

**I. Objective: By the end of this class you should be able to...**

1. List several issues and motivations that undergird the act of piercing/tat.
2. List the 3 components that compose an ethical decision
3. Explain why piercing/tattooing appeals to existentialist and post-moderns
4. Explain why piercings/tats have typically died out in Christian cultures

**II. Introduction:**

***A. The rise of the phenomena in Western Society<sup>1</sup>***

The taboo tattoo was until recently, the menacing fashion of heavy-metal rockers, bikers, criminals and the social outcast. But today the tattoo glamorously appears everywhere and anywhere. It's the latest fashion craze. The tattoo has found a canvas on celebrities such as Britney Spears, Julia Roberts, Jessica Simpson, Bruce Willis, Geraldo Rivera, Halle Berry, the Dixie Chicks and thousands of others.

The sports world has also received the "baptism of tattoos". A 1997 AP Poll discovered over 35% of all NBA players sported at least one tattoo, including such mega stars as Michael Jordan, and Shaquille O' Neal. Sports reporters claim similar tattoo percentages are decorating the professional football, baseball and hockey world. Holding their own, the tattoo adorns the "conservative" golf world on such notables as Lee Trevino and Tiger Woods.

The National Geographic News stated that 15% of all Americans are tattooed. The Alliance of Professional Tattooists (APT) estimates over 39 million Americans have a tattoo. Details Magazine published a poll that stated 22% of 18-25 year olds have at least one tattoo. It's also estimated 60% of the tattooed are women.

And many more are waiting in line. . .

Even the toy world has it's very own Tattoodles doll. And it's rumored sweet little Barbie has recently been seen flaunting a "cool" tattoo. Not to be outdone by the tattooing zealous adults,



the younger generation has joined the tattoo party. A Texas Tech University School of Nursing study consisting of over 2,100 adolescents from eight states reveal that 1 in 10 adolescents were tattooed and over half were planning on getting tattooed. Another study estimated 25% of all 15 to 25-year-olds are tattooed. By the way, the average age of getting tattooed is 16 years old. While some receive their first tattoo as young as eight-years-old.

*According to US News and World Report, (November 3, 1997) tattooing is the country's sixth-fastest-growing retail business. And growing at the amazing rate of more than one new tattoo studio every day.*

## B. **Pictures:**

Officially titled "Most Pierced Woman", Elaine Davidson of Scotland holds the Guinness World Record for most permanent piercings, first setting this record in 2000 upon verification by Guinness judges of 462 body piercings, with 192 at the time being around her head and face.<sup>[59]</sup> As of 8 June 2006, her Guinness-certified piercings numbered 4,225.<sup>[60]</sup> She has more piercings in her genitalia than in any other part of the body - 500 in all, externally and internally.<sup>[3]</sup> As of May 2008, Davidson's piercings total 5,920.<sup>[5]</sup> As of Feb. 2009 her piercings total 6,005.<sup>[6]</sup> In March 2010, Elaine reported a total of 6,725 piercings She claims she does not drink or use drugs.

The most pierced man has a paltry 250 piercings!

## C. **Terms:** Body art, Body piercing, tattoos, scarification, body/self modification, self mutilation/self harm



### III. History and Motivation for Body Modification:

1. *Discuss: Why do people get tats/piercings?* Discuss the cultures in class
2. Read History
3. List more motivations:  
Beauty, spontaneity (fun), rite of passage, memorial, brotherhood identification, utility, “express individuality”

### IV. Ethical considerations:

#### What factors into an ethical decision?

1. Act
2. Motive
3. Consequence

- 1) *Is it right?* Nature of body (imago Dei, cosmic trash, ); modesty; nature of image (what does tattoo represent/communicate)
- 2) *Motive:* (rebellion, sexual enhancement, identification change [“I can be someone else”/better person] prestige—“I’ll be cool/people will notice me.”); affiliation (brotherhood, political, religious)
- 3) Health risks, Cultural norms

### V. Existentialism & Post-moderns

#### A. Existentialism: the choice is yours!

Piercing is comparable to suicide! It doesn’t matter what the consequence, what matters is the choice!

#### B. Postmodernism: Power—dominance of body

#### C. Underwritten thought: Materialism—body is cosmic dust and I have the right to do with it as I will.



## VI. A Christian Response:

You may have noticed in the history of bod/mod. that bod/mod virtually died out in places where Christianity was dominant. There have been some exceptions (monks mark for order identification, Xn's mark to identify Xns). The question rises though, particularly in this time when it is rising today, is whether or not this is something that Christians can embrace?

*Piercing in the Scriptures:* ear piercing of servants (Ex. 21:6); prohibition of marks for the dead (lev. 28:19); nose piercing (beauty)

**All** would agree that the body should be preserved. When body modification becomes mutilation it is a violation of commandments. This would certainly include piercing of private parts.

**Some** would say that all is prohibited due to the nature of the body, health concerns, the culture surrounding bod.mod.

Others say that moderate piercings/tats are a matter of adiaphora (i.e. things indifferent).

**Act:** Moderate is most likely not wrongful in and of itself.

**Motive:** (most important!) Things like beauty enhancement, identification w/ a given group, perhaps even sexual enhancement may be ok. On the other hand, one must deal with the question of modesty, rebellion, identity change, power, *Tradition (Evil, neutral)*

**Consequence:** glorify God, witness, health issues, career hindrance, regret