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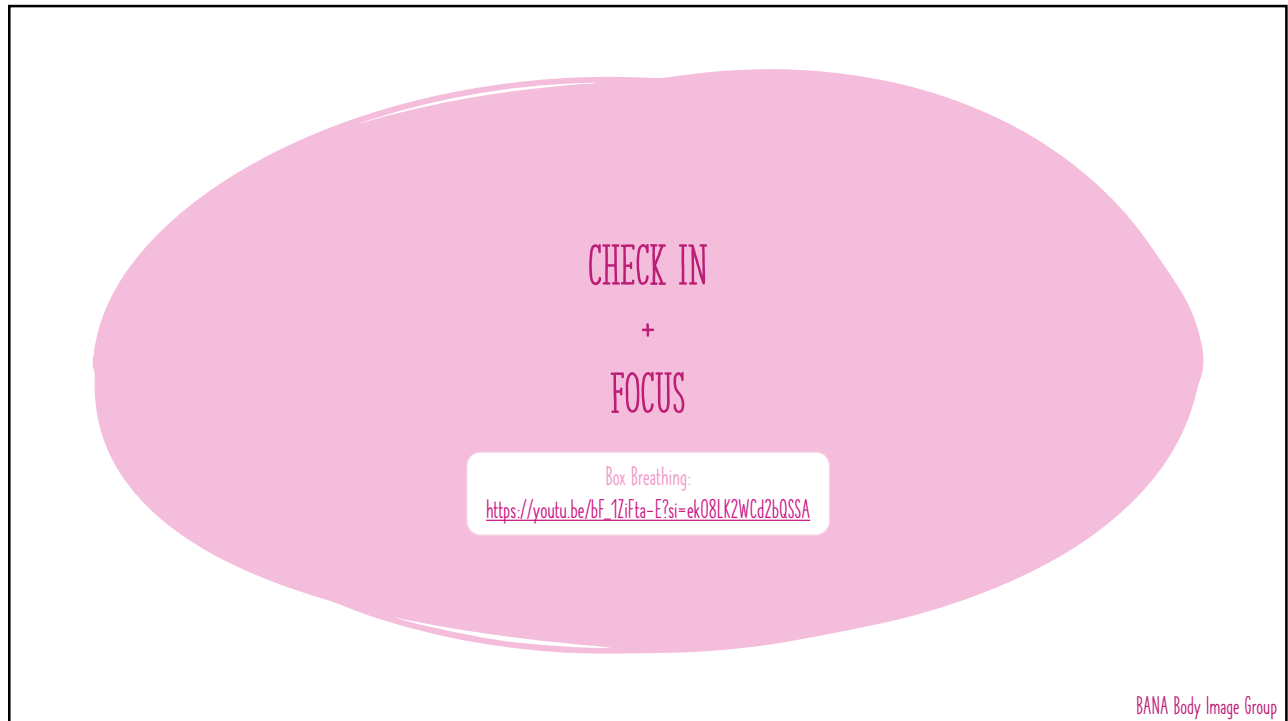


**AGENDA:**

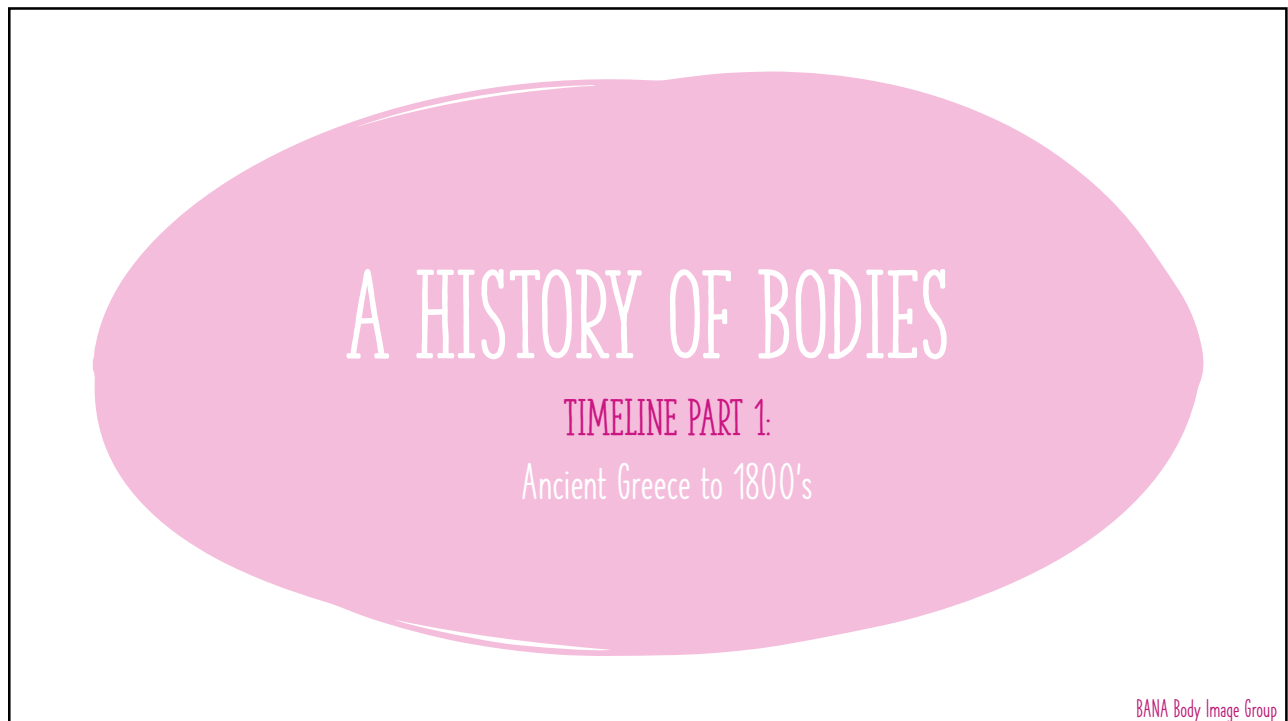
- Check In & Focus
- Review Homework
- Review Part 1 of Timeline:
  - Ancient Greece
  - Middle Ages
  - Age of Discovery
  - Renaissance
  - Age of Enlightenment
- Check Out & Grounding Activity

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## DISCLAIMER:

We can see throughout history the body has acted as a canvas for dominant discourse to play out.

This timeline will look at the various depictions of bodies through art, literature, & other forms of media, as well as the stories & ideals they tell from the time-period.  
*Please keep in mind, we will be referring to popular culture as examples & these may not all be relevant for you as an individual.*

PLEASE NOTE: the following slides contain overt discussions surrounding classism, ableism, racism, colourism, eugenics, transmisia, cisheterosexism, misogyny, & misogynoir.

Our timeline will focus on body image in the Western world – with this comes inevitable gaps in knowledge & information. As the dominant culture dictated the narratives that were captured – & omitted – in historical documents & research, we will not be able to capture the entire scope of body image & human diversity.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE: this timeline serves as an introductory & basic overview of historical movements & events. Please see our reference list for continued learning.

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## DISCLAIMER:

The ways in which we all experience the world are uniquely impacted by our various identities.

The lived experiences & identities of the facilitator(s) & all group members – both visible & invisible – will naturally differ.

We will all interact with the following content in deeply personal ways as we are all touched by this history.

We invite you to reflect on this in whichever way feels most meaningful to you.

If the content of this presentation is difficult for you, let the facilitator(s) know & please refer to our resource list for support.

"If we are struggling to reject the lies we've been told about our devalued identities, we will not be able to build healing relationships with others.  
The devastating truth is until we are able to heal our internalized stigma, we will not allow ourselves the opportunity to be seen and loved for who we are"

(Kinsey, 2022, p. 30)

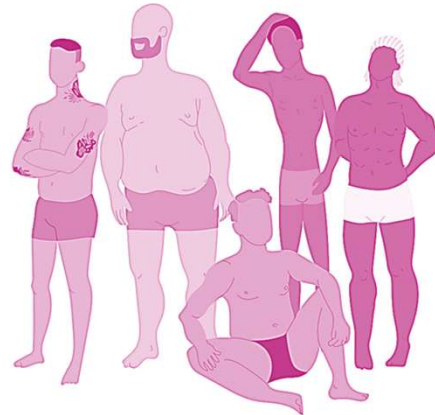
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# MYTH OR FACT:

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Racism & anti-fat bias are interwoven.



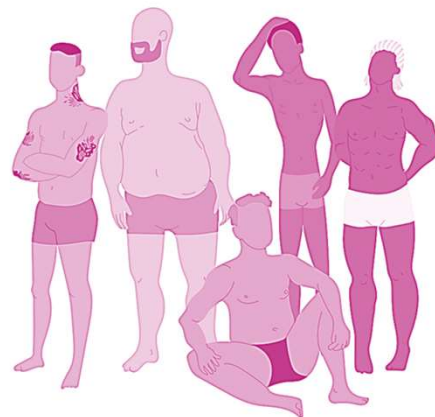
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# MYTH OR FACT:

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Racism & anti-fat bias are interwoven.



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## ANCIENT GREECE (1200 BCE–323)

- Introduction of early classification system based on climate & geography
  - Used to justify regional peoples' superiority
- Importance placed on the body & studying it
- Influential minds, like Aristotle & Plato, positioned men at the top of society's hierarchy & viewed women, children, & persons with disabilities as lesser
- Early ideas around eugenics appeared in Plato's works:
  - ie: Discouraging procreation within the lower classes and mating guidelines for an ideal society
- Views around disability were cruel; common practices were to abandon or euthanize disabled children



Copy of a Greek bronze bust of Aristotle by Lysippos (c. 330 BC)



Plato, copy of portrait made by Sitanion, 370 BC for the Academia in Athens

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## ANCIENT GREECE (1200 BCE–323)

- The male figure was the focus of society, often depicted in the nude
- Influences from mythology (ie: Hercules, Achilles & Odysseus - not real people) painted the Homeric hero as the male ideal (Greek society was structured around war)
- Early manifestations of toxic masculinity (stoic, courageous, strong, fearless)
- Prototypical man was based off a sculpture with a lean body, defined muscles, large chest & small penis
  - Believed that larger penises on men aligned them closer to animals & beasts of far away nations
- Preference for young, smooth & supple skin, positioning ageing bodies as undesirable (ableism/ageism)



Panathenaic amphora depicting athletes. Image from the Trustees of the British Museum



So-called Hercules Farnese by Glycon of Athens, Lysippos

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## ANCIENT GREECE

(1200 BCE–323)



Venus Genetrix (or Aphrodite Genetrix), Roman marble copy of Classical Greek statue by Callimachus, c. 475 BCE

- Introduction of gym culture & Olympics normalized assessing & comparing each other's bodies in public
  - Showing your body off in the nude was the ultimate way to present yourself as a man in society
  - Gymnasiums fundamental part of a man's life, including for famous scholars like Socrates & Plato

- Women were not welcomed at gymnasiums
  - Softness, curvature & "flabby" body parts were associated with femininity
  - Translated into men working tirelessly at gym to avoid association with femininity
  - Femininity was seen as "having nothing to offer society"



The Discobolus (The Discus Thrower) by Myron

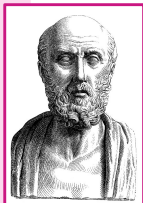
- Pederasty was a common practice & those sodomized were socially construed as feminine, & therefore, weak, further increasing drive for muscularity
- Socrates has written on how it is not only your involvement in war & society that is integral to your civic duty, but also how your body looks while doing so
  - He was known to walk the street, berating people for their bodies

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## ANCIENT GREECE

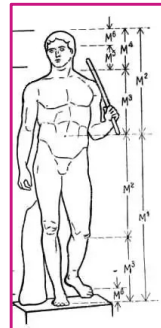
(1200 BCE–323)



Hippocrates of Kos; Image in a Roman "portrait" bust (19th-century engraving)

- Early philosophical thoughts regarding mind–body dualism appears in Plato's Dialogues, where the mind & body are seen as separate entities
  - He believed the mind could dominate the body, as they were not interconnected
- The Greeks were focused on ideas of moderation & balance
  - Overabundance of anything was a cause of moral failing (sex, food, drinking, body fat)
  - Those in fatter bodies began to be scrutinized for focusing too much on one pleasure
- Polykleitos used mathematical measurements to map out a "perfectly balanced" body
- Hippocrates – the father of Western medicine – linked fatness to a disease of the spirit
  - As opposed to a disease of the body, that we see now
- Hippocrates also introduced dieting & other efforts to reject "too much pleasure" in the name of health
  - The Greek word 'diaita' translates to 'way of life, regimen'
- Greeks would deem those who do not follow the same diet as them a lesser human

The Canon of Polykleitos



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## REFLECT:



Where do you see the influence of Greek philosophies still existing in society today?

(ie: democracy, math)



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## REFLECT:

We know Greek statues are idealized depictions of people.

Can you think of any other beauty standards that are based off fictional people?

(ie: Barbie)



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## MIDDLE AGES (500-1500)

- Rise of Christianity made the naked body something shameful that should be hidden, marking a sharp shift in the ideals we saw in Ancient Greece
- Spiritual perfection became the focus over ideal physical form
  - Ideal man was one who was living in harmony with the universe
- Christian knight appears as the ideal body:
  - Depicted as courageous, strong, fair, tall & handsome
- Your location & how you look are indicative of your character & morality, justifying the brutality of the Crusades in the Middle East
- Disabled bodies were seen as being possessed by spirits or being punished for sins



Barcloné Bermejo, Saint Michael triumphant over the Devil with the Donor  
Antonio Juan, 1468.



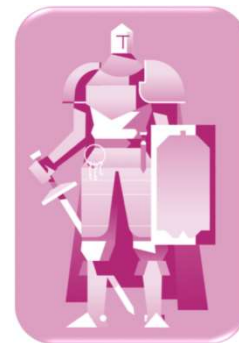
Book of Divine Works, Part 1, Vision 2:  
The Cosmic Spheres and Human Being  
Manuscript, Voynich Manuscript, 15th

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## REFLECT:

Can you think of any examples of the "white knight" that show up in media today?  
(ie: movies, books)



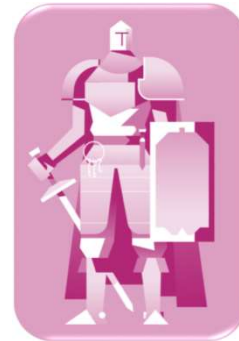
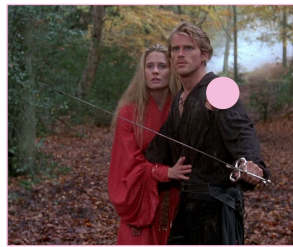
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## REFLECT:

Can you think of any examples of the "white knight" that show up in media today?  
(ie: movies, books)



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## AGE OF DISCOVERY (1400-1500)

- Period marked by exploration, the dissemination of information, as well as colonialism & racism
- Columbus "discovered" the New World:
  - Unfamiliarity with local food and environments led to European foods being marked as superior & "safe", & cultural foods as "bad" & dangerous
  - Colonizers believed differences in bodies came from the food
  - Any illness attributed to the "uncivilized" food options available
- To avoid any likening to Indigenous peoples, colonizers would restrict their eating or impose their European food on Indigenous peoples
  - Colonizers there to "civilize" those deemed as "others"
    - A continuation of linking race & body type



The Landing of Columbus.




Admiral of the Ocean Sea: Christopher Columbus by Sebastiano Piombo, 1519.

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## AGE OF DISCOVERY (1400-1500)

- Columbus introduced a slave trade, forced slave labour, sex trafficking & the fetishization of BIPOC women in the Caribbean
- Beliefs around geography impacting your legitimacy as a human led to the narrative that non-Europeans were ideal slaves
- Other explorers, such as Jacques Cartier, would also enslave Indigenous peoples in Canada & send them to Europe
- Disabled people were put on display at various ports & then abandoned through traveling shows



Jacques Cartier.  
Portrait by Théophile Hamel, c. 1844



Lame Tamerlane imprisoned & humiliated the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid (German Album Amicorum, 16th Century)

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## AGE OF DISCOVERY (1400-1500)

- Wealthy men studied the human form & categorized body parts, proportions & identified what was a "typical" face with measurements
  - Based on white, Eurocentric norms
- "Venus archetype" popularized as an ideal body for women
  - Fat indicative of health & wealth
- Slave trade in Europe leads to fear of 'the other'
  - Slaves appear in art in subservient settings to reinforce negative public opinion
- Intensification of scholars aiming to define differences between regions & people through racial categorization



Princess Henrietta of Lorraine by Anthony van Dyck (1609-1641)

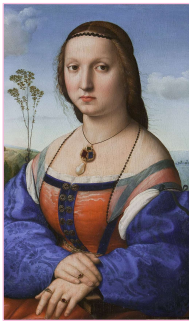


Sandro Botticelli, The Birth of Venus (c. 1484-1486)

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# REFLECT:



The Portrait of Maddalena Doni is an oil painting by Italian painter Raphael, c. 1506

We know that having fat on the body was preferred for everyone as a means to avoid illness, but why do you think fat on the body was more heavily promoted in women?



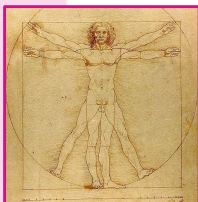
Portrait of Henry VIII of England by Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1546

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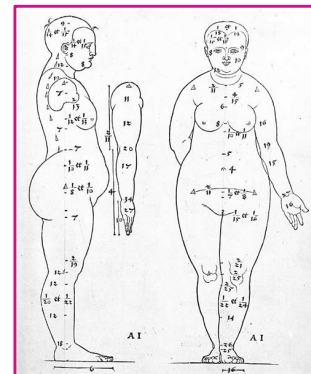
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## AGE OF DISCOVERY (1400-1500)

- The search for an "ideal" man & woman - reminiscent of Polykleitos - continue
  - da Vinci's Vitruvian Man & Durer's
- Women with shapely bodies, larger limbs & well-rounded proportions were seen as attractive
  - Fatness linked to the divine & good health, due to harmonious body proportions, fertility, & resilience to disease / mortality
- Some believed beauty existed in the diversity of bodies, others believed that it could be found in symmetry, but underlying sentiment was it was up to man to decide how to define a woman's beauty



Vitruvian Man, by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490.



"Side and frontal view of the female head type 7" c. 1528 by Albrecht Durer

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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

- Men's body ideals focused on the groin & legs (fitted tights, heels, codpieces) to show strength & status
  - Less emphasis on upper body & chest, as this was associated with labour
- Henry VIII's reign impacted social policies:
  - Laws forbidding intercourse between men
  - Abolition of hospitals & houses for people with disabilities
  - The Poor Laws: aimed to address the poor, old, disabled, unemployed & sick
  - Poor laws shaped narratives around personal & moral failings if unable to work



Portrait of Henry VIII of England by Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1537



The Beggars by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, c. 1568



Ritratto del duca Alessandro Farnese by Antonis Mor, c. 1561

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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

- Transatlantic slave trade expands to England & the idea of Black as being the "other" intensifies
  - Similarities in body diversity led to Europeans seeking out ways in which they differed from slaves
  - Fatness became associated with greed - instead of wealth & status - as a way to demonize fat slaves
  - White, fat male bodies began to be associated with poor character, low morality & low intelligence
  - Black people were depicted as inferior, subservient, immoral & sexually deviant in art & literature (ie: Shakespeare)
- Black bodies given primitive, uncivilized & unattractive status; white bodies with pure & holier status
  - Elizabeth I ("the Virgin Queen") paints her face stark white to depict purity & civility



Ira Aldridge: The black actor who - in the 1800s - made history in Shakespeare's famous roles.



Elizabeth I, by George Gower, c. 1588



Venus in Front of the Mirror, by Peter Paul Rubens, 17th Century

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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

→ Fat men were depicted as inferior, subservient, & immoral in art & literature.

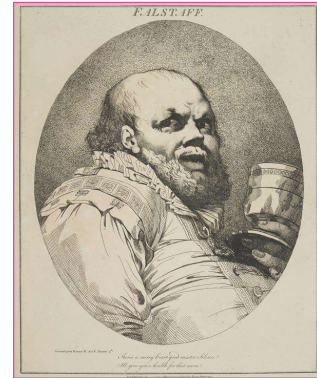
- For example: Shakespeare's: Falstaff from *Henry IV, Part I*
- Comedic relief, described as lazy, corrupt & selfish
- "An old fat man; a tun of man . . . that bolting-hutch of beastliness";
- "that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts";
- "an ox with "pudding in his belly"
- (Shakespeare, 1596, 2.4.447-459)



Falstaff und sein Page, Adolf Schrödter, 1867



Falstaff, by Eduard von Grützner (1906)



Shakespeare's Character: Falstaff,  
by John Hamilton Mortimer (1776)

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## REFLECT:

Can you think of any parallels to how fat people are viewed in the workplace today?  
(ie: higher rates of firing, unemployment)



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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

- Fatness linked to a lack of intelligence & character = new focus on one's ability to "master themselves" & avoid the "descent into savagery".
  - Did not apply to women as they were predominantly valued for their body parts (ie: domestic & child-bearing purposes).
- Restriction viewed as way to become closer to God through willpower.
  - Intellectuals (ie: Shakespeare & Descartes) began to promote fasting to clear minds, enhance wits & avoid "giving in" to base desires (ie: hunger).
  - Intellectuals strive to adhere to extreme & prolonged starvation to support the idea of: fasting equates to higher intelligence & fatness equates to stupidity / laziness.

Venus, Mars & Cupid, by Peter Paul Rubens, 16th Century.

By Juan Rizi, "The Dinner of St. Benedict," 17th century - depicts "One Meal a Day"

"The Beginning of the Fast" (later known as Ash Wednesday)

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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

- Mind-Body Dualism
  - Descartes' legacy surrounds mind-body dualism, where the body & the mind are separate entities
  - Creates idea that the body can be dominated & controlled if one has an exceptional mind & will
  - The mind is not a physical entity in this philosophy - something immeasurable/spiritual

Descartes, 1637 infamous quote: "I THINK, THEREFORE I AM"

1995 sculpture by Marc Quinn, titled "Emotional Detox IV" - art representation of mind-body dualism

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# RENAISSANCE

(1400-1600)

- Rediscovery of Ancient Greece led to Renaissance painters reinterpreting art with new values of the time:
  - Curvy, white women were centered in art & deemed desirable (ie: Rubenesque women)
  - Increase in depictions of female nudity
  - The male gaze



Perseus freeing Andromeda after killing Cetus. 1st century AD fresco from the Casa Dei Dioscuri, Pompeii



Perseus and Andromeda by Titian (painted in 1554-1556 as part of a series of mythological paintings called "poesie" ("poetry") intended for King Philip II of Spain)

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# ORIENTALISM


(1600-1800)

"Orientalism": the representation of Eastern cultures through a Western lens (ie: in literature, art, philosophies)

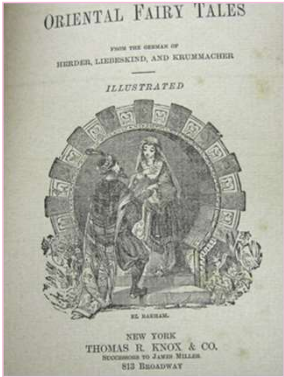
- As trading increased with East & Southeast Asia & India, interest with the regions intensified & shaped public opinion
- The East was depicted as the new "other" to fear & was heavily villainized & sexualized
  - "Oriental Tales" (ie: stories like "Arabian Nights")
  - Ballets & literature with sexual themes became popularized



Arab knight old illustration. By unidentified author, published on Magasin Pittoresque, Paris, 1840



Arabian Knights television show, aired 1968



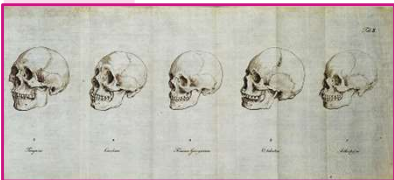
Oriental Fairy Tales, novel published 1832

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## AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT (1600-1800)

- Enlightenment movement (a focus on reason & science, over God & the church) took off, ushering in a new wave of interest in theorizing about humans' fundamental differences
  - Rise of "armchair anthropology," under representative findings, & sensationalized reports regarding Africans
- Racial categorization systems now focused more on the differences in one's body, including shape & size, with particular interest in categorizing different "types" of Africans
  - Food abundant areas in Africa were deemed to be full of gluttonous Africans
  - Blackness was linked to overindulgence & immorality
- First official racial categorization system introduced by Francois Bernier emerges
  - Detailed how black & white women differed, as a way to describe ideal beauty standards
  - As the slave trade expanded into France, so did the reach of these publications - intensifying public fear & hatred of 'the other'





Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's "5 races", introduction of Craniometry in 1795.

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## AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT (1700-1800)

- Saartjie "Sara" Baartman, a Khoekhoe woman with a thyroid disorder, was enslaved & advertised around England as a "freak show" display, depicting the most "accurate" form of a Black woman
- Baartman's exposure solidified the link between Blackness, barbarism & fatness, & served as a tool to ridicule all Black women at the time
- Nicknamed by colonizers as the "Hottentot Venus", she was labeled as the prototypical sexual desire of all Africans, positioning her as something both grotesque & sexually stimulating to the male gaze
- Other exhibits opened to display fat people, creating the idea that fatness is something peculiar to gawk at, something humiliating, & above all, something that is open for public discussion & opinion

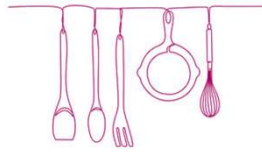
Saartjie, the Hottentot Venus by Frederick Christian Lewis, c. 1810.

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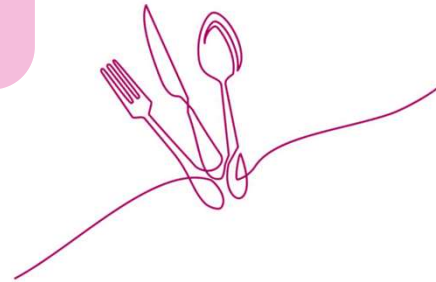


## REFLECT:



Regarding beliefs about food, can you identify any that are still relevant in today's diet culture?

Can you identify any that have shifted?



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## SUMMARY:

As we move toward the mid 19th century, we can see that Europe is standing firm in its position as a dominant power in the world.


With over half of the world colonized by Europe, they hold significant sway over the dominant culture, & thus, control & shape foundational ideas surrounding desirability & social capital.

The preference for thinness was not so much about health as it was about legitimizing hierarchies (ie: race, sex, and class) & we can see the link between fatness & Blackness take hold here.

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## HOMEWORK:



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- 1) Weekly SMART Goal
- 2) Begin to develop your own body image timeline (due session #4)
  - Explore how your body image has changed over time and what factors may have influenced these changes.
  - Consider how body image was modeled to you by parents, peers, or people close to you growing up, as well as any interpersonal and cultural/societal events and factors that affected how you felt about your body.
  - Ask yourself, what conclusions and beliefs did you draw about your body and your worth from those influences?
  - Consider different ages of your life:
    - Childhood (0–puberty years)
    - Adolescence (puberty–18 years)
    - Early adulthood (18–35 years)
    - Later adulthood (35+ years)

Please see the prompt sheet provided separately, if needed, to help guide your reflection.

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## CHECK OUT

+

## GROUNDING

Guided Imagery Forest Walk:  
[https://youtu.be/gU\\_ABFUAVAs?si=wjRW5sTzhYHEDKcW](https://youtu.be/gU_ABFUAVAs?si=wjRW5sTzhYHEDKcW)

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