Eng/Filmstd/Complit 316 World Cinema: Body and Desire in World Cinema
(T/TH 1:00pm-2:50pm; Curtin 104)

The human body, by dint of its placement in culture and history, is laden with meaning. Its movement in space, posture, stylization, affect and sensation, cannot but signify. But besides this semiotic inevitability, the body also lives a life in materiality. This material body, though unsymbolizable, is intensely explored in cinema, by way of crises that endanger its being, producing narrative tension and visual fascination. This being body in crisis reveals a complex of desire, desire both as a sociohistorical imprint that structures the body’s meaning and as a material transgression against that meaning. Through a group of films produced in different parts of the world, this class will study how the human body in cinema is often straddled between meaning and being, performing the paradoxical function of creating an otherness within the symbolic. We'll examine how films from different cultures stage unusual situations to call forth the material body, and what critical agency such a body often brings forth. We'll observe how such psychosomatic practices as religion (eastern), martial arts, music and dance, occult rituals, dragging, psychiatric therapy, scientific experiments, etc., mold, affect, or produce the body’s meaning and desire, and how film diegesis mediates that meaning and desire through its own cultural codes. The objective of our study is to discover how this unique cinematic body opens up dimensions of truth we do not normally see, truth that undermines the entrenched norms of society by overstepping many boundaries, from those of race, class, gender, sex, to what it means to be human. The course satisfies the Humanities GER and L&S International Requirement.