

## **Call for Participation**

The Gender and Agency Research Network at the University of Vienna together with the Gender Research Office cordially invites you to join us at our

Symposium

### **Body Discourses / Body Politics and Agency**

The Symposium *Body Discourses / Body Politics and Agency* aims to open up an inter- and transdisciplinary discussion of current approaches, perspectives, research questions and work within the field of gender-related body discourses in all their diversity. We seek to create exchanges between scholars from all disciplines: between students, PhD candidates, post docs and senior scholars. We would like to forge networks between academic and non-academic groups. We look forward to connecting scholarly with relevant fields of practice, activism and art.

All participants are experts in certain areas within their fields. For this reason, the formats of the themes of this symposium will be diverse and will be arranged based on the submissions we receive. There will be space for working groups, panels with thematic lectures, discussion forums and poster sessions as well as open spaces, performances and installations.

The emphasis is on exchange, networking and on initiating open and respectful dialogues.

**Date: 5 - 7 February 2015**

**Location: University of Vienna, AKH Campus**

The **deadline for proposals** of all kinds, e.g. lectures, posters, inputs for working groups or discussion forums from a scholarly, practical, activist, or art-based points of view is

**31 October 2014.**

We kindly request that all suggestions for contributions be submitted via e-mail to:

**bodydiscourses@univie.ac.at,**

for further information, visit <http://bodydiscourses.univie.ac.at/>

The following core themes can be helpful for those submitting proposals:

1. The Optimized Body: For Whom and What for?

With different kinds of body modifications, surgical procedures, forms of body enhancement and neuro-enhancement the modifiable body and brain are quickly becoming crucial factors for success in securing one's social position and for profitably bringing oneself to the labor market. Only resilient and stress-resistant bodies are able to work flexible hours and thus--not least because of "modern" enhancement technologies--get caught up in the grind of striving for improvement, expansion and optimization. However: according to what norms are or should these bodies and minds be improved? What are the implicit and explicit goals of these socially ambitious improvements? Which optimization aims are considered intelligible, and who has the power to deem them legitimate? How are socio-ethical, politico-economic, and legal discourses set up? What role does the boom in technologies of body modification, brain enhancement, reproductive medicine, the creation of digital networks, etc. play within these discourses; and what effects do they have on forms of empowerment, inclusion and exclusion? Not least, how can optimized and optimizable bodies, technologies of the self and others, ascriptions of meaning, and discourses be analyzed within a framework that views them as dynamic phenomena? Which aspects of gender and intersectionality have an effect on these material-semiotic networks? What overall effects do discourses around body optimization, modification and enhancement have on an individual, social and symbolic level?

*For this topic, we welcome submissions or posters on research perspectives, concepts and current research work, which will hopefully further open up the debate.*

2. Academic Body Habitus

Body habitus brings together biomaterial and social spheres within concepts that transgress the boundaries between nature and culture. This stream will focus on an area that has yet to become part of the debates within sociology of the body. Which meanings, constitution, effects and impacts do processes of academic body habitus have within different disciplinary settings, for instance within technical and natural sciences such as physics or biology, within the social sciences, philosophy, and the humanities? Through a gender-focused lens, we want to take a closer look at the function of bodily practices and presentations, and examine the relationship between body habitus and agency, as well as the significance of power structures within and between disciplines and between science(s)/scholarship and society.

Further relevant points for the current analysis are the ways in which links are made between habitus, identity construction and subjectivation, education and scientific culture, which we will explore through different lenses, for instance contemporary embodiment concepts and feminist materialist approaches .

*Further submissions as well as theoretical and empirical contributions are welcome for this stream.*

3. Biopolitical Regulation of Bodies/Corporealities in "Eastern" and "Western" Discourses

This stream will present and intensify the exchange and networking between the international independent research and education project *Bodypolitix: Політику Телесності* (<http://bodypolitix.me/>) and experts from related fields in Belarus and Russia.

Focusing on different mechanisms of regulating (non-normative) bodies, we invite papers analyzing the processes of gendering, racialization, fragmentation and optimization in Belarus and Russia from a biopolitical perspective. Furthermore, we welcome research asking for the relationship between "Western" European practices of governing bodies and "Eastern" discourses. Questions we seek to discuss in more detail are in what way hegemonic "Western" discourses on sexuality take shape within (dominant and marginal) discourses and forms of governmentality in Russia and Belarus, and how such discourses are represented on a global level. A specific focus will be placed on questions regarding the kinds of agency of different actors implied in the body discourses in and between the "East" and "West", and the necessary steps for creating an exchange that is aware of the power (dynamics) within this emerging international field of research.

*This stream welcomes further submissions.*

#### 4. Discourses on Development, Postcoloniality, Body

This stream has a queer-feminist focus and looks at agency and analysis in terms of international inequality and international "development." What is the significance of this field in shaping the discourses, politics, norms and subversions of the body? What is the relevance of feminist, queer, postcolonial and intersectional work on "corporeality"/the body for discussing the politics of globalization? What does it mean to work with or on non-Eurocentric theories, analyses and conceptualizations of the body?

The thematic framework for this stream focuses on practices from initiatives working on gender and sexual politics, from disability/crip movements and queer networks working on a global level and/or on development policy, addressing binary oppositions related to the body within colonial and development contexts, such as "sick/healthy", "mutilated/intact", "dirty/clean", "in need of development/developed" as well as analytical terms such as "(post)colonial desire" or "queering development" and more.

*The research group "bodies\_gender\_sex" (Department of Development Studies at the University of Vienna) will discuss work currently being done within this field and invites further contributions to broaden the overall discussion.*

#### 5. What's Left of the Body

"Bringing Gender into Science" (Birke 2003), this has been at the core of the endeavors to create a dialogue between gender studies and the MINT disciplines. This forum aims to discuss possible approaches to this dialogue and to further develop it. There are many fields that provide points of entry into this dialogue, research perspectives within which the entanglements and transgressions of the boundaries between nature and culture are obvious (from brain plasticity to body modifications, to epigenetics and many others).

Engaging in a critical and respectful exchange among disciplines from gender studies in social and cultural sciences, MINT disciplines and scientific research can open up new options for integrating gender and intersectional aspects into different fields in a differentiated manner. The challenges, potentials as well as the limits of such a dialogue are at the center of this forum, with the goal of developing strategies for gender-aware research and teaching together.

*This stream welcomes submissions for discussion inputs.*

#### 6. Concepts for Further Streams (of all kinds) are welcome as well.