

# 2026 WG FAEF Workshop

## Theme: Embodiment Revisited

Helsinki, Aug. 13-15, 2026

### *Embodiment Revisited*



*Louise Bourgeois, 'Are You In Orbit?', 2008\*\*\**

[M]y body is not only an object among all objects, . . .but an object which is sensitive to all the rest, which reverberates to all sounds, vibrates to all colours, and provides words with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception*

Embodiment is a central concern of feminist theory insofar as the body is a site for the symbolic, representational, and discursive construction of sexual difference, a ground for political exclusion or inclusion, a locus of subjectivity, a prospect for self-realization, and the material focus of many labors that typically fall to women and/or define us. Feminist thinking has long embraced the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau Ponty (1962), whose *embodiment* is the irreducible coming together of mind and body. For Merleau Ponty the body is that through which all experience is mediated and is also a social agent.

The focus on the body and embodiment intersected with late second-wave feminist anthropology and folklore. Exploring conceptions of bodily boundaries and social order, the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966, 1970) noted how fundamental body imagery is to world view, directly affecting political discourse. American folklorist Marta Weigel (1982) wove eroticism, cosmology, and politics from the imagery of embodiment. Donna Haraway (1985) challenged not only Cartesian dualism but the cultural limitations imposed on the body, including the notion of the body as a fixed entity. Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes focused on “states of embodiment” (1989: 221) to (re)-unite categories of Cartesian dualism to express “the ways in which the mind speaks through the body, and the ways in which society is inscribed on the expectant canvas of human flesh” (1987: 10). Folklorist Katharine Young’s edited collection *Bodylore* (1993) investigated discourses and practices of the body to understand how we, as embodied subjects, conceive and experience ourselves and others. And Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* (1993) emphasized not only the constructed nature of the gendered body, but also culture’s imprint on the body, sometimes quite literally. They argue for the materiality of the body, or its materialization, in part to clarify their concept of performativity. In focusing on bodies, Butler found that “the movement of bodies beyond their own boundaries appears central to what bodies ‘are’” (preface), which resonates with Haraway’s questioning why our bodies should end at the skin.

## Revisiting Embodiment

We consider the topic of embodiment as it intersects with feminist theory to be unfinished business. In our upcoming zoom discussions and their culmination in the workshop in August, we are motivated by several questions: how does the neglect and denial of women's descriptions of their own embodied selves remain tied to the patriarchal logic in which "gender" produces MAN and then WOMAN – who is not Man – and how has this led

to the acceptance of a universal based on the experience of Men? How can we articulate embodiment in language? And how can we deepen our understanding of embodiment through recent interdisciplinary and intersectional discourses?

We also seek to investigate the relationship between corporeal sensations and perception, emotion, and affect, and how, in a rebarbative fashion, these phenomena continuously reshape subjecthood, identity, and cultural formations. Topics might include:

- What is it to be an embodied subject?
- Theorizing the body
- The ambiguous body
- The mediated body
- Affect and embodiment
- Carnal generational connections – embodied memories, collective histories, collective/and personal trauma
- intersubjectivity

### **Workshop preparation**

The workshop in Helsinki, taking place on 13-14 August 2026 will be the culmination of a year's worth of readings and discussions focused on these topics. We will continue to meet every other month on zoom to discuss, analyze, critique, and offer up specific applicability of concepts to our work. These are not lectures, they presume the engagement of all participating.

### **Schedule zoom meetings 2025**

All meetings are at 2:00 pm GMT unless noted otherwise.

**1. Friday Aug. 29, 2025** Sobchack, Vivian. "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh," available at: <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2000/conference-special-effects-special-affects/fingers/>

And an application of Sobchack in a folkloristic article: Conrad, JoAnn. "Consuming Subjects: Making Sense of Post-World War II Westerns." *Narrative Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2015, pp. 71–116, [particularly pages 85-89]. Available at JSTOR: <https://doi.org/10.13110/narrcult.2.1.0071>.

Facilitator: JoAnn Conrad

**Zoom invitation**

JoAnn Conrad is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: WG FAFE Discussion Zoom. Time: Aug 29, 2025 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

<https://4cd.zoom.us/j/9150754556?pwd=2z90XSURjR0JPouPOHmUU6ejdC4SM8.1&omn=84505677975>

Meeting ID: 915 075 4556

Passcode: 050353

**2. Tuesday Oct. 21** – Kruks, Sonia. "Going Beyond Discourse: Feminism, Phenomenology, and 'Women's Experience'" in *Retrieving Experience*. Available on project Muse: [Project MUSE - Retrieving Experience](#)

Facilitator: Rozemarijn van de Wal

**Zoom invitation**

JoAnn Conrad is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: WG FAFE Oct. zoom Meeting. Time: Oct 21, 2025 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

<https://4cd.zoom.us/j/9150754556?pwd=2z90XSURjR0JPouPOHmUU6ejdC4SM8.1&omn=87268996979>

Meeting ID: 915 075 4556

Passcode: 050353

**3. Monday Dec. 1, 2025** – Young, Iris Marion. "Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality." *Human Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1980, pp. 137–56. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20008753>.

Facilitator: Kim Lau.

**Zoom invitation:**

JoAnn Conrad is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: WG 3rd zoom discussion

Time: Dec 1, 2025 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://4cd.zoom.us/j/9150754556...>

Meeting ID: 915 075 4556

Passcode: 050353

**Zoom Meetings in 2026** (most likely on Fridays)

Feb. 2026 Date and reading TBD

April 2026 Date and reading TBD

June 2026 Pre-workshop meeting Date TBD

**About the Workshop in Helsinki**

The workshop will be a combination of lectures, workshops, and discussions centering on the theme of embodiment in theory and practice.

More details will be forthcoming, and there will be a general call for papers in early 2026.