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Bodies and Pain: How to Be Ill and Unhappy

Bowling Green State University. Institute for the Study of Culture & Society

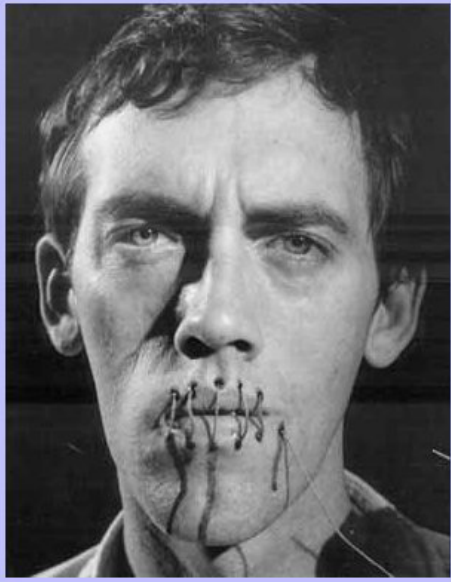
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Artists and Scholars



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
CULTURE & SOCIETY
PRESENTS

Bill Albertini

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

2:30 pm

Mylander Room (207)

Bowen-Thompson Student Union

Bodies and Pain: How to be Ill and Unhappy

How might we speak of pain in a culture that is both morbidly fascinated by and deeply averse to it?

What is displaced by the push to heal at all costs?

How might works with multiple authors and modes of address (such as graphic novels) help us think in new ways about the physical experience of living?

Body theory often seeks to recuperate the suffering body as a site of pleasure, healing, and political action. One of the ways in which it performs this function is by challenging dominant representations of the ill as helpless victims. Recent critiques, however, have called for more focus on physical pain and negative affect or emotion. In calling for attention to unreformed pain, these critiques of the ideal subject invite the question of what might happen to pleasure, an issue of great importance to critics and activists interested in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Professor Albertini turns to the work of avant-garde writer and artist David Wojnarowicz (who died as a result of AIDS in 1992), especially *Seven Miles a Second*, the multiply-authored graphic novel of Wojnarowicz's life, to draw attention to manifold experiences of illness, including suffering, pain and anger--but not excluding an investment in pleasures.

Bill Albertini is an assistant professor of English at BGSU, where he is affiliated with the programs in American Culture Studies and Women's Studies. His research and teaching focus on illness, disability, queer theory, and gender studies. He has published essays in *Iris* and *VERB* in addition to co-editing a special issue of *New Literary History* entitled "Is There Life After Identity Politics?" for which he also co-wrote the introduction. Currently a fellow at ICS, he is at work on a project that investigates illness discourse through the critical lenses of disability studies, race theory, and queer theory.

Special Thanks to the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and to the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences for their support of this work. All events are free and open to the public. For more information, call (419) 372-0585.