In academic sense, to speak of bodies is to invite interdisciplinary conversations. Scientific and philosophical inquiry seeks to understand what animates bodies. Cultural, social, and political analysis traces the contours of similarities and differences resulting from embodiment. Theoretical paradigms and creative practice can both critique and remake what bodies are, how they signify, and where the boundaries of physical limitation lie.

Throughout, bodies incorporate and synthesize contradiction. They are simultaneously metaphor and reality, machine and sensormum, the mortal coil and the site of transformation and wonder.

This fall, our formal programming ranges from the very real scourge of opioids to fantastical tales of uncanny bodily transformations. We will think about bodies in relation to place, whether creating livable urban worlds or moving in relation to political borders. Award-winning author and digital sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom will come to campus in late October to engage in conversations on race, gender, and power.

Stay tuned in spring for additional programming related to Bodies. In the meantime, and throughout the year, keep an eye out for “pop up” events—open classrooms, workshops, and facilitated conversations. These less formal opportunities are meant to integrate into the daily life of the campus, bringing our community together to share expertise, experience, and curiosity on the nature, art, science, and culture of Bodies.

What if we talked not about “the body” but about bodies? In the shift from singular to plural comes a movement away from abstraction and its claims to universality and toward specific embodiments and diverse lived experience.

To pluralize bodies is to begin breaking down rhetorical binaries—body and soul, mind and body, sickness and health, pleasure and pain, flesh and spirit. To consider actual bodies is to interrogate and re-engange familiar metaphors with new perspective—body as temple, bodies of work, bodies politic, body as machine.

In a social sense, our bodies are how we encounter the world, and how the world first comes to perceive us. Bodies are sites of desire and projection, bias and recognition. How can difference itself become an alternative foundation from which to consider continuities of experience?
In the Flesh

AN EXHIBIT BY ELLI CROCKER

Mind/body duality. The human place in the natural world.

Clark University’s Elli Crocker (Studio Art) will delve into these central motifs with her latest exhibit, *In the Flesh*, an evocation of the elemental connections that exist between the earth, the cosmos, and all living things.

“Our living bodies are supported by the spirit and matter of all that came before us,” Crocker says. “We stand on layers of life accumulated over millennia, knowing that we too will become part of these strata of spirit, flesh, sand, soil, stone, and stardust.”

Crocker has been actively exhibiting for forty years and has received numerous commissions, awards, and artist residencies. Her art has been featured in various publications, including *New American Paintings, Volume 50*. Last year, Crocker received a major grant from the Higgins School of Humanities to produce a Catalogue Raissoné, a comprehensive chronicle of her artwork to date.
Opioids have been front and center in both medical literature and the popular press as our society struggles with the burden of chronic pain and the unprecedented rise in opioid overdoses.

Dr. Edward Bilsky, Provost and Chief Academic Officer at Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences, researches the neurobiology of pain, pain management, and addiction. In this talk, he will provide a broad overview of the effects that opioids have on the human body—from cellular to complex behaviors—including those effects associated with long-term, high levels of exposure seen in the management of chronic pain, opioid use disorders, and medication assisted therapies. Bilsky will examine the impact of opioid systems on the family unit and communities, tracing their influence through human evolution. How can we connect liberal arts, social and biomedical sciences, medicine, and public health to better address what is arguably one of society’s highest health, social, and economic priorities?
An Evening with Tressie McMillan Cottom

In her most recent book, *Thick and Other Essays*, on beauty, media, money, and more, Tressie McMillan Cottom uses her characteristic melding of humor and irreverence, sociological expertise and deep cultural critique to show “precisely how the political, the social, and the personal are almost always one and the same.” Join us as Professor McMillan Cottom brings her distinctive voice to issues of race, gender, power, and other themes in this conversation facilitated by Clark University’s Toby Sisson (Studio Art).

McMillan Cottom is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University. Called “the author you need to read now” by the *Chicago Tribune*, her work has been featured by the *Washington Post*, *NPR’s Fresh Air*, *The Daily Show*, the *New York Times*, *Slate*, and *The Atlantic*, among others. In 2017, she published *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*. A powerful presence on Twitter, McMillan Cottom also co-hosts *Hear to Slay* with Roxane Gay, a podcast with an intersectional perspective on celebrity, culture, politics, art, life and love.

A book signing will follow immediately after the conversation. Copies of *Thick* and *Lower Ed* will be available for purchase at the Clark University bookstore and at the event.

This is not a ticketed event, but please arrive early for the best seating.

**Tuesday, October 29 @ 7pm**

Daniels Theater, Atwood Hall

This event is co-sponsored by the Higgins School of Humanities; the Office of the Provost; and the Office of the President. Additional support has been provided by the Center for Gender, Race, and Area Studies; the Department of English; the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education; the Media, Culture, and the Arts program; and the Department of Sociology.

“The author you need to read now”

*Chicago Tribune*
The Horror Within

What draws us to twisted tales of zombies, mutants, and monsters?

Why are we fascinated by stories of transfiguration wrought by death and disease, magic and the occult, experimental science and technology? As external threats, these dramatic transformations provide metaphors for our social, political, and cultural anxieties. And yet, when alteration comes unbidden and from within, the change can terrify us on an even deeper level. The internal becomes visible, and the uncanny uncontrolled. What happens when bodies rebel? Is it desired release, or our worst fears revealed?

Continuing our popular Halloween tradition, Professors Gino DiIorio (Theater Arts), Jay Elliott (English), and Jennifer Plante (The Writing Center) will read scary tales exploring our fear of and fascination with disruptive bodies and embodied horrors. Combining the beauty of language, the art of storytelling, and the desire for community, Readings in the Higgins Lounge continues to showcase the power and pleasure of the humanities.
Bodies and Borders

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Movement across borders is an entirely common occurrence in modern life.

How and why do people transcend borders, and why is the movement of some bodies disproportionately monitored, regulated, and prohibited? What has led to a perceived and alarming increase in selective incarceration, deportation, removals, and bans? What role does the media play in creating a rhetoric fear about bodies imagined as threatening or dangerous, globally and in the US? In a precariously shifting landscape of policy change and legal challenges, there is a pressing need to consider what protections are possible for those most vulnerable to anti-immigrant sentiment, both because of and despite legal status and humanitarian interest. Heather Silber Mohamed (Political Science) researches in the field of Latino politics, immigration policy, and media. Anita Fábos (International Development, Community, and Environment) works on issues related to refugees and forced migration. Together, these two Clark University professors will offer their expertise as a springboard for this community focused dialogue.
Urban and Unruly

What does it mean to be urban?

How might the everyday lives of Black women provide an archive for understanding the city? Clark University professor Asha Best (Geography) is an urbanist whose teaching and research bring together interdisciplinary perspectives in black studies, post-colonial studies, urban geographies, and mobilities studies. In this talk, she will consider everyday practices, desires, styles, and ways of being that often fall outside the traditional scope of urban studies. Engaging a range of Black women artists and intellectuals, from bell hooks and June Jordan to Mickalene Thomas and Ebony G. Patterson, she will explore how the intimacies of Black urban life foster robust ways of understanding place and place-making. Focusing on working-class communities in particular, Best will show how unruly women imagine and script livable urban worlds.
symposium at a glance

IN THE FLESH

OPIOIDS

TRESSIE MCMILLAN COTTOM

October

HORROR WITHIN

BODIES AND BORDERS

URBAN AND UNRULY

November
Voter Suppression and Disenfranchisement: The Language of Theft

Maya Contreras, host of the Emmy award-winning show “Brewed in New York” (PBS) and voting rights advocate, will examine the policies that weaken and threaten our democracy through voter disenfranchisement, gerrymandering, and voter suppression. She will suggest strategies to create fair electoral maps, close voting gaps, and enfranchise voters across the United States.

Thursday, October 17 @ 4:30pm
Fireside Lounge at Dana Commons

Essential Early Women Composers

Combining performance and scholarship, award-winning ensemble La Donna Musicale will present a richly varied concert of vocal and instrumental works composed by women from the Middle Ages through the early Classical era. Admission will be free and open to the public. For more information, visit Clark Arts online, email clarkarts@clarku.edu, or call 508-793-7356.

Friday, October 25 @ 7:30pm
Razzo Hall, Traina Center for the Arts

Choosing a Creative Life

Clark alumna and Visiting Artist Cheryle St. Onge will discuss her recent photography project, Calling the Birds Home, which explores her relationship with her mother who is suffering from dementia. St. Onge will share her approach to crafting a creative life and explain how simple daily routines can shape studio practices that honor work ethic, organization, and creative output. Refreshments will be served.

Wednesday, November 6 @ 12pm
TC 100, Traina Center for the Arts

Co-sponsored by the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and the Higgins School of Humanities.
The Higgins School of Humanities affirms the centrality of the arts and humanities to our lives and the values of a liberal arts education. It supports teaching and research through its grant programs and sponsors public events and campus initiatives, enhancing the intellectual and cultural life of the Clark community.

Unless otherwise noted, all events will be held on the Clark University campus in the Higgins Lounge at Dana Commons, 36 Maywood Street, Worcester, MA 01603.

Admission is free and open to the public. All information is subject to change.

To support the Higgins School:
Visit alumni.clarku.edu/make-a-gift. Please select designation “Other” and direct your contribution to the Higgins School of Humanities.