Psychology of Eating and Body Image  
PSY 1905

Date and Location: Fridays 10:10-12:30, Wulling Hall 240
Instructor: Professor Traci Mann
Office: Elliott S357
Email: mann@umn.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

This seminar covers the continuum of human eating behavior, from hunger, starvation, and restraint, to binge eating and obesity, as well as body image. I hope that during this course we can call into question several myths about eating and obesity that you may believe. We will discuss the media’s influence on body image, as well as the development of body image concerns. We will read about the famous starvation study conducted on this very campus over 60 years ago, as well as the causes and consequences of obesity. We will learn about the effectiveness (or not!) of diets, and about the little things that may be influencing our eating without us realizing it. We will talk about solutions to these problems, and about what healthy eating really is.

Readings: Most of the readings for this class are articles that I put in a shared dropbox. You may read them electronically or print them out as you wish.

Books: There is one book that I would like you to purchase because we read a lot from it. It's available in both paperback and electronic form through Amazon, and is much cheaper through Amazon than from the U bookstore. It is called The Great Starvation Experiment: Ancel Keys and the Men Who Starved for Science, by Todd Tucker.

http://www.amazon.com/The-Great-Starvation-Experiment-Starved/dp/0816651612/ref=tmm_pap_title_0

Class Format: This course is a seminar, so its success is based on both the efforts of the instructor and on the efforts of the participants: We will be learning together.
Each week you will be expected to carefully read the assigned articles. I expect this reading to take about two hours of focused time. In class, you will be expected to participate in class discussion. In addition to doing the reading, there will be a small homework activity or project assigned every week, generally involving you collecting some personal data by observing your own behavior, observing someone else’s behavior, interviewing someone, or conducting a brief survey. These are all described along with the readings for each week below. The projects will not be time consuming, and will help to illuminate the main points from the readings. For each project you will attempt the assigned activity, and then reflect on what happened, how it made you feel, and what you learned from participating in it. I expect you to come to class prepared to talk about these things.

**Blog Entries:** In addition to doing the reading, you will be expected to write a short (or long!) blog entry in response to the reading most weeks. The entries will be posted on our class blog, which, to keep things simple, is a shared google drive document. It will only be accessible to the students in this class. Please do not share it with anyone who is not in our class. These entries should be your own thoughts. You may write specifically about the readings or the homework activity, about your own experiences that are relevant to the topic, or any other things that pertain to it. You can do other things as well, such as post articles, pictures, YouTube clips, or anything else that would be of interest to the rest of the class. These entries ideally should try to do one or both of the following: 1) illustrate that you read and understand the reading and 2) comment or expand on the ideas brought up by the reading. I suggest that half of the weeks you post your own entry, and the other half comment on someone else’s entry as your contribution.

**Format for posting to the blog:**

1. Put your name first, followed by a colon, and then your post. (Traci Mann: I thought that reading was blah blah blah, etc.)
2. Put your post in a different color than the post above it (and below it if there is one) so that we can most easily tell them apart.
3. I will put some topic headings in bold, and then we can put posts beneath those headings. But feel free to also add headings.
4. When you comment on a post, make it clear that you are doing so. (e.g., I disagree with what Jill said in her comment...)

**Grading:** Because this course is a seminar, there will be no tests. Your grade will be based on how thoughtfully you did your homework projects and reading (50% of your grade), and on the quality of your blog entries (50% of your grade). The homework projects rarely involve turning anything in to me. I will be assessing their quality based on your participation in class discussions about those projects. Did you make a sincere effort to do them, reflect on them afterwards, and come to any clear conclusions? Did you critically examine the assumptions with which you started the semester? Did you challenge those assumptions based on any of the articles? Did your views on any of these topics change? These are good things to bring up in discussion and on the blog.

**Participation:** I understand that having your grade based significantly on class participation (and writing on a blog) can be a bit unsettling, so I offer this advice. First, I will do everything in my power to make sure everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. I would like you to do the same. The topics covered in this course can be rather personal, and I encourage you to be understanding with each other. Second, I will take every comment seriously and I will consider each comment to have something of value in it, even if it takes a bit of exploration to find it. Third, it is nearly impossible to participate in class discussion if you have not done the reading carefully and thoroughly. I would make this a priority. Although you may be able to fool your classmates into thinking you have read the material, I am not easily fooled and this is unlikely to work.
Readings and Weekly Assignments*

*The readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due in class. For example, come to class September 12 having read the Fat Talk stuff and having done the assignment listed with those readings.

September 5: Introductions

September 12: Fat Talk


Please read and be prepared to discuss the two articles listed above. For the assignment, I want you to attempt to engage in NO Fat Talk at all for the entire week. That includes comments about your body as well as comments about whether you should be eating certain things. To get started, first read the definition of fat talk that is given in the beginning of the Nichter article. Do your best, reflect on how it is going, and be prepared to discuss how it went.

Sept 19: Body Image Concerns and Strategies for Acceptance


3. Cooke, K. (1996). Body-Image Boosters. 208-212. From Real Gorgeous. (This is a list of strategies to improve body image.)
4. Harding, K., & Kirby, M. (2009). Stop Judging Other Women. 87-91. From Lessons from the Fat-O-Sphere. (This gives one more strategy to improve body image.)

Sally McGraw will be joining us for class this day. She thinks and writes about these topics for a living (check out her widely read blog AlreadyPretty.com). For your homework, try one strategy for improving body image (from among those described by Cooke or Harding & Kirby), and be prepared to discuss it. Choose a strategy that you are not already doing. (For example, one strategy was exercising. If you already exercise, or have been intending to exercise, don't choose this one.)

September 26: What Causes Obesity?

1. Glassner, B. (2007). The Gospel of Food. 174-189. This excerpt examines the causes of obesity. (Be sure to think of some causes yourself before reading this.)


Before reading the articles, write down what you believe are the causes of obesity, and why you believe that. Where did you get your information? This will provide a useful comparison for what you read in the articles.

October 3: No Class

October 10: Physical and Psychological Effects of Human Starvation

For class this week, if and only if you are in good health physically and you feel that it would be safe for you psychologically, please fast from wake-up
time until 6 pm one day. Come to class prepared to talk about the physical and emotional experience. (And if you don’t do it, there is still plenty to discuss about the reading.)

You will be reading a lot of selections from The Great Starvation Experiment. This is a book I asked you to purchase. Because we are all reading in different formats with different page numberings, I am listing below what parts to read based on chapters and words. Sorry that it is a pain.

Also, DO NOT PANIC about how much is assigned. It reads quickly, it is very interesting, and it is easy to skim when necessary. Plus you have two weeks to do it.

With that said, here is what to read:

Read **The Prologue**

Read **Chapter 4** ("Control") but stop toward the end at the paragraph starting with: "All of the men intently followed the events of the war."

Read **Chapter 5** ("Crucifying the Flesh") but stop at the paragraph starting with: "As Keys had foreseen when he designed the starvation study..."

Then, **still in Chapter 5**, continue with the section that starts with "The war in Europe ended at 5:01 PM Central time..." and read til the end of the chapter.

Read all of **Chapter 6** ("The Stigmata of Starvation")

Read all of **Chapter 7** ("Restricted Rehabilitation")

Feel free to skim over parts of chapters 6 and 7 that do not really focus on the experiment, but that just give more information on the war and stuff.

Read just the **first few paragraphs of Chapter 10** "Unrestricted Rehabilitation", ending at the paragraph that starts with "Max Kampelman had decided..."

**October 17: Do Diets Work?**

1. Harding, K., & Kirby, M. (2009). *Lessons from the Fat-o-sphere*. 3-11. This is a little more from Kate Harding, who you read a couple weeks ago. This is about dieting.


**Assignment: Week 1 of class research project due today.**

**October 24: Is Obesity Bad For You?**

*Before* reading, think of your answer to the question (*Is obesity bad for you?*), and then think hard about where your knowledge of the answer to that question came from. Come to class prepared to discuss whether you changed your answer after reading, and why.


**Assignment: Week 2 of class research project due today.**

**October 31: Consequences of Obesity: Stigma**

Read the below articles, and then observe people around you or on social media, and find at least two examples of obesity stigma or discrimination. Come to class prepared to tell us about them, and to tell us what you think you can do to put an end to this form of stigma/discrimination.


Assignment: Week 3 of class research project due today.

November 7: Mindless Eating and Smart Regulation Strategies


November 14: Eating in Space/Kids and Eating

For class this week, ask your parents about what sort of eater you were as a toddler, and about what rules they had about eating when you were little. (Even if you think you know the answer, ask them anyway, and dig for details.) Consider if this had any effect on your current eating habits.

These 4 readings are all short and quick and easy. First there are two short excerpts from Ellyn Satter's book on kids and eating (both very short):


Then two about eating and astronauts:


November 21: What’s In Our Food and How Should we Eat?


First read the selections from the two books, and then see if there are things you currently eat that you don’t think you want to eat any more. Try to avoid processed foods for one full day (but still eat every meal).

November 28: Thanksgiving

December 5: Class Lunch: Exploring Ethnic Foods at Midtown Global Market