

# FATNESS

What is it and why do we fear it?

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"Picture of what?" Photo by Agnes

## An introduction to Fat studies

What do we see, when we look at this picture? We can't exactly say it, but at the same time we clearly link it to our idea of how a chair is supposed to look. We can say the same about fatness, we all have an image of fatness in our mind. What fatness is, how it looks like, and what we understand it as.

Whereas the word fatness is highly stigmatised it is also important to unwrap its narratives. It is not the word itself that is responsible for the harm it does, but the societal fatphobia and negative connotations, that are responsible for our fear of the word fat. So instead of abandoning the term, the focus should lie on deconstructing fatphobia in our society.

As Aubrey Gordon, an inspiring fat activist and author describes it:

*"Refusing to respect the names we choose for our bodies doesn't change any of that—it just pushes that harshness away and gives people who aren't fat a sense of absolution for the anti-fatness that's all around us."*

Throughout this course, we've tackled unconscious structural biases about fatness, talking about its narratives and the process of creating new ideas and making space for academic knowledge within Fat, Gender and Queer Studies. (Text by Agnes and Chu)

## The gender in fatness – the fatness in gender?

Gender seems to function like a social cage in which people are placed into as soon as they are born. The same can be said about fatness. Both are similarly regulated through norms about what kinds of bodies and desires are seen as "acceptable" or "natural". (Text by Sara)

The differences in the treatment of fat men and fat women and their surrounded narratives, show how instable these declared identity categories are. Fat men can be seen as strong and powerful, whereas fat women are confronted with weight loss narratives throughout their life, bringing up further questions about what this means for non-binariness and fatness. Fatness is not only questioning our societal structures, but furthermore challenging existent gender-categories (Text by Agnes and Chu).



Photo by Anika



Photo by Michaela

## Fatness ≠ Fatness

Gender and race have always influenced how fat people have been perceived, that it is why it is not something we can avoid. (Text by Anna).

The intersectionality of different categories, gender, sexuality, race, disability and fatness included, define how we see fatness (Text by Anika)

Racialized power structures determine whose bodies are seen, studied, and legitimized as knowledge-producing. Who gets represented is shaped by white supremacy (Zerafa, 2022) (Text by Zehra).

Signifying the structural underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous and racialized fat bodies, whose experiences are frequently marginalized or rendered invisible. Fat studies need to move beyond shallow ideas of intersectionality and to seriously address racism, colonialism, and who is allowed visibility, authority and voice (Text by Zehra).



Picture by Eva

## REFERENCES

Finlay, Jeanie (2023) *Your Fat Friend*. Documentary, Together Films  
Zerafa, Samantha Rose Ruth (2023) (Un)Mapping trajectories of fatness: a critical account of fat studies' origin story and the reproduction of fat (white) normativity. *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 11(3), pp.424-439.



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