What do memorial displays for those who died from AIDS tell us about public mourning as a political measure of (disavowed) sexuality? How does the performance of dancers with disabilities challenge the normative understanding of gendered and racialized desire/desirability? How do literature and film afford space for re-imagining the relationship between women and other female animals in the circuits of biotechnology? This course examines how the biopolitical operations of gender, sexuality, race, species, and disability im/materialize through various forms of cultural practice. In this course, we will enter the conversation between feminist and queer theories and the discourse of biopolitics concerning the relationship of life (and death) to the political. We will pay particular attention to the entwinement between the biological, technological, and cultural as an important constituent of biopolitics, as most dramatically shown in – but not limited to – the emergence of bioarts and biimedia. From this perspective, the course explores a number of sites of cultural practice including digital archive, exhibit, dance, tattoo, biometrics, prosthetics, and graphic medicine as topoi of feminist criticisms and creative interventions.

Learning Outcomes

• Students will familiarize themselves with the major concepts and arguments in biopolitical theories, and their connections to and implications for gender studies in particular and critical theories in general.
• Students will better understand and be able to analyze some of the important ways in which biopolitical power relations substantiate and operate through cultural practices in the contemporary world.
• Students will be able to experiment with transdisciplinary theories and methods in order to engage with various forms of cultural practice, such as digital archive, dance, cloning, and biometrics.
• Students will improve their skills in analytical reading and writing, verbal discussion, and other forms of presentation.

Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation (10%): Please complete the reading and screening assignment each week, and be prepared for class discussion. Curiosity, humility, generosity, respect, and risk-taking are expected for our collective journey. Attendance is mandatory. Absences due to medical problems must be officially documented. Missing a class without an official document will negatively affect your grade, and missing more than three classes might result in failing the course.

2. Moodle Posts (40%): You are required to write four posts on the course website (each 500-600 words) about the readings and other materials under the corresponding weekly
thread *by the day before class*. The website is a space for you to think about the texts, to articulate your questions, interpretations, and critiques, and to share them with other participants. A post is expected to demonstrate your analytic engagement with the texts — more than simple summaries or criticisms based on an already-assumed position of truth and/or justice. You are encouraged to read your colleagues’ posts before we meet. These posts won’t receive extensive written comments, but will be incorporated into class discussions.

3. Conference presentation (20%): You will give a presentation that is directly relevant to your upcoming term paper. You are welcome to present the work-in-progress that you are developing into the paper, but you may also present a media, art, or performance project that will be complemented by the paper. The point of the class conference is to have the opportunity to share your work and offer collective input into each other’s projects. We will schedule your presentations in advance for either week 8 or week 12, so that you can plan ahead.

4. Term Paper (30%): You will write a term paper (2000-2500 words) on a topic of your choice that is directly relevant to the theme of the course. The term paper is not a standard research paper, and should demonstrate conceptual, methodological, and epistemological engagement with the course materials and discussion. You may write the paper as part of a larger research project of yours, but you should nonetheless engage with course materials in a significant manner.

**Course Policies and Logistics**

1. Please arrive on time, and turn off or silence all cell phones before class begins (vibration-mode does *not* constitute turning off). I also have a no-laptop, no-tablet, no-recording policy during class discussions, so that we can fully engage with and pay attention to other participants. However, if you need a laptop (or any other device) for disability-related or other meaningful reasons, you’re welcome to use it; just let me know in advance.

2. Office Hours: I’d like everyone to visit my office hours at least once during the semester, but I welcome and encourage more visits. These meetings are to go over classroom discussions, assignments, and any other concerns or thoughts you might have related to the course. If you come up with an idea for your current or future research during the semester, it would be my pleasure to discuss it. Feel free to come in small groups as well as individually.

3. If you have any disability-related needs, please discuss them with me ASAP. Access needs can be shared with the class without shame. We, as a learning community, will try to support each other’s access needs.

**Preliminary Course Schedule and Selected Texts**

**Week 1. Life, Power, and Biopolitics**

Course Introduction
- SubRosa, art and performance pieces from http://www.cyberfeminism.net/.
Week 2. Bare Life and the Informatics of Bodies

Week 2. Necropolitics and the Informatics

Week 4. Precarity of Life
• Materials on the AIDS memorial display and performance TBA.

Week 5. The Politics and Aesthetics of Life Itself

Week 6. The Immunitary Paradigm

Week 7. Flesh, Skin, and Affect

Week 8. Conference A

Group A Term Paper Due TBA
**Week 9. Art, Labor, and the Technology of Reproduction**

**Week 10. Trans-Species Feminist Alliance**

**Week 11. Prosthetic Assemblages**

**Week 12. Conference B**

Group B Term Paper Due TBA

*** This syllabus is subject to change ***