

Sociology 265H1F

Gender and Society

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Office: 3-4 in room 382

Spencer Underwood: 11:00-11:50 Tues, room 225

Week 6: Images of Women's Bodies

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I. Historical Legacy: Women's Bodies as Dangerous and in Need of Control

- A. Classical Greek philosophers (Aristotle): A basic dichotomy -- women and "matter" (body/passion) vs. men and "form" (reason/mind/soul)
On virtue -- the need for Reason to triumph over Passion (mind over body)
- B. 1500s-1700s: Unruly pregnant bodies as dangerous to the baby.
- C. 1800s: Women governed by their uterus – 'hysteria' as a common diagnosis for illness.

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II. Today's Messages: Women Equated With and Judged by Their Appearance

A. Susan Bordo on achieving femininity through appearance

- (1) Our bodies are shaped by cultural ideals of femininity.
- (2) Hysteria, agoraphobia & anorexia: bodily manifestations (or caricatures) of white femininity (appropriate for the time).
- (3) Ads about diet: a 'gender ideology' that women should curb their appetite (and prepare and serve meals)

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B. Becky Thompson on trauma as a source of body and eating problems

III. The Sexualization and Objectification of Women's Bodies

A. Michele Lazar on ads' ideology of postfeminism and women's 'rights' and 'choices'

B. Susan Douglas, *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism*

Film: Killing Us Softly, Jean Kilbourne (2010)

IV. The Body Work We Do (D. Gimlin)

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