

THIS IS *MY* BODY

Ethical Engagements • EGMT 1540

Fall 2023, Quarter 2
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 5 – 6:15 pm *or* 6:30– 7:45 pm
Monroe Hall 111

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Sign up for office hours in NCH 321 [here](#)

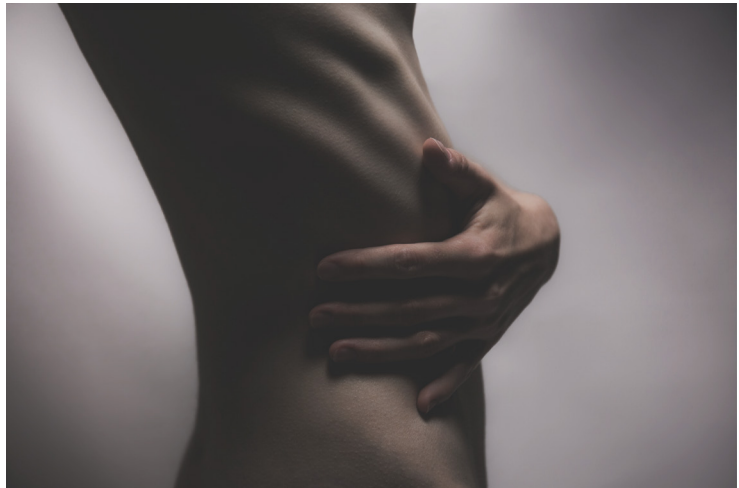
This course is an offering in UVA's Engagements Program, a liberal arts program that seeks to enable students to become engaged citizens of the world. It belongs to the Ethical Engagements pillar, which invites students to meditate on "motivations, practices, and dispositions that constitute a good, meaningful, or successful life." We'll think about justice, freedom, power, and goodness—not just as a matter of philosophizing, but to become more ethical members of our communities.

Overview of the Course

Too many of us treat our bodies like cars, as Sonya Renee Taylor points out in *The Body is Not an Apology*. We fuel ourselves—often as cheaply as possible—and we take ourselves to get checked out when we suspect something might be wrong. But, as Taylor reminds us, if for some reason we wake up to find our cars don't start, we can get a new one, or look for other alternatives. That is not the case when it comes to our bodies.

This course invites students to reflect on the fact that we live our lives in bodies—these strange assemblages of flesh, blood, and bones. What limitations do our bodies set upon us? What possibilities do they open up?

Through the seven weeks of this course, we will focus on many different aspects of our embodied lives. We will consider the ways the world we live in shapes our experience of our bodies—particularly given our experiences of gender, race, and disability. We will also focus on the effects trauma can have on our bodies.



We will not only think about the ways our bodies are *shaped*, but also what we *ought to do* with these bodies that we inhabit. We will think about how we feed and house our bodies. We will consider the remarkable fact that protestors on both sides of the aisle cry “my body, my choice,” at counter-purposes. And we will learn from Sonya Renee Taylor and Tricia Hersey, two extraordinary new black female writers on the body, about our obligations to care for our bodies and thereby to care for those around us.

Objectives for the Course

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- assess the ways our bodies are shaped by social forces and structures of power;
- understand how bodies are enabled and constrained to do ethical work;
- read and assimilate material—and reflect on their embodied experiences of processing course material;
- describe to non-experts how attention to the body can affect ethical thinking and doing;
- reflect on and self-assess their own bodily needs for care and rest; and
- foreground how their embodiments enable their pursuit of a well-lived life.

Inclusion and diversity in the course

Mutual dependence and expertise. All of us ought to remember, as we read and discuss the material, that we can and must lean on one another as we try to make sense of how our bodies influence our ethics. To be clear, no student is expected to be an expert in social theory or politics; in fact, students are not required to have any background in these fields whatsoever. Yet we must also remember that insights don't always come from experts. We always have something to learn from one another.

Diversity statement. It is my goal to create a learning environment that empowers students of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to participate and become ethical citizens of the world. This can be difficult to do, frankly, in the world in which we live, where the views of white, male, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, and wealthy persons are privileged. I have worked resolutely to create a course that addresses this issue: in fact, this is one of the concentrations of the course material. However, as someone shaped by that same world, I know that my own position of privilege means that I, too, have much personal work to do. Please contact me or submit anonymous feedback [here](#) if you have any suggestions for enabling me to be more inclusive or better honor your various identities. I also appreciate your help enabling me to make our course as inclusive as possible by informing me about:

- a preferred name or pronouns you would like to use;
- something you may have heard (from a classmate *or* the professor) that troubled you; or
- limitations of the course that could or should be addressed.

If you have concerns that would be best addressed by a third party, please see UVA's Title IX coordinator.

Special needs. If you have any special needs, academic or otherwise, or if you are having a difficult time in the course, please do let me know. Students with disabilities, in particular, should let me know as soon as possible what their specific needs are, so that their rights can be upheld in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you are having any other difficulties—moral, spiritual, or personal—that impede your participation in this course, please let me know.

Ten classroom commandments

1. This classroom is your classroom, a place where you might be formed together.
2. Thou shalt not dominate discussion but ensure that all are able to contribute.
3. Thou shalt not feel the need to be profound or to impress anyone.
4. Thou shalt respect one another's time, by being concise in discussion and by ending on time.
5. Thou shalt honor one another: show one another decency and charity.
6. Thou shalt not hesitate to ask a simple, unsophisticated, or clarifying question.
7. Thou shalt not assume others' knowledge of any material that has not been assigned in class.
8. Thou shalt not overlook the role of various biases (like gender biases) when managing discussion.
9. Thou shalt not present your objections as a flat-out dismissal, but an invitation to conversation.
10. Thou shalt not hesitate to acknowledge your own mistakes.

If you feel that your classmates have violated these standards, you may point that out in class or some time thereafter. You may also let the professor know anonymously about problematic patterns using [this form](#).

Graded assignments

Students will choose to complete **THREE** of the following eight modules. Each module will count for 20% of your grade. **At least one of your modules must come from options 1-4.**

1. A *meal*. You will prepare a meal for a total of at least four people, planning a menu and locale. You will also be asked to reflect on why you chose to make your meal, how you procure the ingredients for your meal, and the ways your choices enhance the experience of the meal itself.

2. A **resting project**. For this project, you will block out an 6-hour block of time in which you do not perform any work. You will then be asked to reflect on what that resting time allowed you to do, the degree to which it was challenging (or not), and how you determine what counts as “work.”
3. A **bus trip**. This project will require that you get to the airport and back using public transit—*without* getting a ride from a friend or Uber, for example. It will invite you to reflect on the challenges facing those without access to private transportation who need to get to work or family.
Note: for options 1-3, your reflection should come in the form of a recorded, podcast-like reflection of about 10-20 minutes. This could take the form of a conversation with a fellow student, a narrative reflection, or even a produced documentary.
4. A **practices project**, which will involve taking on a new bodily practice for at least three weeks. This could include taking on a new hobby, an exercise regime, or something as simple as flossing. For this project, you will make a recurrent video diary with ten entries of about 2-4 minutes over the period in which you are exploring the new practice.
5. An **art piece**. This can be rather broad: it can involve a painted canvas, a recorded song, a poem, a textile creation, or a sculpture, for example. It must come along with an interpretive recorded video of about ten minutes that connects the piece to material from the course.
6. A **teaching project**. You will be expected to develop an instructional tool to teach others about the concepts offered throughout the course. This might be a small wiki, a Youtube video, a two-page handout, an interactive Prezi, or some other resource. Your imagined audience might include your fellow students not taking our course, or even friends and family who are not currently students. Your goal is to convey the material in a clear and compelling way.
7. An **op-ed**, suitable for publication in a local newspaper or community newsletter, which brings to the readers’ attention a way that some persons’ bodies can suffer harm. The op-ed should include a policy proposal or course of action that might serve to ameliorate that harm. *It should be less than 1,000 words.*
8. A handwritten **journal** that you will keep throughout the quarter. After each class session, you are to write approximately 250 words reflecting on the material discussed in the session. You will be expected to submit your journal to the professor for assessment, but rest assured that it will be handed back to you.

Further details, as well as rubrics, will be offered when the projects are discussed in depth on 10/17. Projects will be evaluated on the presence of these three components: 1) critical reflection; 2) integration of course material; and 3) attentiveness to audience. Note that these projects will be peer reviewed by your colleagues.

Students will be expected to make a choice about which three they will undertake by 10/26. The first module should be submitted by 11/2; the second by 11/28; and the third by 12/11.

In the closing days of the quarter, all students will present to their classmates something about one of the three modules they have undertaken throughout the quarter. This will account for 10% of your grade. Your presentations should be no longer than 4-5 minutes. Your goal is to allow your classmates to learn from what you have learned in the course. Rubrics for the class presentations will be discussed in further detail toward the end of the quarter.

Grading

Three modules: 20% each	60%
Presentation & peer review	10%
Engagements Experience	10%
Regular responses	10%
Discussion participation	10%

In addition, students will be asked to respond before each class to the assigned reading, video, or podcast. This will be done in a short Google form with 2-4 questions. Students should complete their responses by **3pm the day of class**. The first response (as an example) is linked [here](#). There are 12 assigned readings, and each student will get two freebies over the seven weeks. Each response will count for 1% of your grade, such that responses count for a total of 10% of your grade. You may receive extra credit if you do all 12 responses.

Finally, all students will be expected to certify that they have completed the three requirements of the Engagements Experience. This includes **attending the Majors Fair on October 10** and meeting with your adviser to plan for Spring 2024 classes. It also includes an activity beyond the classroom. This last requirement will be satisfied by your completion of one of the module options 1-4.

Reading assignments

Date	Theme	Assigned readings (or other material)	Tasks
Introduction			
10/12	<i>In the flesh</i> : Being in a body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to Ezra Klein’s interview with Annie Murphy Paul (70 min.) ⇒ <i>Optional reading</i>: Annie Murphy Paul, <i>The Extended Mind</i> 	📌 <i>Response</i>
How the world shapes our bodies			
10/17	<i>The social body</i> : Our social formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Mayra Rivera, “Carnal Relations” (20 pages) 	📌 <i>Response</i>
10/19	<i>From day one</i> : Socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch Youtube playlist on “Clark Doll Experiments” (15 min.) 	📌 <i>Response</i>
10/24	<i>All made up</i> : Gender and bodily comportment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl” (19 pages) Watch Always commercial, “#LikeAGirl” (3 min.) ⇒ <i>Optional reading</i>: West & Zimmerman, “Doing Gender” 	📌 <i>Response</i>
10/26	<i>Bound up</i> : Facing bodily & social realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch PBS News Hour video on hair discrimination (9 min.) Read Julia Serano, “Performance Piece” (4 pages) Read New York Times article on chest binding (~5 pages) 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 <i>Tell the professor which modules you’ll do</i>
10/31	<i>Within limits</i> : What bodies can and can’t do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Michael Oliver’s “The Social Model” (17 pages) Watch Molly Burke’s “Social Model vs. Medical Model of Disability” (32 min.) 	📌 <i>Response</i>
11/2	<i>Hurting bodies</i> : The experience of trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch Nadine Burke Harris’ TED talk on childhood trauma (16 min.) ⇒ <i>Optional reading</i>: Nadine Burke Harris, <i>The Deepest Well</i> 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 <i>Submit one module</i>
What we ought to do with our bodies			
11/9	<i>Feeding bodies</i> : what we eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch one of the following: <i>Food, Inc</i> (2008); <i>To the Bone</i> (2017); <i>Gather</i> (2020); <i>High on the Hog</i> (2021) 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 <i>Peer review 1 due</i>
11/14	<i>Housing bodies</i> : where we live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch video of Matthew Desmond discussing his book <i>Evicted</i> here 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 <i>Do mid-quarter self-eval</i>
11/16	<i>Bodies politic</i> : Bodily autonomy, left and right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch Kim Iversen’s discussion on “my body, my choice” (14 min.) Read “‘My body, my choice’: How vaccine foes co-opted the abortion rallying cry” (NPR) 	📌 <i>Response</i>
11/21	<i>Bodies at rest</i> : the value of rest and sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to NPR’s “Why rest is an act of resistance” (24 min.) ⇒ <i>Optional reading</i>: Tricia Hersey, <i>Rest is Resistance</i> 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 *NO CLASS*: Rest!
11/28	<i>Body positive</i> : Enacting radical self-love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Sonya Renee Taylor, “Making self-love radical” (24 pages) ⇒ <i>Optional reading</i>: Sonya Renee Taylor, <i>The Body is Not an Apology</i> 	📌 <i>Response</i> 📌 <i>Submit one module</i>
Wrapping up			
11/30	<i>Student presentations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No assignments: work on your final module and enjoy your colleagues’ presentations 	📌 <i>Prepare your presentation</i>
12/5	<i>Student presentations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No assignments: work on your final module and enjoy your colleagues’ presentations 	📌 <i>Prepare your presentation</i> 📌 <i>Peer review 2 due</i>
12/11	📌 <i>Final module & final self-eval due</i>		