Object relating: Feminist bio–psycho–social science studies
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In this seminar, we will think and do object relating as an opening into feminist science studies. We will consider what an object is and how it comes into being by working through the conjunction of the biological, psychological, and social—or, the bio–psycho–social, a term coined by psychiatrist George Engel in 1977 in a generalist challenge to the hegemony of an increasingly scientized psychiatry. We will explore practices of object relating in several different yet interconnected spaces: therapeutic, experimental, aesthetic, and political. We will begin with some tools provided by the object relating theories and practices of psychoanalysis: Freud on the uncanny and mourning and melancholia, Klein on reparation, Winnicott on playing, and Fanon on de–colonization. Two important texts first published in the 1990s—an essay from Hortense Spillers on race and psychoanalysis and another from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on paranoid and reparative reading practices—will function as a vestibule into the second part of the course where we will take up examples of doing feminist bio–psycho–social science studies by writers/thinkers Sylvia Wynter, Evelyn Fox Keller, Donna Haraway, Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, Mel Chen, Alondra Nelson, Ellen Samuels, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Elizabeth Wilson, among others. Through these case studies, we will relate to a wide array of course themes: from Wynter’s many genres of the human in history to Wilson’s biological unconscious; from Haraway’s making kin to Preciado’s making sex; from Keller’s take on McClintock’s “feeling for the organism” to Nelson’s take on the Black Panther Party’s social health activism. Finally, we will consider the psychoanalytic unconscious in much contemporary techno–scientific thought.