

Bodies that Sell: Commodification and Cultural Marketplaces

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We make assumptions based on bodies all the time: what bodies are normative, strange, dangerous, fragile, familiar, foreign, and so on. The bodies we see are always-already constructed and commodified within various cultural marketplaces. Bodies function as currencies, some of which have more cultural capital than others. This cultural capital lends visibility to some bodies, while rendering others invisible.

For example, as the Bring Back Our Girls campaign entered the U.S. activist lexicon, the cultural capital of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls become visible only as 'victims'. In the context of this campaign, the girls' bodies lend cultural capital to bodies who participate in the campaigning process and identify as progressive. As such, the campaign constructs two kinds of bodies : progressive American bodies and the less culturally valuable Nigerian schoolgirls' bodies. This is but one example of the ways in which cultural marketplaces construct various kinds of bodies.

For our 7th annual interdisciplinary conference, the English Graduate Organization at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst invites submissions that examine the ways in which cultural marketplaces construct, produce, erase, value/devalue bodies. Some questions we are interested in include:

- What kinds of bodies do various cultural marketplaces produce and value?
- In what ways do marketplaces commoditize bodies? How do they allow certain bodies to become more visible than others?
- How, and to what extent, can bodies resist the conditioning forces of various marketplaces, even as they exist within them?

- How, and to what extent, does the cultural capital of various bodies depend on varied dynamics of circulation and representation?
- How do cultural texts (films, books, documentaries, etc.) objectify certain kinds of bodies (black, “third world,” feminine) and so on?
- In what ways do cultural representation of certain bodies shape our understanding of concepts such as :”normativity,” “gender,” “disability,” “nation,” ”race,” “freedom,” and “justice”?
- What methodologies would be effective in helping us to reveal the ways in which forces of various cultural marketplaces construct bodies?

We accept three kinds of submissions:

- Individual papers/projects: please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words. Include your name, paper title, institution, and email address.
- Panels: please submit a 1000 word proposal for an entire panel of presentations (3-4 presenters). Included in this proposal should be abstracts of 200-300 words for all presentations, title of the panel, and information for each presenter (name, paper title, institution, and email address). If you are forming your own panel, you have the option of providing your own chair.
- Performances and creative presentations/panels: we welcome submissions of creative works, including creative writing, visual art, and dramatic performance. Please include a brief description of your project, as well as your name, project title, institution, and email address

Areas include, but are not limited to:

- Gender & sexuality
- Critical Race theory
- African American Studies
- Postcolonial, Global, Transnational Studies
- Disability Studies
- Studies in Rhetoric and Composition
- Cultural Studies
- Media studies
- Communications
- Narrative Theory
- Development Studies / Postdevelopment Theory

- Childhood Studies
- Political Science
- Political Theory
- Native and Indigenous Studies
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Humanities
- American Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Movement, migration, diaspora
- Digital humanities
- Animal Studies