“Why All the Fuss about the Body?”

An Interdisciplinary Conference on Local and Global/ized Bodies

The University of the South
April 11–16, 2016

ABSTRACTS
Keynote Speakers’ Abstracts

Haun Saussy (University of Chicago)
“The American Walk’: Global Contact, Gesture, Rhythm, and Poetry”

The invention of means of recording and measuring physiological processes allowed gestures (such as walking) to be stored and replayed. I take Marcel Mauss’s 1936 essay on “Techniques of the Body” to be testimony of a global circulation of gesture mediated by cinema, but also a methodological hint that all media, from oral recitation and writing on through print and emoticons, encrypt the memory of bodily movements. Indeed a gradual rediscovery of the body as a locus of action and thought formed one theme of modern culture before World War I. I trace this rediscovery through two parallel and opposed developments: the contagious propagation of free verse across the globe from the 1880s onward, and the rediscovery of oral-formulaic poetry as an art of memory by ethnographers and philologists.

Olga V. Solovieva (University of Chicago)

The talk situates Nakata’s Ringu, adapted from Suzuki Koji’s novel of the same name, in the history of Japanese horror film, on the one hand, and in the context of the Japanese hibakusha cinema, dealing with the victims of the atom bomb from Children of the Atom Bomb (1952) to Kurosawa’s Rhapsody in August (1991), on the other. A cross-fertilization between the old, folkloric elements of horror and the forms of modern, technologically induced horror, involving unprecedented kinds and levels of bodily destruction, effectively updates the horror genre in ways specific to the context of contemporary Japan and anxieties about survival.

Jehanne M Gheith (Duke University)
“The Mortal Body: Russian and America Ways of (Not) Knowing”

Pain, as Elaine Scarry has famously said, isolates. Pain is something we do alone. Yet practices around pain are cultural. This paper explores medical, social, and personal practices around terminal pain in the U.S. and Russia. I will argue that practices around hospice care in the two cultures reveal particular ways of not wanting to know what the body knows.

While pain can isolate, it can also teach. Fiction helps us understand this. Sue Monk Kidd states “The body knows things a long time before the mind catches up to them. I was wondering what my body knew that I didn’t” (The Secret Lives of Bees). Such fictional statements are borne out by scholarship (Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Knows the Score, 2014). My paper lightly, but I hope also deeply, touches on ways that fiction helps us to know something about the mortal body.

As a hospice social worker, I know what the process of dying looks like. As a professor of Russian culture who studied the Gulag for 10 years, and is currently studying the Russian hospice movement, I know something about both mass dying in Russia and current problems with pain management for the terminally ill there. The paper brings together my knowledge in both realms to begin an exploration of how theorizing the body changes in the face of mortality. In the paper, I examine different cultural ways of not knowing the mortality of the body and the consequences of that desire not to know. The paper concludes with some thoughts about how to reframe mortality so that it can include hope: I argue that this can only be done through the body.
Conference Presenters’ Abstracts

Panel 1: DISCIPLINING BODIES

Kelly Whitmer
“Youthful Bodies and Sentimental Culture in Early Modern (Central) Europe”

In her book, the Body of the Artisan, historian of science Pamela Smith takes inspiration from Caroline W. Bynum’s astute observation that “the deep interest in the body in Europe in the high Middle Ages sprang from a view that matter, and particularly the body, was pregnant with creative potential” (p. 117). Smith’s work explores how artisans throughout the Renaissance period “shared this view of nature and sought through their work to make clear the creative power of matter and the copiousness of nature, while at the same time proving their ability to play on nature’s potential.” By the turn of the 18th century, conversations linking mechanized bodies to the new sentimental culture of a civil society (see Voskuhl, Androids in the Enlightenment, Chicago, 2013) continued to emphasize the power of the body as a creative force. Using recent work among historians of science on the ‘knowing body,’ my paper will consider efforts to trigger the affective or creative energies of the bodies of elite young men (c.1700) who had no direct connections to the workshops of artisans and were increasingly viewed by economic reformers active in several central European states as useless and even burdensome. These efforts coalesced around the implementation of a strategic set of observational practices, the juxtaposition of material objects in virtual collections and sustained periods of time in motion, or intentional travel, as a form of exercise that my reformers hoped would generate new ideas, inventions and projects.

Sara Nimis
“Incorporation in a Sufi Milieu: Apprenticeship and Ritual in the Trade Associations of Early Modern Egypt”

The paper seeks to defamiliarize contemporary ideas about the nature of religious authority in Islam and its relationship to other social, political, and economic institutions through a case study of the integration of a particular Egyptian ta’ifa (trade association) in spiritual life in the 18th century. Trade associations (often referred to as “guilds” by analogy to trade associations in Europe) served the practical functions of advocating for and arbitrating among their members or adherents, as well as in serving the state through tax collection and the regulation of production. However, the practices through which these organizations worked to reproduce and assert themselves reflect their embeddedness in the variegated landscape of devotional cultures, most notably Sufi or “mystical” belief and practice. The study will take as its focus an entry in Murtada al-Zabidi’s (d. 1791) Mu’jam, a collection of writings about his contemporaries. The entry not only gives biographical details about his friend who was a prominent bow-maker, but includes a treatise on the art of bow-making, its origins and ethics, and the text of a speech that Zabidi composed for this mu’allim (master of a craft) to deliver at a ceremony marking his retirement and the ascension of his best student to the position of master. The text is adorned with the aphorisms, prayers, and anecdotes typical of the genre. These conventional components will be analyzed to give insight into how processes of inscription of communal identity were conceived by their practitioners. Descriptions of ritual dressing of the body, of the body on display performing its craft in public festivals, and the linking of the body to genealogies stretching back to originary sources of honor, reveal the minute disciplinary processes that shaped guild members’ experiences of their body—its gestures, dress, function, and movement through space in relation to others. A consideration of these processes will be brought to bear on broader conversations in the fields of history, religious studies, and beyond regarding how religious belief and practice function in the public sphere.

Emmanuel Asiedu-Acquah
“‘We Need Educated and Honest Youth’: Youthful Bodies, Discipline, and Resistance in Post-independence Ghana”

This paper examines how youths were implicated in the discourse and practices of nation building and development in Ghana’s first decade of independence from British colonial rule in the late 1950s and 1960s. Discussions about national development in this period coalesced around the idea of youth as model citizens. As elsewhere in newly independent
Africa, the Ghanaian state envisioned and legitimated youth as key social actors in post-colonial nation building but also sought to control them. To the government, Ghanaian youths were to be disciplined, productive and revolutionary patriots, and important agents in the mobilization and development of the country along socialist lines. In Foucauldian fashion, the government sought to discipline students and youth for this purpose through state-sponsored youth organizations and in higher education. University students and youth worked within but also challenged the government’s attempted disciplinary regime. The historiography of early post-independent Ghana stresses the dominance and authoritarianism of its first government but assigns no significance to student and youth politics. In this literature, the designs of the government always prevailed. This paper critiques that historiographic perspective and contributes to a growing scholarship that re-evaluates political developments in early post-colonial Africa. Drawing on British and Ghanaian archives, including student periodicals, the paper argues that the government’s effort to discipline youth and the opposition to it made for a contentious public culture in which youthful bodies were inscribed as the central mechanism of nation-building, but it also helped to construct student and youth politics as a bulwark against governmental authoritarianism.

Michael Wairungu
“Uniformity vs. Swag: Styling the Body as Protest among High School Students in Kenya”

Despite the increasing scholarly interest on urban youth cultures in Post-Colonial Africa, very few scholars have focused on issues of style and fashion among school-going youth. This leaves an important area of scholarly inquiry unattended. Specifically, many urban youth have embraced popular culture as a pedagogical tool more than education system and the nation-state. My presentation focuses on the notions of school uniform and prescribed body hexis (Bourdieu 1977), in Kenyan urban high schools. While school authorities promote homogenous dress codes and body mannerisms to enhance “decency” and produce “good” citizens, many young Kenyans constantly modify these badges of identity to make them “fashionable.” Consequently, presentation of the body becomes a potential site of struggle between school authorities and many students. In this context, I ask three main questions: 1) What is the disconnect between the officially sanctioned and young peoples’ desired social identities in school settings? 2) What meanings do students attach to the various modifications on their school uniforms? 3) Do these modifications also apply to other aspects of body hexis such as walking styles? My presentation draws data from a 10-month ethnographic research in two urban co-ed high schools located in different cities in Kenya. The research indicates that the notions of “style,” “fashion” and difference are central to many students’ desired distinct identities. Therefore, the research contributes to the ongoing debate on the significant role of cultural engineering in the construction of young peoples’ desired identities over the homogenous ideals promoted by the state. Overall, the research contributes to the understanding of the increasing influence of mass-mediated global popular culture over the nation-state among urban youth in Africa.

Panel 2: BODY, SEX, GENDER

Liesl Allingham
“The (In)Visible Body”

In the 1990s, scholars hailed multiple forms of gender bending as inherently subversive to hegemonic configurations of gender, identity categories, and the gendered binary thinking that dominates Western philosophies. Garber, for example, asserts that cross-dressing has the power to denaturalize gender and sexuality because it severs the links between chromosomal sex (signified) and cultural gender (signifier). Similarly, Butler points to the power of drag to disrupt hegemonic constructions of essentialist gender. Critics such as Halberstam, however, argue that because cross-dressing relies on the notion of an original self that is “disguised,” it reifies existing binary categories. Furthermore, crossing to pass depends on erasing the identity of the subject and thus demonstrates the instability of boundaries in theory only.

Gender subversion in fictional accounts of passing by 18th-century women writers is overwhelmingly at odds with these theories. In these accounts, the material body never disappears: 18th-century cross-dressing depends on maintaining rather than severing the agreement of signified and signifier and highlighting the essential femininity of characters that are nonetheless—paradoxically—successfully passing as men. Thus, contemporary critics tend to dismiss these historical
examples as mere plot devices that affirm gender complementarity and essentialism and preclude a fundamental challenge to ideological notions of gender. I propose that it is not despite, but rather through the visibility of the essentialized gendered body that 18th-century women writers create subversive possibilities.

Brandon Kemp
“Vulnerable Bodies: Precarious Desire in Tsai Ming-liang’s I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone”

Aside perhaps from Hou Hsiao-Hsien, no director better exemplifies the cutting edge of contemporary Taiwanese cinema than Tsai Ming-liang. His richly crafted corpus draws from both national predecessors as well as the style of Godard and the French New Wave. Since his entry into (and equally swift exit out of) the cinematic mainstream beginning with his Rebels of the Neon God (1992), Tsai has developed a unique directorial touch characterized by cinematic slow time and paucity of nondiegetic music. Matching this constancy of audiovisual expression is its geographic location. Almost without fail, his films are set in Taipei. In I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone (2007), Tsai both recycles as well as innovates on this familiar stylistic repertoire. Significantly, the film signals a kind of homecoming for the Malaysian-born auteur, with the action taking place in Kuala Lumpur. In this essay, I examine how the film, through its foregrounding of vulnerable bodies as sites of ethical and erotic investment, highlights precarity as a kind of precondition for the development of unlikely (even “queer”) affective ties. In addition, by taking into account both its unique visual and auditory elements, I note how I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone moves this observation beyond the narrow confines of the nation-state, situating it firmly in the midst of transnational flows of people and desires.

Kathryn Mills
“The Body: Sacred or Profane?”

I’m interested in how the poems of Baudelaire represent the bodies of women as sexual objects, sometimes in quite graphic terms, and also use those bodies as the inspiration for his poetry. Baudelaire’s exploitation of the female form is particularly interesting because at the same time that sexuality serves as the starting point for art, that source is soon disembodied by the end of the poem. In fact, many of Baudelaire’s works end up in an ethereal sphere that seems almost antithetical to a sometimes sordid physical realm, even though the body has helped to define its antidote. For Baudelaire, then, the human form carries a mixed charge: it is essential for poetic creation, but the thrust of his work ultimately negates physicality and even discredits it. This tension between earthly life, particularly as it is sexual, and the aspiration for spiritual art, runs throughout Baudelaire’s oeuvre. For him the body and the spirit are causally linked, but in a war that does not reconcile the two opposite yet co-dependent sides.

In 1857 the Second Empire put Baudelaire’s only published collection of verse, Les Fleurs du mal, on trial for sexual immorality. Their judgment conveyed no apparent awareness that sexual desire was in fact mostly sublimated by a yearning for a form of “essence divine” in many of his poems. Baudelaire’s poetry is thus even more subversive than the Second Empire realized, since he was not only representing the body in a socially unacceptable way, he was also representing the spirit in ways that society couldn’t even recognize.

How do Baudelaire’s views of the body relate to Christianity, the religion he had to hand? There, too, the picture is a complex one. Baudelaire’s embattled view of soul and flesh relates to a Christian world-view in the sense that that religion posits the material world as fallen from grace since the Garden of Eden episode. On the other hand, the poet’s failure to reconcile body and spirit runs counter to the incarnational aspect of the Christian faith, which centers around a God made flesh in Christ. Indeed, Baudelaire’s struggles with the divine in his work play out as torturously as his relationships with women.

The central conflict in Baudelaire’s work thus takes him beyond the label of a torrid poète maudit with a lasciviously bohemian flair, and puts him more in the league of metaphysical poets struggling to make sense of how St. Augustine and Pascal, among others, defined man: as a paradoxical union of mind, or spirit and body. This age-old, fascinating, and essentially human as well as religious problem is covered in bodies of work with many different wrinkles. In his love poetry, for example, John Donne achieves union—with the woman, and between body and soul—where Baudelaire does not.
Panel 3: RACIALIZED BODIES

Russell Fielding and Matthew D. Mitchell
“Telling the Half: Slaves, Slavery, and Place in North America and the Caribbean”

In recent years the image of “the black body” has become an important rhetorical frame for understanding matters of race in U.S. society and history. In public discourse the metaphor figures most famously in the journalism of Ta-Nehisi Coates, while the academic historian Edward Baptist in his influential 2014 book *The Half Has Never Been Told* anatomizes the connection between “Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism” with chapters entitled “Feet,” “Heads,” “Right Hand,” “Left Hand,” “Tongues,” and so on.

As the enslavement of Africans in the Americas is also the topic of the upcoming course to be taught by environmental studies scholar Russell Fielding and historian Matthew D. Mitchell, so the metaphor of the body might also be used to understand what we hope to help students grasp throughout the course. The slavery of Africans in the Americas might have expressed itself in different ways at different geographical locations: rice and indigo production in the Carolinas, tobacco in the Chesapeake, sugarcane in the Caribbean and southern Louisiana, cotton across much of the lower South, and foodstuffs in the mid-South. Yet as different parts of the body come together in one organic system, so did slavery evolve differently in these different places to create one human, economic, and environmental system in an organic fashion, with the various agricultural products, the capital that financed their production, and more tragically the bodies of the enslaved Africans who provided the labor being circulated around the system as considered necessary by those who profited from it all.

The intense place-based focus of the course, complete with field trips to see and feel the landscapes and how slavery affected them, seeks to recover for students this history of an organically interconnected continent-wide system of human slavery. Wendell Berry rightly stated that, “[t]here is in fact no distinction between the fate of the land and the fate of the people. When one is abused, the other suffers.” The environmentally degrading practices of plantation agriculture went hand-in-hand with the human degradation that was slavery. Through firsthand experience of the landscapes of slavery, students in this course will gain a perspective on the parallel effects on the bodies—and whole persons—of the enslaved.

Adam Dahl
“Black Disembodiment in the Age of Ferguson”

One of the more striking features of the Black Lives Matter movement against racialized police brutality has been the unique focus on violence inflicted on “black bodies.” On one hand, the language of “black bodies,” as opposed to simply “black people” or “black personhood,” marks a strategic attempt to make the issue of racial violence more visceral and immediate to white audiences otherwise indisposed to perceive black pain as a moral problem. On the other hand, it represents a theoretical challenge to dominant liberal understandings of pain, suffering, and individuality based on Cartesian subjectivity. Exemplifying both of these aspects, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ recent work, *Between the World and Me* (2015), provides a deep philosophical reflection on the moral and political problem of “black disembodiment.” This paper tracks the theme of disembodiment in Coates’ book by foregrounding the role of queer and feminist theories of embodiment in his exploration of the black condition in contemporary America. Coates’ focus on disembodiment forcefully pushes beyond the stoic strand in black philosophical thought that says that you can be mentally free yet physically enchained. In doing so, he reconceives the basis of black freedom in the Age of Ferguson.

Tam K. Parker
“Ferguson and After: Profaned and Sacralized Black Bodies and the Contestation of the American Social Imaginary”

This paper draws on affect theory and new Durkheimian scholarship to theorize the 2014 events of Ferguson Missouri and after as both corporeal and discursive contestations of ownership of the American social imaginary. On the one hand, racial and ethnic demographics are shifting so that white Americans will move from majority to largest minority status, thus denaturalizing centuries of symbolic American identity as white. On the other hand, digital recordings of mostly white police
killing ever-growing numbers of black men, women, and children exemplifies and represents a violent excising of black people from the presumed equal status of citizen. Following the Durkheimian notion that the birth of a sacralized imagined collective body is in the corporeal interaction of bodies, I argue that the intensity of collective affective responses, on the street and then engendered further through digital dissemination, signals an escalating struggle over proprietorship of the social imaginary. The argument takes place literally and figuratively over the dead bodies of unarmed African Americans who function as sacred vectors of social belonging transgressed and collectively reclaimed in public protest, or as profane “thugs” necessarily expunged pollutions of the social body. As Sara Ahmed suggests, negative affects, in this case either moral outrage over lethal policing of black communities or white racist schadenfreude over lethal policing, “sticks” to them, as they are discursively and visually circulated. An examination of the social “transmission of affect” around these murdered black bodies sheds light on the symbolic machinations of the American social imaginary in dispute.

Panel 4: REPRODUCING BODIES

Brandon Moore
“Human Sex Ratios and Environmental Factors: A Skewed Roll of the Dice?”
Social and/or environmental factors can change sex ratios in human populations! Wait, isn’t human sex determination just a 50/50 chance with an XX genotype leading to a female phenotype and XY leading to a male phenotype? As we must work to remember, humans also exist in the same dynamic environment as other organisms that demonstratively show environmentally-induced sexual plasticity and responsive reproductive adaptations. Further, humans continually transduce environmental signals into functional physiological signals that result in clear biological outcomes. Recent advances have demonstrated that the sex of vertebrate offspring is more than gamete-driven random chance. Here, we will discuss the putative mechanisms and potential adaptive functions of environmentally-biased sex ratios in human populations.

Elizabeth Skomp
“Dismantling the Ideal Soviet Body: Ludmila Ulitskaya and Corporeality”
In their persistent attention to the body, the novels and short stories of contemporary Russian author Ludmila Ulitskaya challenge received notions of ideal Soviet physicality. While one of Ulitskaya’s central aims is to argue for acceptance of corporeal diversity—she sympathetically depicts irregularity through catatonic, ailing, and disabled bodies and through figures such as iurodivye (holy fools)—she also critiques the state’s control of the body and its establishment of prescriptive bodily norms. The novels The Kukotskii Case (2001) and Sincerely Yours, Shurik (2005) respectively address corporeality through a focus on Soviet policies on abortion and a discussion of the consequences of bodily nonconformity. In their attention to the body, these novels pose questions about bodily autonomy and emphasize the dangers of eliding individuality in the interest of forming an ideal collective. Ulitskaya approaches history through the body; her rehabilitative and pluralistic depictions of the human form amount to a rewriting of history in personal and familial terms instead of accepting the totalizing narratives perpetrated by Soviet ideology.

Cat Clark
“Juno Reads Miss Piggy’s Guide to Life: Unruly Women, Grotesque Bodies, and the Controlling Nature of the Patriarchy”
Combining Kathleen Rowe’s examination of Miss Piggy as an unruly woman from The Unruly Woman, Mikhail Bakhtin’s “The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources,” and Zillah R. Eisenhowe’s The Female Body and the Law, I will show the subversive nature of the unruly women, specific to the representation of her body. Often seen as excessive or grotesque, the unruly woman defies the patriarchal rules of femininity. With this understanding of the subversive nature of the unruly woman’s body, I will apply this to Juno. Juno ticks several of the checkmarks for the unruly woman: she creates disorder by dominating the man in her life, her speech is “excessive,” her behavior is associated with “looseness,” and most importantly, her body is not beautiful but instead represents the grotesque body as she is pregnant. I argue that these representations of women, specifically their bodies, defies the patriarchal control on women’s bodies.
Rachel Head  
“Representations of Motherhood in the Soviet Union: Gladkov’s *Cement* (1925) and Baranskaya’s *A Week Like Any Other* (1969)”  
This research examines the examples of femininity and motherhood put forth in the Soviet Union, using Feodor Gladkov’s 1925 novel *Cement* and Natalya Baranskaya’s 1969 novella *A Week Like Any Other*. The paper contrasts socialist realism and *byt* literature and their representation of motherhood, especially sexualised motherhood. *Byt* literature, using the example of *A Week Like Any Other*, confronts issues of motherhood and femininity more frankly than socialist realism does—in fact, socialist realism erases all identities besides the identity of laborer. In addition, *byt* literature conflates womanhood and motherhood. Through close textual analysis, this project demonstrates the evolution of the identities of femininity and motherhood in the Soviet Union.

Pippa Browne  
“Function and Fetish: Comments on Breastfeeding”  
My collection of paintings is a pictorial interpretation of comments by women on the practice of breast feeding. Comments cover topics such as: breast augmentation and the decision not to breastfeed; the burden of responsibility for growing a being where there is no economic choice; the emotional and spiritual connection within a generation or passed down through generations of breastfeeders and the empowerment of women through the ability of their bodies to grow another human being as well as to make social and political statements. All of these comments are interwoven with the dual status of function and fetish that breasts occupy within the dominant culture.

Panel 5: THE BODY IN ILLNESS AND IN HEALTH  
Alyssa Summers  
“The Immune System: Friend or Foe?”  
The immune system is complex array of cells that serve as our protectors against the myriad of possible threats to our bodies. The importance of these cells are seen when a small change in genetic code that is responsible for the development of these cells is altered and results in disease. Severe Combine Immunodeficiency (SCIDs) or also known as the “Bubble Boy” disease is the consequence of a single genetic change and is a prime example of how defenseless we are without a functional immune system. Yet, we also see illnesses that are a direct consequence of our immune system. When the immune system is in over-drive, we have allergies and diseases such as lupus, diabetes, and perhaps even multiple sclerosis. Our immune system is in a delicate balance within our bodies that we are just beginning to understand and harness. The immune system functions not only to protect us from outside invaders, but also from those within. Cancer cells invade and destroy normal healthy cells, they are a target for our immune system; however, cancer cells are constantly altering their genomes to be able to evade the immune system. Current work in cancer therapy focuses on harnessing the immune system to target and destroy these once invisible cells. Cancer Immunotherapy is the process of reprogramming the immune system to pursue these rogue cells and destroy them with precision. This type of biotherapy can treat drug resistant cancer cells that were once thought beyond hope and is an alternative to toxic generalized chemotherapy regimens. Immunotherapy is providing patients the power of their own immune cells to fight cancer from within.

Amy S. Patterson  
“Engaging Therapeutic Citizenship and Clientship: Untangling the Reasons for Therapeutic Pacifism among People Living with HIV in Urban Zambia”  
This paper explores reasons for therapeutic pacifism among people living with HIV (PLHIVs) in urban Zambia. It contributes to a growing ethnography on global health, biosociality, and patient-provider dynamics. Therapeutic citizenship is a biopolitical citizenship that includes claims and ethical projects that emerge from techniques to control and manage bodies. In some contexts, therapeutic citizenship has included activism and claims-making against local, national, and international
power brokers. This presentation investigates therapeutic citizenship in the specific context of impoverished urban Zambian compounds, sites of food insecurity, unemployment, and political exclusion, as well as targets for donor, NGO and FBO projects and PLHIV support group proliferation. The paper utilizes data from participant observations at two Lusaka AIDS clinics, interviews, and focused discussions with support groups of PLHIVs. It argues that PLHIVs continuously negotiate subjectivities related to kinship, clientship, religious belief, and political citizenship in processes that complicate therapeutic citizenship. Rather than fostering participation in PLHIV support groups or challenging ‘politics as usual’ through activist claims-making to institutions of biopower, these processes lead to therapeutic pacifism.

Phoebe Kajubi  
“Tensions in Communication between Children on Antiretroviral Therapy and Their Caregivers: An Exploratory Study in Jinja District, Uganda”

Introduction: Uganda, one of the first countries in sub-Saharan Africa to experience the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and to take action to control the epidemic, has registered significant progress in provision of treatment and care for PLWAs—People Living with HIV/AIDS.

While the number of HIV-infected children on treatment-antiretroviral therapy (ART) has increased, many of these children are unaware of their HIV status and what the medications are for. How and when to tell children that they are HIV positive, is an on-going debate, as parents/caregivers continue to fear the negative impact of this on the children. Discussing with HIV-infected children their illness and treatment remains one of the greatest challenges that parents and caregivers of perinatally HIV-infected children continue to face. Yet, communication with HIV-infected children about their illness and treatment is critical to their gaining a better understanding of their health and medicines and to their adherence to the treatment given for the rest of their lives.

Methods: The study involved 394 HIV-infected children aged 8-17 years on ART and their caregivers in Jinja District, Uganda. The overall objective was to explore HIV-infected children’s knowledge and communication practices regarding their diagnosis and ART. The study examined further the tensions between children and their caregivers arising from differing perspectives regarding when and what to communicate about children’s diagnosis and antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Results: Only half (50.8 percent) of the children knew that they were HIV positive and were taking medicines for HIV. Caregivers expressed predicament regarding how much information to communicate to children about their diagnosis and treatment opting to withhold information even as children grew in curiosity, competence, and desire for independence. They perceived the children as being too young to understand the diagnosis and to keep it a secret. This became a source of tension between them and the children especially those who believed themselves to be mature. The children employed different tactics including refusing to take the medicines, to find out what they were suffering from, and what the medications were for.

Conclusion: Communication about, and knowledge of HIV diagnosis and medicines among HIV-infected children is low. Communication between caregivers and children about medicines is infrequent, constrained, and characterized by tensions. Age-sensitive guidelines and child-friendly communication materials to assist caregivers in communicating age-appropriate information about HIV and medicines to the children should be developed.

Amelia Gray  
“Redefining Physical Therapy: Extending Healing beyond the Physical Body”

In 2013, the American Physical Therapy Association adopted a new vision statement for the physical therapy profession: “Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.” This proclamation was the official declaration of a movement that had been on the rise for several years, the rejection of the idea that physical therapy was solely the treatment of a physical injury and shift toward a holistic mode of treating patients instead of injuries. In this presentation, I will share how my experiences shadowing various physical therapists has supported this new vision statement and the strong impact of taking care of a multi-faceted body, rather than just the physical being, on the healing process.
Panel 6: PERFORMING BODIES

Courtney World
“Challenging the ‘Ballet Body’ with Somatic Dance Practices”

The centuries-old, largely unchanged, ritualistic, codified structure of the classical ballet class, taught worldwide with little variation, serves to discipline young bodies through routine exercises that physically mold and contort their developing musculature in ways that not only support the functionality of the unnatural movements that define classical ballet, but also serves to control these bodies for the purpose of conforming to the aesthetic ideals of the “ballet body.”

The ideal female “ballet body” in particular, has been shaped and molded since the rise of the ballerina and the development of the pointe shoe during the Romantic Era. Traditionally, the ballet class reinforces dominant hierarchical structures that harken to the earliest development of ballet in the court of King Louis XIV and continues to do so today through the “star system” structure found in most ballet companies where dancers are ranked as corps de ballet, soloists, and principals. However, in recent decades, somatic philosophies and practices that teach perception, embodiment, presence, mind-body connection, and heightened awareness of bodily sensations, all of which empower and give a voice to the historically silent dancing body, have inundated the field of dance, including ballet. This presentation examines the ways in which these practices that implicitly encourage self-discovery, agency, and democracy, are not only changing the way dancers train but also challenging traditional structures and notions of what the ideal “ballet body” is, or should be.

Toby Hickson
“The Unequal Struggle for Equality: Body as Performance in Kieslowski’s Trois Couleurs: Blanc”

Erving Goffman’s discussion of the performative aspect of self appears particularly appropriate in the study of film, as several critics suggest. Judith Butler’s expansion of these thoughts in Gender Trouble further applies to the body dynamic seen in the literal performances of actors portraying physical relationships. In Krzysztof Kieslowski’s Trois Couleurs: Blanc, the performative aspect of the body emerges simultaneously as a manipulative tool in the power struggle between Karol and Dominique and an indicator of a lack of control in physical relationships due to societal constraints even (if not especially) in these types of intimate battles. An application of Goffman's and Butler’s ideas to Kieslowski’s work illuminates the central claim of the film—the search for equality only exists in the search for greater or lesser inequality.

Justyna Beinek
“Cecylia Malik: Embodiment, Eco-art, Ephemerality”

The Polish painter, performance artist, and environmental activist, Cecylia Malik (b. 1975) uses her own female body, bodies of others, and/or body imagery in ways that are both surprising and effective in terms of their artistic gravitas, as well as galvanizing the public to join the artist in her protest actions that consistently yield real-life changes. For example, she involved thousands of Cracow’s inhabitants into donning self-made blue wings and protesting urban development of green areas surrounding a lake in Zakrzowek (2011). She plaited, with children, families, and the elderly, several miles of dyed fabric “braids” for the Bialka river in mountainous southern Poland as part of a performance protests against regulating the river (2013). Malik first became famous for her project “365 trees” (2009–10), during which she climbed a different tree every day and photographed herself.

These environmental actions and performances are ephemeral in the sense that they are largely flashes in the pan: unrepeatable and finite, since Malik climbs a given tree once; she lays out braids for the river once; her butterflies disperse after a day full of bathing in the lake they want to protect. The traces Malik leaves are the invisible ones: a river that continues its irregular existence or a lake and meadows slated for becoming a park, rather than a condo complex. Perhaps the most ephemeral are dresses made of field plants and flowers, which last only a few hours. What is interesting for me is that, in our age obsessed with permanent objects with which we write history and hope to change the course of politics, such as monuments and museums, Malik focuses on the organic and transitory to spark social action: her own body merging with the body of a tree for a few minutes, human bodies transformed into butterflies for a day, her own body disguised as a siren for a few hours, and the body of a river temporarily adorned, or maybe equipped, with dyed-fabric “braids” on a
spring day. In the age of a media deluge of representations of mutilated and dead bodies, and in the age of performance art that uses exposed, aggressive, or transgressive bodies as media—as it has been in Petr Pavlensky’s nailing of his scrotum to the cobblestone pavement in Moscow’s Red Square or literally sewing his mouth shut, Pussy Riot’s anti-Putin punk performance in a church, or Femen’s public breast baring in various protests, if we only consider the context of East European/Russian performance art—it might be the gentleness with which Malik uses the human bodies for social protest, which has captivated audiences and apparently the authorities as well.

It may be the act of anthropomorphization of the river and imagining her as possessing a female body, which perhaps makes people stop and think. It may also be the Bakhtinian carnivalesque treatment of the body that allows Malik to attract followers; enjoyment experienced by her co-artists comes not only from the intellectual support for environmental ideas, but also from the involvement of the body that is sitting together with others, braiding, and talking, or the body merged for a while with the bodies of water, trees, flowers, and butterflies. The gentleness of Malik’s method equals the gentleness of the political outcomes (action stopped); impermanent activities that approximate play yield tangible, permanent (at least for the time being) results.

Panel 7: BODIES/MACHINES

Bill Engel
“The Early Modern Corporal Imaginary and Memory Machines”

Hamlet signed himself in a letter to Ophelia: “Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet.” The use of “machine” in this context was not unusual, meaning simply “this bodily frame,” or one’s proper body. It connotes that which is his, belongs to him while he lives. Harold Jenkins observed: “Elizabethans thought of nature in general and the human body in particular as a mechanism.” My investigation takes off from here, looking at the implications of the machine that is the human body, and the ways it was conceptualized and put into practice, vis a vis technology—and mnemotechnics in particular.

The place of the human in the Renaissance Memory Theatre can be said to exist at the threshold between what is and what is not, between what is demonstrably real and what is symbolically present. As such it provides an ideal way to chart the intellectual movement within such an imaginary construct so much a part of early modern life and letters. Using contemporary sources (Ravenna, Plat, and Willis), theorized by way of lectures by Heidegger, de Saussure, and Lacan, my paper recovers and brings together the textual traces of this commonplace procedure of early modern mental gymnastics in which the human form, the body, was figured as a phenomenological element in mnemotechnics. The body thus imagined and set to work accedes to a new mode of being, as the locomotive mechanism in place-based (“local”) artificial memory schemes.

Mark Preslar
“The Changing Body—Our Evolving Self”

Our understanding of self includes both our body and our connections to others. How will changing our ‘body’ change our conception of self? Modern definitions of Mind or Soul also comprehend our incarnation in a physical body with the accompanying attributes that arise from brain/body/biome/hormone interaction: personality; temperament, mood, emotion, sensation and qualia, intellect, will, intention, and many other cognitive traits, as well as experience and memory. Yet changes keep occurring in this ephemeral dance of being that keeps occurring between our hardware and software.

A large array of technologies is changing the nature of, and the interaction between, the human body, mind, and culture. The rate of change is accelerating exponentially. In fact, it is difficult for us to comprehend the changes that have come, let alone those that are coming.

The changes that have already occurred are accepted as a given; the changes occurring now appear futuristic and scifi like, and are marveled at before becoming the accepted norm;—the changes being promised in the near future seem like
unbelievable fantasy—to the extent that it is almost impossible to prepare for them since we are nearly incapable of truly grasping and accepting them.

Converging technologies now promise to offer heretofore unbelievable opportunities for enhancing, altering, and restructuring our body, mind, and culture. In fact, opportunities for reengineering the human experience appear to be nearly limitless. Formerly absolute constraints like gender, age, race, ability, mortality, as well as physically based definitions such as I.Q., memory, creativity, strength, dexterity, grace, beauty, size, color, shape, form, all also appear to be on the table as changeable options in the not too distant future. My presentation will explore some of the technologically driven changes now happening, some promised in the near future, and potential outcomes in terms of concepts of self. This will take Bakhtin’s concept of the unfinalizable self to a new and absurd level.

Donald Rung
“Reconstruction / Reincarnation: Navigating the Posthuman World of Charles Stross’s Accelerando”

Jean Baudrillard, writing about the relation between humanity and technology in the postmodern world, emphasized the importance of networks, which subsume the individual into the apparatus of communication.

Am I a man, am I a machine? In the relation with traditional machines, there was no ambiguity. ... Whereas new technologies, interactive machines, computer screens do not alienate me at all ... They are a part of me, a part of myself: ...

All modern forms of communication are built on the same model: that of an integrated structure, where the quality of being human, as opposed to the machine, is undecidable. (“The Vanishing Point of Communication”)

In Charles Stross’s science-fiction novel Accelerando (2005), artificial intelligences arise, born from financial instruments, and start practicing economics 2.0, a theory of wealth that optimizes resource allocation. Humans cannot participate in these transactions without surgery that dehumanizes them, and are left behind in terms of wealth. However, even “traditional” humans, in this post-singularity era, can download their consciousness into another body, or choose to exist virtually inside a computing substrate.

My paper will explore the role that networks play in Accelerando, in the subsequent homogenization of large sectors of humanity. Stross seems to oppose the financial and physical tendency toward entropy of capitalism and networks, the homogenization associated with globalization, to the contrary impulse of humanity to celebrate diversity and difference, which however at its limit might be seen as leading to a different kind of loss of identity.

Panel 8: THE DEAD BODY

Shana Minkin
“French Imperial Bodies in Late 19th-Century Alexandria, Egypt”

This paper asks questions of colonial governance, imperial competition, and Mediterranean connections. It does so by using the French consular death registries to ask what the category of “French” meant in late 19th-century Alexandria, Egypt. People from all over the globe populated the port city. Those registered as French included French nationals, Algerians, Tunisians, citizens of over twelve European countries, and even an American and a Chinese man. What, then, did the category of “French” represent?

I argue that the category of French had almost no national meaning in late 19th-century Alexandria. Moreover, despite the French insistence that they were in Alexandria to protect Catholics, the majority of their subjects were Muslims and Jews. The French, then, served as protectors of empire for subjects who lived lives far beyond the reaches of imperial power.
The French subjects who died in Alexandria, ironically, can often most explicitly claim their French connections in death. Their bodies became imperial bodies, and their lives were documented as French lives—now legible and labeled for the governing parties. Could it be, then that death creates the categories of the living, that death, ultimately, defines—and confines—belonging?

Nicholas E. Roberts

My paper asks what role the dead body played in the success of Arabs challenging the colonial state’s control over Jerusalem by looking at two struggles over Muslim burial in British Palestine. The first incident occurred in the early 1920s when Palestinian politicians contested the development of lands abutting Jerusalem’s ancient Muslim Mamilla cemetery. Designated as a zone for Jewish neighborhood development in British urban plans, these politicians succeeded in getting the cemetery protected in later British plans. A decade later in 1931, burial became an issue again when the family of Mohammad Ali Jouhar sought to have the body of the Indian nationalist and pan-Islamist leader buried in Jerusalem. Powerless to control Muslim burial in the precincts of the Haram al-Sharif and wary of offending Muslim religious sensibilities, British officials had to accept Mohammad Ali’s interment, handing the mufti of Jerusalem a major propaganda victory.

Analyzing the debates that took place between the Palestine government, Arab political organizations, and the Muslim religious authorities over Muslim burial, the paper considers the power of the dead body to shape understandings of sacred space, public health, urban planning, and national development during the Mandate period.

Derek Ettensohn
“‘City of Death’: The Corpse and Catastrophe in Nuruddin Farah’s Fiction”

Nuruddin Farah’s recent novel Links joins a long succession of novels that seek to make sense of the disorder and chaos that attends the state of emergency. These novels offer alternative forms of mourning that are able to historicize a narrative of disaster and recovery for populations that were unable to properly tend to their dead in moments of catastrophe. Set in Mogadishu, the war-torn Somali “city of death,” Farah’s novel denies the completion of any such recuperative narrative. Rather, the novel focuses on how the trafficking of corpses in transnational discourse undermines attempts to recover communal bonds. Links investigates how caring for the dead has become a critical ethical and political responsibility that forms the foundation for the emergence of civil society.