

Spring 2009

BODY/TEXT: REPRESENTING THE BODY IN POLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Slav-P365/565

Second eight weeks course: March 9 – April 29, 2009

Intensive Writing section, A&H, C&S credit

MW 4-6 p.m.

Ballantine Hall 214

Prof. Justyna Beinek



Human bodies have always been the object of fascination and inquiry. Discourses of philosophy, theology, and medicine have conceptualized the body in many ways for millenia, according to contemporary beliefs. Literature, fine arts, and cinema, have attempted to depict the human body in a range of ways from realistic to surreal. The body is the material reality that we experience on a daily basis, yet it remains an enigma, impossible to capture through intellectual inquiry or creative endeavors.

This course discusses representations of the human body in 20th-century and contemporary Polish literature and culture. Primary texts and images focus on Polish Modernism, post-war and contemporary literature: Schulz, Gombrowicz, Witkacy Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, Miłosz, Szyborska, Poświatowska, Świrszczyńska, Chwin, Masłowska, and others. Films by Machulski, Kieślowski, and Gliński.

Main topics of interest: the body and mind/soul dichotomy, body in text/body as text, body and cognition/language, body and the discourse of desire, body and trauma, body and communist politics in post-war Eastern Europe, body and gender, metamorphoses of the body, persons and things, and bodies in the cybernetic age.