violence* (London: Athlone, 2000)

*Week 6 (Body Politic)* (Dominic Keown)

The aim of this lecture is to explore some concepts which help to frame the topic of the body in the texts and artworks you are studying. It will discuss a number of modern thinkers who have foregrounded the role of power, politics, and ideology in shaping bodily experience and its representation. These elements will be contextualised within
the framework of the Marxist deliberation on reification: that is to say, the manner in which the commodification of humanity in the capitalist system is exposed and subsequently challenged in art of the twentieth century through corporal representation. To this effect, the aesthetic basis to the argument will be established with reference to the "look" of female stars in early Hollywood which will precede a more detailed examination of essays on the same theme in European cinema: particularly as regards the dissident speculation on this theme evident in the graphic work of Picasso, Buñuel, Dalí, Berlanga, Almodóvar and Bigas Luna.

**Suggested reading/viewing**

K Marx, F Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
L Buñuel, S Dalí, *Un Chien andalou; L'Age d'or.*
L Garcia Berlanga, *Plácido*
P Almodóvar, *Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto; Atame*
Bigas Luna, *Jamón jamón*

**Lent (weeks 1, 3, 5)**

Week 1 (*Nudity and Costume*) (Nick White)

This lecture is subtitled Nudity and Nakedness, Narrative and Painting; and the notion of dressing and undressing is going to be at the heart of our analysis of the ways in which the body, and in particular the female body, has been inscribed in European art and literature, not least in its painting and its fiction. Anyone who has ever walked around the great art galleries of Europe’s capital cities will realise that it is in the depiction of the body beautiful that much art has asserted its own aesthetic prowess. The aim of this lecture is to examine what is at stake in the cherishing of the nude in European art, and why there seems to be such an investment in the value of what is known metaphorically, and not so metaphorically, as the ‘naked truth’. To do this we will look at a habitually celebrated time and place in European art, namely late C19 France, a time and a place when the traditional status of the nude comes under severe cultural pressure. One key site of this cultural pressure is the interrelationship between painting and narrative. On the one hand, the narrative possibilities of the nude are articulated in the process of dressing and undressing foregrounded in more and more paintings of the period, not least in and around Impressionism. On the other hand, it can be argued that the unfurling of narrative itself can best be understood in terms of the revelation of bodily truths, not least in the fetishisation of the feminine to be found in the mimetic fiction of the 19th century in realism and that form of hyperrealism known as naturalism.

**Suggested reading**

Week 3  (Dreams) (Ian James)

This lecture examines the function of dreams and their implications for the body in Sigmund Freud’s *Traumdeutung (The Interpretation of Dreams)*, in French and German modernist writing, and Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut*. While introducing major aspects of Freud’s theory, it addresses in particular the cross-currents and differences between psychoanalytic, literary and filmic dreams. When Freud through the exploration of dreams attempted to find ‘the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind’, European avant-garde writers and modernists engaged with the uncertain status of these activities between the rational and the irrational, the sleeping and the waking, the imagined and the actual. Kubrick transposes their preoccupations to the 21st century. When looked at in comparison, what emerges in Freud’s, and other works treated here is a shared interest in the psychosexual genealogy of desire, and in the realm of the physical as an area that is as much of the body as of the mind.

**Suggested reading/viewing**

Sigmund Freud, Die Traumdeutung, Gesammelte Werke vol. 2/3 (The Interpretation of Dreams – available in Pelican Freud Library or World’s Classics series), section II (‘The Method of Interpreting Dreams’). Arthur Schnitzler, Traumnovelle, in Die Erzählenden Schriften, Gesammelte Werke II (Fischer, 1970), also available as ‘Reclam Heft’; (Dream
Week 5 (Hysteria) (Amaleena Damlé)

A Keyboard for Expression: The Hysterical
This lecture takes a historical approach in considering responses to hysteria since classical antiquity, highlighting relations between gender and power in the formulation of hysteria as a pathological experience and as a cultural phenomenon. In particular, it explores the ways in which hysteria has been taken up in psychoanalysis at the end of the nineteenth century, in consideration firstly of Freud’s theoretical writings and famous case study of Dora, and secondly of Jean-Martin Charcot’s Salpêtrière clinic in Paris. Focusing on the complexity of relations between mind and body, and between patient and psychoanalyst, it considers variously the roles played by language, narrative, gesture and specular performance in the communication of the discourse of the hysteric.

Suggested reading