A) The reading for this week focused on two parts of work that can be done with the body. The first one was hair dressing. Reading the chapter on hair dressing discussed the different viewpoints that could be taken such as the hair dresser versus the customer and who ultimately has the most power in the decision making and also who has the most knowledge in what is best for the customer. Some other things that the chapter mentioned were the issues of class. Specifically how individual’s roles according to class decides how they should look. Also Gimlin mentioned that an important part of the hairdresser/customer relationship is that hairdressers do not just cut hair but are also seen as therapists that their customers can talk to. The other chapter read discussed the art of cosmetic surgery. Gimlin researched this issue more ethnographically by interviewing those who went under the knife. Individuals in this case had different reasons for going through with cosmetic surgery. Also a big difference with cosmetic surgery is that the doctor will and can refuse patients. But it was also really interesting to see how only patients that had no ‘other’ options were those permitted to go through with cosmetic surgery. Also Gimlin emphasized many times that cosmetic surgery cannot be taken lightly. It is a very expensive/time consuming process that many individuals have to make huge sacrifices for.

B) This book is very different than the other books we have read. Body Work is technically Gimlin’s report of her ethnographic research. It is very interesting how she went about researching though. She specifically chose to focus her work on women and the different things they go through in order to present their bodies. But for everyone she interviewed she had a specific reason for interviewing them. Also in order to talk to the hair dressers she needed Pamela’s permission and to talk to the cosmetic surgery patients she needed permission from the doctor. I think that this maybe how I will go about interviewing individuals for my project. For example I am doing tanning on campus and I should ask the managers of tanning salons which customers I should talk to. This way you are not offending anyone and they are giving you honest answers. Additionally other things to play close attention to are the relationships that are formed. For example, hair dressers were seen as therapists for their customers. Maybe tanning for some individuals is a form of therapy which completely changes the way tanning is viewed. Also individuals who do go tanning might be like the women who go to the hair dresser. They might feel compelled to go because society expects that those individuals look tan because of their class or role they play. So basically Gimlin’s research gave me more ideas that I can ask about when I do my research.

C) Cosmetic surgery is something that intrigues me very much. I have known a handful or people to go through with it but I have never really taken it too seriously. In chapter 3 Gimlin discusses that cosmetic surgery should not be taken lightly. For example, for many individuals it is very costly. Anne Marie a patient who had cosmetic surgery had to take up another job and give up home improvements in order to get a face lift. But after getting the face lift Anne Marie was so happy with her decision. So is it worth it? When does cosmetic surgery cross the line? Gimlin
and Dr. Norris suggest that it is not something that should be done if there are other answers. However it is also interesting that this field has recently started within the past half century and within that time the number of doctors has tripled. Why is that? I think that cosmetic surgery is being abused. But I do not think that it is wrong. It clearly has made people happier and more comfortable in their skin. And I think that being able to do that is great in regulated doses though.