

Fall 2016
Women's Studies and Feminist Research
University of Western Ontario

WS 4460F: Decolonial Interventions and Indigenous Activism

No pre-requisites required for enrolment

Professor: Victoria Miceli
Class Hours: Monday 10:30 – 11:30
Class Location: Lawson Hall 2210
Office Hours: Monday 12:30 – 2:30
Office Location: Lawson Hall 3241
E Mail: vmiceli@uwo.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At this present moment in North America, as well as around the world, we are witnessing an ever-increasing movement toward decolonizing the settler state, with communities calling on politicians and citizens to act on threats to the environment, Indigenous women's bodies, and land theft. Especially in the age of social media, it is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore these issues and the movements that are arising to address them. By examining Indigenous-led activist movements, this course will explore different forms of activism organized by Indigenous persons and communities to combat state and colonial violence within what many of us refer to as Canada. The course will cover issues ranging from Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, to Indigenous motherhood and reproductive justice, land claims and struggles, questions of reconciliation and more in order to understand both changing systems of power, as well as resistance to these oppressive systems.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to learn about and engage with the issues that are ongoing both within their communities and across Canada. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to engage, analyze, and learn from/about Indigenous-led activist movements that have developed to address these issues. By the end of this course, it is intended that students will:

- Develop an understanding of Indigenous political, social, and legal struggles and activism in the context of the Canadian settler state

- Gain greater knowledge of Indigenous-led activist movements occurring both within their own locales as well as across the country
- Develop an understanding of core concepts and theories in decolonial resistance and activism
- Develop an understanding of what ethical engagement in activism and allyship looks like and entails

COURSE TEXTS

All readings that are from books or anthologies will be placed on OWL Sakai as PDFs for printing. Where possible, I will also place these books on reserve. Journal articles will be searchable on the library website. I will also photocopy all material and place a complete copy of all material in the Women's Studies office for students to photocopy, along with a USB key with all material downloadable from there. There will often be videos and websites that will need to be viewed prior to lecture. Should any of these options present a problem for you, I encourage you to come speak with me.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Course assessment will be divided amongst the following assignments and activities:

Participation – 15%

Participation will be assessed according to two main components – attendance, and engagement with the material during seminar. It is expected that students will not only discuss the material in nuanced ways that show they have a working familiarity with the content, but also engage with it through relatively sophisticated questions and discussions. Engagement with the material will also be assessed not only during moments of speaking, but in moments of listening as well. Facilitating and encouraging participation will be crucial during the leading of your seminar presentation. Of equal importance will be participating in the presentations led by your classmates. This will be discussed more in the following section, as well as during our first class. Participation is meant to provide students with the opportunity to work through complex thoughts and concepts with their peers. *Please note* – should you feel uncomfortable speaking in seminar, please discuss this with me so that alternate arrangements for this component of the grade can be made.

Seminar Presentation – 25%

Leading a seminar is important practice for students to synthesize material and explain their engagement in ways that their fellow classmates can also understand and engage with. The seminar is not meant to be a summary, but rather is meant to teach students how to read material and discuss possible implications, shortcomings, logical conclusions, and theories, as well as develop discussion questions for classmates to respond to in lengthy discussions. Students will

present on the material for the week, as well as formulate discussion questions to structure a dialogue and establish connections between the literary work, accompanying readings, and the extra-textual world. A copy of your presentation will be made available to the professor prior to the presentation. A meeting will be scheduled before the date of the presentation to discuss your proposed presentation to ensure that you are on the right track and are confident in the material. You will be expected to provide your classmates with a handout for the presentation. Leading this seminar will allow students to develop skills of communication, and also provides students with experience in reading texts for purposes beyond comprehension alone.

Response Paper – 20%

At the beginning of the semester, when signing up for seminar presentation dates, students will also sign up for a seminar, other than their own, that they wish to respond to. This response paper is meant to be a space in which the respondent can explore further the questions that were asked, as well as any questions they may have developed following the discussion period with their peers. The paper, once marked and pending approval by the respondent, will also be turned into the student who presented on the original topic for the purpose of providing said student with the opportunity to see how their presentation, as well as the material itself, was taken up.

Final Paper – 40%

The final paper will be an opportunity for students to use material and discussion from the course to formulate their own area of interest for research. Students can discuss an issue pertaining to decolonial resistance that has been, or yet to have been addressed by an activist movement. As there are theoretical components accompanying each issue we covered, it is the expectation that students will apply a theoretical framework to the issue they wish to discuss in their paper. It is the expectation that the writing, as well as the chosen area of research, will be a sophisticated, and appropriate, scope of research.