

**Department of Anthropology**

**ANTHRO 2263B-650**

**Bodies: Making, Buying, Living and Dying**

**BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE**

**Summer 2026**

*Date: February 21, 2026*

**Instructor and course information:**

Instructor: Dr. Karyn Olsen (she/her)

Method of delivery: Asynchronous online.

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: None.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

**Course Description:**

Why take this course? This course draws on cultural, medical, archaeological, and biological fields in anthropology to engage students in critical reflections on the human body. Bodies are physical and sensual, personal, and public, the result of evolution, and yet flexibly attuned to local histories and desires. This course will take a biocultural approach to exploring what bodies are, how they are used, by whom, for what purposes, and how we come to know such things.

We will start by considering how anthropologists contribute to the study of bodies and then examine how body “norms” are constructed and disrupted. We will discuss key aspects of our social and cultural identities that are enacted and resisted through bodies. You will have the opportunity to review ideas on “body image” as we explore perspectives on weight and body modification. We will consider the different ways that anthropologists help us to understand notions of sick and healthy bodies. We will explore representations of the body in the ancient past and how modern anthropologists navigate the ethics of studying and displaying human remains. Finally, you will have the chance to examine how we treat bodies after death across cultures and through time.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course’s OWL Brightspace site before the first day of class.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Define embodiment and other key terminology used to conceptualize the human body physically and socially.
- Discuss approaches to understanding the human body from various perspectives including sociocultural, medical, archaeological, and bio-archaeological perspectives.

- Compare and ask questions about body “norms” and the ways in which bodies are represented and perceived across cultures and through time.
- Critically evaluate scholarly sources relevant to the study of the body as well as sources found in popular culture and the media.
- Reflect on and articulate connections among social constructions of the body, scholarly literature, and your own experiences.

**Course Materials:**

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. Students can expect to read about 4-6 journal articles or book chapters per week. In addition to lecture videos, some weeks will also include watching relevant video clips or documentary films. Required readings and videos will be available through the OWL Brightspace course site.

**Evaluation:**

Grades will be based on the following:

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|------------------------------|-----|
| • Module Quizzes (12 x 1%)   | 12% |
| • Weekly Activities (4 x 3%) | 12% |
| • Midterm                    | 16% |
| • Assignment                 | 40% |
| • Final                      | 20% |

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