Expanded Course Description
In this course we will explore, in some depth, the relationship between body, mind, consciousness (self), others, and society. In particular we address two conceptually challenging issues:

i) the relationship between human consciousness (i.e. the “minded” self) and human embodiment

ii) the relationship between human social practices and the embodied nature of human existence.

Addressing these two issues will take us on a journey into a variety of topics concerning the body/mind relationship – including cyborgs, human neurological disorders, sexed and gendered bodies, emotions, the relationship between human embodiment and the technologies we use, the relationship between humans and other species, and the embodied basis of human society. We will cover a wide range of theoretical approaches and disciplines in addition to sociology including philosophy, biology and neurobiology, primatology and psychology.

Organization of the Course
This course is a fully online course. It is based on individual bi-weekly exchanges between you, the student and me, the instructor. These exchanges involve you submitting written work, based on assigned readings, video material or research projects, and me the instructor, commenting on that written work.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Statement of course purpose: The purpose of this course is to assist you to develop a critical overview of the complex relationship between human embodiment, consciousness and society.

2. List of specific learning objectives of the course
   - Extend student understanding of the body/mind debate in Western thinking
   - Encourage students to address some of the classic texts that have established the basis of sociological inquiry, especially as they apply to the relationship between human embodiment, mind, consciousness (the self) and society
   - Allow students to explore recent writings, drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, on the relationship between human embodiment (and especially human brain functioning) and the experience of consciousness, the self and of society.
• Extend student’s critical thinking and analytical skills by addressing substantive topics concerning human embodiment body from the point of view of sociology as well as from the point of view of other academic disciplines that address the relationship between embodiment, consciousness, the self and society.

Course Text / Readings
Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course.

Evaluation
Final grades for this course will be based on the following:

1. **Six (6) “Reaction Papers” -30% of final grade.** A major portion of this course is based on assigned readings and documentaries/videos. You are responsible for doing the readings and/or watching the documentaries/videos and then for submitting Reaction Papers. Each Reaction Paper you submit is worth a maximum of 5 marks. Reaction Papers are due by midnight on the Mondays indicated in the posted Moodle schedule. I will comment, graded and returned the papers to you by the following Monday. Commented papers will then be posted (without identification or grades) for other students to read.

   Each Reaction Papers you submit should consist of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 double-spaced pages, approximately 250 words per page.

2. **Discussion Forum Contributions – 15 % of final grade.** There are 12 reading assignments for this course. Each reading assignment has a forum discussion where you will be asked to post commentary on the question I’ve posed. Once you have posted to the forum you will be able to see the commentary of other students. You will receive a maximum of 1% for each forum (adequate) post (and a bonus of 3 point for posting to all 15 forums). An adequate post addresses the question posed and provides clear, on-topic commentary in response to the question.

3. **1st term project -25% of final grade.** For this assignment you must either alter your body or your senses in some way (e.g. go blindfolded, spend the day in a wheelchair) or you must experience some aspect of the treatment of bodies or the presentation of bodies that is new to you (e.g. visiting a funeral home or a maternity ward). The specifics of your individual project will be established in discussion with Professor Anderson. (20%)

   Papers should be between 5 and 7 pages in length, approximately 250 words per page. All project papers will be posted, without identification, and you must choose two of the posted projects to comment on (5%). Comments for each project paper should be approximately 250 words in length.

4. **2nd term project -30% of final grade**
   In this project you will be asked to draw on the theoretical framework(s) presented in the text that have been covered during the course to analyze the relationship between mind, self and embodiment as it is presented in James Cameron’s film *Avatar.*

   Papers should be between 10 and 12 pages in length, approximately 250 words per page.
Summary of Grading Components:
Reaction Papers 30%
Forum Posts 20%
Term 1 Project 25%
Term 2 Project 25%
TOTAL 100%

Grading, Assignment Submission, and Lateness Penalty

Grading: Assignments will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.) (For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar -
http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

First and second term papers will be graded using criteria loosely based on “Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO)” taxonomy developed by Biggs and Collis, (1996).

A-A+. Paper demonstrates that student is able to
- critically reflect on his/her own experiences, readings and/or research.
- evaluate his/her experiences, readings and/or research findings using explicitly stated theories that are relevant to the assignment.
- formulate his/her own theory(ies) and/or generate a new approach to assignment content based on the principles and approaches taught in the course.

B-B+. Paper demonstrates that the student is able to
- critically reflect on his/her own experiences, readings and/or research.
- apply course content and recognize good and poor applications of principles.
- understand that certain aspects of the course content can be used as a theory to evaluate experiences, readings and/or research findings.

C-C+ Paper demonstrates that the student
- is able to discuss his/her own experiences, readings and/or research meaningfully.
- does not transfer or apply course materials or other relevant materials to evaluate experiences, readings and/or research findings.

D-D+ Paper demonstrates that student
- has sparse understandings of course materials, readings and/or assignments.
- has some misunderstandings of course materials, readings and/or assignments.

F Paper demonstrates that the student
- has fundamental misunderstandings of course materials, readings and/or assignments.
- has not made the necessary effort.
- lacks involvement with course materials, readings and/or assignments.
Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Assignments are to be submitted via Moodle on or before the due date.

Lateness Penalty: Assignments received later than the due date will not be accepted and will earn a grade of 0. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by Professor Anderson but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

Email Policy
Please address all email to Professor Anderson at soc4070@gmail.com
I will do my best to respond to your emails within 48 hours.

Important Course Information for Students
All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) -
http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm
• York’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
• Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
• Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
• Student Conduct Standards
• Religious Observance Accommodation

Texts
1. Descartes: Meditations available online at: www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/descmed.pdf


20. Miguel Nicolelis  
   http://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2011/03/16/miguel-nicolelis-beyond-boundaries/

In addition to the texts, films and documentaries assigned for both semesters, as noted in this outline. Documentaries may be accessed directly on Youtube. Films are readily available either at York in the film library, or via other means for purchase, rental or download.
SCHEDULE: Part 1
“The social is embodied and the body is social”

Week 1 May 7
Theme: the mind/body split

Readings:

Descartes: *Meditations* available online at: www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/descmed.pdf


Week 2- May 14
Theme: Abject Embodiment

Readings:


Weeks 3 and 4, May 22, and May 28
Theme: Reflexivity and Trans-embodiment
Readings:


Films:  Transamerica

Documentaries:

Documentary: Journey of a pregnant man – Thomas Beatie.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jho1UCPDqXg
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wbIoOrZNYY&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvDJD4QX9Y&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwDRJD4QX9Y&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WClT7PYeqlY&feature=related

Weeks 5 and 6, June 4, and June 11

First Term Project: Reflexive Embodiment. Part 1 is due June 4 by 12:30pm. Part 2 is due June 11 by 12:30pm. Submit via Moodle

SCHEDULE: Part 2:

Cyborgs, extensions of self and what makes us human
Weeks 6 and 7, June 11 and June 18
Theme: Body and Self: the view from neuroscience

Reading

Weeks 8 and 9, June 25 and July 2

Theme: Mind in a vat

The Wachowski Brothers’ 1999 film classic, The Matrix, is a great vehicle for provoking a series of questions relative to sociologists (and philosophers!) about the experience of embodiment:

- Do sentient beings need consciousness and a body to have moral standing?
- Do humans need a body in order to experience reality?
- What can we humans know on the basis of our own embodied experiences? What are the body-based limitations to our knowledge?

Film:

The Matrix
Readings

Julia Driver. “Artificial Ethics”.  
http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/aethics.html

T.J. Mawson. “Morpheus and Berkeley on Reality”.  
http://www.lightwerx.org/metaphysical/philosophical/morpheus-and-berkeley-reality

Maier Werx. ‘Brain in Vats and the Evil demon’.  
http://www.lightwerx.org/metaphysical/philosophical/brain-vats-and-evil-demon

Andy Clark. “The Twisted Matrix: Dream, Simulation or Hybrid?”  
http://www.lightwerx.org/metaphysical/philosophical/twisted-matrix-dream-simulation-or-hybrid1

Hubert Dreyfus and Stephen Dreyfus. “Existential Phenomenology and the Brave New World of the Matrix”.  

Weeks 11 and 12 July 16 and July 23  
Theme: Consciousness and self

Reading:


Week 13 – July 30  
Second Term Project: Embodied Cognition and Extended Selves. Due by 12:30 pm August 3. Submit via Moodle