

Care and Body Practices in Modern Societies

National Research University - Higher School of Economics

Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Sociology, Moscow

Instructors: Dr Ruben Flores and lecturer Evgeniya Golman.

Fall 2015: Modules one (1 September-1 November) and two (2 November – 27 December).

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Credits: 6.

Type of the course: compulsory MA Course

Course description and objectives

This course brings together two emerging sociological literatures: the sociology of the body, and the sociology of care. The **first part** of the course focuses on body practices. The **second part** is devoted to the study of care as a social practice.

The sociology of the body is a relatively new area of sociological studies. It explores a number of issues related to the body politics and embodiment in contemporary culture including social regulation of the body and body practices, the body as a site for political struggle and inequality, social knowledge on the body, its biological processes and relation to particular social structures mediated by scientific knowledge and mass culture. At the same time the body, as a sum of biological processes, is an object of constant transformation via culture during socialization and the lifecourse.

The sociology of care, in turn, has one of its starting points the recognition that from cradle to grave, human beings depend on the care of others. Accordingly, human societies spend a significant amount of their resources in the provision of care. This is true also of modern societies, where care needs and demands have given rise to a wide range of institutions: from kindergartens to hospitals, and from social work to pension schemes. Nevertheless, neither care provision nor access to care are uniformly distributed within and across societies: the provision of and access to care is often organised alongside gender and class divisions. At the same time, care is always an embodied practice. The body is the first human instrument of care for others; and it is also an object of care.

The aim of this course is to provide students with tools to understand, and undertake sociological research into, the multiple manifestations of care in relation to bodily practices as means and mediums of care for others and for ourselves. The course will offer students the opportunity to deploy analytical categories from the sociology of care and the body in order to deepen their understanding of phenomena such as welfare, healthcare, sustainability in different regions of the world, the body politics, gender politics, and social inequality.

Course Prerequisites

Participation in the course requires a basic knowledge of sociology and social research methods. English language skills (no less than at an intermediate level) are crucial for taking part in the course.

Learning outcomes

The course focuses on developing critical reasoning skills, research skills, as well as the habit of thought that C. W. Mills called "sociological imagination": the ability to link everyday experience with the big picture of historical structure and change. On a more applied level, the analytical skills this course seeks to develop could be useful in fields such as social enterprise, non-governmental organisations, foundations, social care, social work, and community organising.

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be better equipped to:

- Undertake sociological research into questions related to care and the body.
- Critically engage with sociological theories of care, the body and bodily practices.
- Link theories of care with wider debates about social solidarity, justice, democracy, and welfare.
- Develop a critical approach to mechanisms of the body politics related to social policy, medicine, culture industry, mass media and everyday practices.
- Be able to provide constructive criticism to fellow students.
- Be able to constructively deal with criticisms to their own work.

Course Instructors

Ruben Flores (PhD) is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Sociology of the Higher School of Economics. In designing the syllabus, he has drawn on his past experience researching charitable activities at the University of Kent at Canterbury, but also on his ongoing research agenda on the study of healthcare systems and practices in middle-income countries.

Evgeniya Golman is a lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Sociology of the Higher School of Economics. Her candidate of science thesis is focused on female

embodiment and female body practices. She is a specialist in the area of theoretical and methodological approaches to the body in sociology and gender studies.

As part of the course, students will have the chance to spend one or two weeks doing fieldwork in social spaces where care is enacted.

Course assessment

Students' final marks will depend on two components: a) seminar participation; and b) written assignments.

Each of these components is sub-divided as follows:

Seminar participation: 20%

Weekly reports: 15%

Essay on bodily practices: 25%

Research design on practices of care (for the second part of the course): 25%

Final presentation 15%

Seminars and seminar participation

Every week a student will be asked to introduce a paper in no more than five minutes. After this introduction, another student will be expected to react and to start a discussion with the whole group. Students will be expected to discuss their course papers on a regular basis during seminars. Towards the end of each session, there will be time to discuss theoretical and methodological questions related to the students' research papers. Questions to help you start the discussion during seminar time include the following:

What were the paper's main findings or main argument? How do these findings or this argument relate to our understanding of care? What theoretical, epistemological, and normative presuppositions underlie the text's argument? What is the paper's methodology? What are the paper's data sources? How can this text be useful for your own and your colleagues' research? Every week you will be expected to comment on at least one newspaper article related to care.

Attendance

Attendance to the seminars is mandatory. Students with more than one unjustified absences will lose the right to receive a mark for the course. We will not count your attendance if you miss more than twenty minutes of any given session. We will mark seminar participation using a four point scale:

Unjustified absence: minus one point.

Justified absence: zero points.

Attendance: one point.

Attendance and active participation: 2 points.

Attendance and active participation which demonstrates a critical engagement with the texts under discussion: 3 points.

Written assignments' length and format:

Weekly reports. Each week, you are to prepare a very brief analysis of – or, rather, a reaction to – the texts to be discussed that week. This analysis, of between 100 and 200 words, is not meant to be a polished piece of work, but only a springboard for seminar discussion. The only requirement is that you use own words to analyse and react to the texts under consideration. You are to write one report per week, regardless of the number of readings. Hint: use your weekly reports to prepare your final paper.

Students are expected to write an essay on bodily practices during the first half of the course, and a research design on practices of care during the second part of the course. Essays for the first part of the course should be not less than 3000 words and include analysis of issues related to the body and bodily practices in contemporary culture. It should be well structured and consist of an introduction (describing the topicality of the issue for theoretical or practical reasons), a main part consisting of 4-5 theses on the topic and several arguments that prove each thesis, and a conclusion. All essay theses must be based on relevant literature on the topic, theoretical approaches and sociological research.

Research designs for the second part of the course (module 2) should be around 3,000-4,500 words and have three parts. A description of your topic and case study (worth 10% of your mark); the presentation of one interview transcript alongside fieldnotes and comments (worth 10% of your mark); and a discussion of your interview drawing on the course readings (worth 20% of your mark). As part of this research design, students are expected to conduct at least one interview, and to conduct participant observation using visual methods. Part one is due on week two, part two on week four, and part three by week six. I advise you to discuss the topic of your research design *before* starting to work on it. Please use the following format for all your assignments: Times New Roman, font size 12, double spaced. Harvard-style referencing.

Final presentation

Towards the end of the course, students will be expected to make a presentation that brings together ideas from their essays and their research designs. This could be a discussion of caring practices from the perspective of the sociology of the body, or vice versa.

How to do well on this course?

Read as widely as possible, and be ready to discuss the texts under review during seminar time. Do ask questions. Cultivate doubt, and an inquisitive attitude towards the social world. Start working early on your assignments!

How to do badly in this course?

One of the best ways to do badly in this course is through committing plagiarism – a plagiarised work will be marked zero and required to be resubmitted. Recurrent plagiarism will be reported to the dean and lead to a zero mark for the whole course. The module convener reserves the right to refuse to give a mark for the course to any student committing plagiarism. So, please make sure to familiarise yourself with what counts as plagiarism and make sure to avoid this practice. The following are some useful websites in this regard:

"Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It" (Indiana University)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

"How to avoid plagiarism" (The writer's center @ The University of Wisconsin – Madison).

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Failing to work on your assignments throughout the course is another way of receiving a low mark. Since there is no final exam – not even for the second (переддача) and third (комиссия) evaluation rounds – your final mark will depend only on the collection of those assignments you completed during term-time. During the переддача and/or комиссия, students will have the chance only to have their term-time work reassessed.

Thematic plan

Part 1 Bodily practices in Modern Societies

Week	Theme	Total hours	Hours in class	Independent work
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		in theme	Lectures	Seminars	
1	Sociology and the body: main theoretical perspectives on the body and embodiment	20	2	2	20
2	Social theories of bodily practices and care for the self	20	2	2	16
3	The body as a project: bodily practices in the context of high modernity and politics of appearance	20	2	2	16
4	Bodily practices in social policy and social work. Biopolitics, discipline and surveillance	20	2	2	16
5	Gender as an embodied practice	20	2	2	16
6	Health care and the body, ill body in culture	20	2	2	16
7	Biotechnologies and changing nature of human body	20	2	2	16

Part II. Care and caring practices

Week	Theme	Total hours in theme	Seminars	Independent work
1	Why care about care?	20	4	16
2	Care labour and the (care) economy	20	4	16
3	Class, status and power	20	4	16
4	4.1 Care through the life cycle: childcare, healthcare and elderly care.	20	4	16

5	Comparative vistas	20	4	16
6	Gendered and informal care	20	4	16
7	Institutions and moral frameworks.	20	4	16
8	Concluding lecture on care and the body	20	4	16

Reading list

Part I. Bodily practices in modern societies

Selected required readings

Bordo S. (1993) *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd.

Cherniavsky E. (2006) *Incorporations: Race, Nation, and the Body Politics of Capital*. University Of Minnesota Press.

Coffey A. (2004) *Reconceptualizing social policy*. New York: Open University Press.

Crawford R. (2006) Health as a meaningful social practice. *Health (London)*, 10 (4): 401-420.

Crossley N. (2005). Mapping reflexive body techniques: On body modification and maintenance. *Body & Society*, 11(1): 1-35.

Foucault M. (1996) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*.

Foucault, M. (1988). *Technologies of the Self*. In: Martin, L.H., Gutman H. and P. H. Hutton (eds.) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press: 16-49.

Giddens A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.

Laqueur T. (1990) *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nettleton, S. (2013). *Sociology of Health and Illness*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 2: 13-33.

New York: Vintage books.

Parkins W. (ed.) (2002) *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship*. Oxford: Berg.

Shildrick M., Mykitiuk R. (eds.). (2005) *Ethics of the Body. Postconventional Challenges*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Shilling C. (2005) *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Shilling C. (2013) *The Body and Social Theory*. Third Edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Turner B.S. (2008) *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. Third Edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Turner, B.S. (1992). *Regulating Bodies. Essays in Medical Sociology*. New York and London: Routledge.

Part II. The Sociology of care

The following is a list of references relevant to the study of care and caring practices. We will discuss some of these during the course:

Graeber, David. "Caring too much. That's the curse of the working classes." *The Guardian*, Wednesday 26 March 2014

Held, V. (2006) *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hochschild, A. R. 2000, "The Nanny Chain" *The American Prospect*, vol. 11 no. 4, January 3, pp. 32-36.

Houweling, T. A., Ronsmans, C., Campbell, O. M., & Kunst, A. E. (2007). Huge poor-rich inequalities in maternity care: an international comparative study of maternity and child care in developing countries. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 85(10), 745-754.

Isaksen, L. W., Devi, S. U., & Hochschild, A. R. (2008). Global Care Crisis A Problem of Capital, Care Chain, or Commons? *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(3), 405-425.

Jenson, J. (1997). Who cares? Gender and welfare regimes. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 4(2), 182-187.

Knijn, T. & Kremer, M. (1997) 'Gender and the Caring Dimension of Welfare States: Toward Inclusive Citizenship', *Social Politics*, Vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 328/61.

Lambert, P. A. (2008). The comparative political economy of parental leave and child care: Evidence from twenty OECD countries. *Social Politics: International*

Studies in Gender, State & Society, 15(3), 315-344.

Lan, P. C. (2002). Subcontracting filial piety elder care in ethnic Chinese immigrant families in California. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(7), 812-835.

Lee, J. A., Walker, M., & Shoup, R. (2001). Balancing elder care responsibilities and work: The impact on emotional health. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16(2), 277-289.

Leitner, S. (2003). Varieties of familialism: The caring function of the family in comparative perspective. *European societies*, 5(4), 353-375.

Martin, Jeannett. 2013. *Rethinking Care: Anthropological Perspectives on Life Courses, Kin Work and their Trans-Local Entanglements*. 06.12.2012–08.12.2012, Berlin, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 16.04.2013, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=4778>>.

Nelson, Julie A (2011). For Love or Money: Current Issues in the Economics of Care, *Journal of Gender Studies*. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/julie_nelson1/6

Nelson, Julie A (2013). "Really radical economics". OpenDemocracy blog post. 11 November 2013. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/julie-nelson/really-radical-economics>

Reich, Adam D. (2014): Contradictions in the Commodification of Hospital Care. *American Journal of Sociology* 119 (6), pp. 1576–1628. DOI: 10.1086/676836.

Rotkirch, A., Tkach, O., & Zdravomyslova, E. Making and Managing Class: Employment of Paid Domestic Workers in Russia. In *Suvi Salmenniemi (ed) Rethinking class in Russia*. London: Ashgate 2012, 129-148.

Stacey, C. L. (2011). *The caring self: The work experiences of home care aides*. Cornell University Press.

Stacey, C. L. (2013). Why Economic Sociologists Should Care About Relational Work. *Accounts: ASA Economic Sociology Newsletter*, 12(2): 2-5. <http://www.asanet.org/sectionecon/accounts13sp.htm>

Tong, Rosemarie and Williams, Nancy, "Feminist Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/feminism-ethics/>>.

Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. London: Routledge

Tronto, J. C. (2013). *Caring democracy: markets, equality, and justice*. NYU Press.

Tronto, J. (1989). Women and caring: What can feminists learn about morality from caring. *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*, 172-187.

Tronto, J. C. (2010). Creating caring institutions: Politics, plurality, and purpose. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 4(2): 158-171.

Ungerson, C. (1997) 'Social Politics and the Commodification of Care', *Social Politics*, 4(3): 362/81.

Wilkinson, Iain. "On the Task of Making Social Inquiry Aligned to Caregiving: An Invitation to Debate." *Anthropology & Medicine* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 87–99. doi:10.1080/13648470.2014.880874.

Wuthnow, R. (2012). *Acts of compassion: Caring for others and helping ourselves*. Princeton University Press.

Wuthnow, R. (1995). *Learning to care: Elementary kindness in an age of indifference*. New York: Oxford University Press.

For supplementary materials related to the study of care, please visit:
<https://sites.google.com/site/sociologyofcare/>