

RLST 4820/5820: Brain, Body, Movement

Spring, 2009
3:00 – 5:30 M, HUMN 180

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Office Hours: W 1:00-2:00

HUMN 288

Introduction: The proposition is that there is no thought, mind, spirit, history, or imagination free of the determinative influence of brain, body, and movement. Thus, ignorance in the character, nature, and structure of brain, body, and movement unnecessarily limits what we know about and how we approach and understand culture and religion. The course is a critical presentation of select research on body, brain, and movement from the perspective of a variety of fields—philosophy, cognitive science, neurosciences, anthropology. The consideration of these materials is from the perspective of themes and issues common to the study of religion and culture. Rather than reducing religion and culture to biology, the intention is to enrich our understanding and appreciation of culture and religion through complementing perspectives. Application to cultural and religious materials will occur throughout. Students will apply these approaches and ideas to religion materials/subjects of their own choosing. For graduate students this is a SASR course.

Course Requirements: Below is the course outline including reading assignments. Since this is a new course for your instructor, he will be in the process of refining and developing the readings and topics for the course throughout the semester (the syllabus is set through Feb 2). New versions of the syllabus will be posted on CULearn periodically. **Readings:** You are responsible for doing the course reading by class time on the day assigned. All of the readings will be available on CULearn. The readings for each class are listed in order of importance. Still all reading should be completed by class time on the due date. **Class Process:** Each class will be focused on a careful consideration of the reading materials. Our concern is to comprehend as fully as possible the subjects as presented in the readings. This objective is complemented by considering the relevance and importance of these ideas, perspectives, and information to the study of culture and religion. The class time will be divided into two segments. First, alternating weekly between undergraduates and graduates, students, as a group, will be responsible for making presentations on the topic and the materials of the day. CULearn will be set up so that students may easily communicate via email with one another on this task. Included must also be examples and discussions of how these materials are relevant to the study of religion and culture. This student portion of the class must involve most, hopefully all, of those presenting for the day. Class presentations should be well organized, detailed, and focused with the intent of providing as much depth and profundity as possible to the discussion/class. Each student in the presenting group must turn in a substantive, yet brief, paper reflecting on the topic. These must be individually written and cannot be a common paper prepared by the group. These papers are due at class time on the day due. No paper will be accepted late or if you are not present in class on that day. These papers will be read, critiqued, scored, and returned to the students. The second half of each class will be directed by your instructor and will include lecture presentations and reflections as well as discussion. **Course Project:** Each student will prepare a course project culminating in a paper of appropriate length (12 to 15 for undergraduates, 15 to 20 pages for graduates). These papers must incorporate specific materials, ideas, perspectives that are presented in the course. Additional reading and research on the select perspective will likely be important. Each paper must also include the analysis and examination of specific cultural or

religious subjects. Students must submit for approval a written project proposal with a précis, an outline, and a bibliography. These will be returned with comment and approval is required. The project proposal is due March 2. The course project is due April 27.

Grading: Course Project will be 60% of the course grade and the average of the 6 class papers 40%

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Jan 12: Being Human: Brain, Body, Movement

Jan 19: Martin Luther King, Jr Holiday

Note: because of the holiday readings for the next couple weeks are longer than normal. Please use this week to get ahead on the reading.

Jan 26 (Grad): Meaning of the Body

Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, pp. 1-15, 19-32, 209-284

Feb 2 (Undergrad): Tradition and Change: Memory and Neuroplasty

Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, pp. 1-26, 45-92, 215-44, 287-318

Gazanega, *Nature's Mind*, pp. 1-7, 30-54

Strauch, *The Primal Teen*, pp. 15-21, 42-49

Ackerman, *An Alchemy of Mind*, pp. 3-6, 41-46, 75-96, 100-118

Feb 9 (Grad): Imagination, Theory, Story

Ackerman, *An Alchemy of Mind*, pp. 12-18, 66-71

Doige, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, pp. 196-214

Gazzaniga, *Nature's Mind*, pp. 112-137

Feb 16 (Undergrad): Color and Reality

Victoria Finlay, *Color: A Natural History of the Palette*, pp. 1-9

Phillip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*, pp. 3-49

Valera, Thompson, and Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, pp. 15-33, 157-84, 217-54

George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, pp. 5-57

Feb 23 (Grad): Phantom and Reality

Ramachandran, *Phantoms in the Brain*, pp. 1-112

Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, pp. 177-95

Mar 2 (Undergrad): Making, Agency, Action, and Artifice

Project Proposals are due today

Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 221-56, 278-326, and notes

Baudrillard, *Seduction*, pp. 5-49

Gallagher, "Before You Know It," pp. 237-48
Ackerman, 159-170

Mar 9 (Grad): Self and Other: Proprioception & Exteroception

Gallagher, pp. 1-10, 37-85, 105-6
Ackerman, pp. 121-150
Massumi, pp. 1-67

Mar 16 (Undergrad): Consciousness and Emotion

Ackerman, pp. 19-27, pp. 235-240
Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, pp. 239-74
Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, pp. 130-49, 184-95

Mar 23: Spring Break

Mar 30 (Grad): Touch, Flesh, and Vision

Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" pp. 130-55
Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 42-72
Vasseleu, *Textures of Light*, pp. 21-78

Apr 6 (Undergrad): Emotion, Depth and Flesh: Merleau-Ponty & Gibson

Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh*, pp. 29-85

Apr 13 (Grad): Language, Movement, Metaphor

Kövecses, *Metaphor*, pp. 3-41, 57-77, 93-105, 163-97, 227-45
Gallagher, "The Body in Gesture," pp. 107-129
Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, pp. 158-207

Apr 20 (Undergrad): Thought and Cognition

Lakoff, *Women Fire and Dangerous Things*, pp. 153-54, 260-303, 370-73
Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way we Think*, pp. 17-57, 389-96

Apr 27: Concluding Discussion

Course Projects are due today