

2026 WG FAEF Workshop Embodiment Revisited

Helsinki, Aug. 13-15, 2026

CALL for Proposals



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

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.

The Workshop Theme: Revisiting Embodiment

We consider the topic of embodiment as it intersects with feminist theory to be unfinished business. In our 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

We envision the workshop to be an intensive discussion on the topic to further our understanding and application of the concept of embodiment. To that end, we are looking for interdisciplinary connections that go beyond work done in ethnology and folklore, but that we can use going forward in our own work.

The workshop will be over two days, with opening lectures each morning and afternoon, followed by “break out” groups on a specific sub-topic. Each workshop participant will contribute in substantive ways to one of these breakouts, to be determined by topic, and also to engage in rigorous discussions in other breakout sessions.

Application to the Workshop

All members of the WG FAEF are welcome to apply (and your membership in SIEF must be current) by writing a short abstract/topic statement. Selection will be based on the strength of one’s application. In your application, you will provide:

- Name, affiliation.
- a topic statement of ~ 350 words, describing your contribution to the discussion of embodiment. This is not an abstract, nor is it a discussion of your field work, but your engagement with some aspect of the theoretical notion of embodiment. WHAT do you bring to this discussion? This will be the basis of the concept paper you present during the workshop sessions.
- a list of 5 KEY WORDS related to your topic.
- a list of 10 – 15 texts/articles that not only shape your ideas on your topic, but that you will explicate in your presentation in your breakout session. These can include, but should not be limited to, your own work.

Submit your proposal via e-mail to jconrad@dvc.edu and Rozemarijn Van de Wal rozemarijnvadwal@hotmail.nl

Concept papers

If your application is accepted, it will be the basis of your concept paper, which will be presented during discussion sessions.

These concept papers should be 3-4 pages in length and focus on a certain approach or aspect of embodiment. What are your thoughts on this? What do you want to bring into the discussion? This should also include a discussion of the relevant literature that you listed in your application. All participants' concept papers which will be circulated before the workshop, and participants are expected to read them before the workshop to facilitate discussion. These, along with the lectures are the bases for our the discussions.

Important deadlines

Deadline for applications: 1 February 2026

Response date for acceptance/rejection of application: 13 March 2026

Deadline to circulate your full concept paper to all workshop participants: 1 July 2026