

**The University of Western Ontario
London Canada
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research**

WS 4458F: Reproductive Rights and Justice: Canada and the World

Instructor: TBA

Email:

Class times: Wednesdays, 10:30 - 1:30pm

Location: Lawson Hall 2210

Officer: Lawson Hall 3239

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

This seminar course explores key issues surrounding women's social and reproductive roles within a Canadian and global context. Students will be introduced to the dominant discourses of reproductive rights, autonomy and choice as the key means by which women's reproduction has been addressed within mainstream feminist movements. Students will also be asked to consider the emergence of the reproductive justice movement as an intervention in, and alternative to these dominant frameworks. Topics examined throughout the course include historical perspectives on abortion, contraception, eugenics and population control; contemporary concerns surrounding the medicalization and criminalization of pregnancy, genetic testing and birthing practices; and emerging scholarship on the role of assisted reproductive technologies, including international surrogacy. Thematically, the course will focus on the intersectionality of reproductive experiences and on exploring the tensions between individual and community interests in biological and social reproduction, including the interests of individual women, the (nation) state and marginalized communities.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will:

- Develop an understanding of key concepts required to study reproductive rights and reproductive justice;
- Familiarize themselves with the history of reproductive rights in Canada, including the legalization of abortion; Canada's Eugenic history; and Canadian development policy as it relates to reproductive rights and justice;
- Learn about contemporary issues of concern to the feminist struggle for reproductive rights and justice within the Canadian and global context;
- Gain an understanding of the tensions and intersections between individual and community interests in biological and social reproduction, including the interests of individual women, 'the (nation)state', and marginalized communities;
- Gain an intersectional understanding of reproductive rights and justice; that is, an understanding of how women's reproductive rights and duties are constructed and managed according to their gender, race, socio-economic background, sexuality, age, able-bodiedness etc.;
- Learn the difference between a reproductive choice and a reproductive justice framework, and how these frameworks shape understandings of women's reproductive experiences and interventions into these experiences;
- Develop critical thinking and critical literacy skills, including how to read visual, multi-media and word-based texts critically. Students will learn to identify the ideological assumptions on which the arguments presented rest, as well as how issues of power and privilege affect how such texts are produced and consumed. Students will also develop their written communication skills.
- Gain an appreciation of the need to think critically about issues of reproductive rights both in relation to topics taught within the course, as well as to apply their knowledge to developing understandings of the world around them.

Methods of Assessment:

Participation: 15%
2 Critical Response Papers 30% (15% each)
Seminar Presentation: 15%
Final Paper Proposal: 5%
Final Paper: 35%

1) Class Participation 15%

During class students will be graded on their active participation. Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the weekly readings, as well as their critical engagement with them. Attendance will count for 5% of the 15% percent.

2) Two Critical Response Papers 30%

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to submit two short essays (800-1000 words) in response to two separate course texts. In each response paper, students will be asked to address the following questions: What is the author's argument/thesis?; What theoretical framework informs this reading?; What is the central problem or issue as the author identifies it?; Is there another way of understanding this problem?; What is the significance of the author's argument and information to women's reproductive lives? ; Whose interests are being addressed in the paper? Who will be helped by any proposed solutions? Whose interests might be hindered? Is anyone being excluded?

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage student to engage critically with the course readings. In addressing the above questions, students are expected not only to demonstrate an understanding of the selected reading, but also an ability to think critically and reflexively about how the reading's content is presented. Furthermore, these response papers are designed to help students think through the implications of the texts they are reading and the information and arguments presented therein. This assignment will help students develop the skills and awareness needed to interrogate the relationship between knowledge production and women's lived experiences.

To ensure that they are thinking critically about a variety of topics, students may only respond to one text from any one week. Although students will be asked to submit their responses during the class for which their selected reading was assigned, there will also be due dates that act as check points throughout the term. That is, at least one response paper must be submitted by the 7th week of class and both must be submitted by the last week of class. These due dates are both to help students manage their time and to ensure that they can receive feedback one of their responses before submitting the other. Although students can certainly chose to submit both responses earlier in the term, this is be strongly discouraged as receiving and incorporating feedback is in important learning experience that will help students push their thinking forward, and to fully develop their written communication skills.

3) Seminar Presentation 15%

Students will work in groups of two or three to prepare and give a thirty minute presentation, ten minutes of which will be devoted to leading class discussion. Presentations will occur from week five to week eleven and students will sign up for their presentations during the second week of class. Students will be asked to find a resource that links to the topic of reproductive rights and/or justice and to devote their presentation to examining why it is relevant to the course. Students must rationalize their choice of topic by drawing directly from the course readings and concepts associated with the week during which they are presenting. That is, if students are presenting during the week on medicalization and birthing practices, their presentation must directly address these

issues and draw on the readings they have done for this week Possible resources include (but are not limited to) blog posts, news stories, advertisements, or television episodes.

Within their presentations students should demonstrate knowledge of course content and evidence of independent research. They should also show that they are able to engage with the practical implications of theoretical concepts. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to bring understandings they have gained within the classroom into their 'real world' encounters, and to apply their critical thinking skills within the context of their daily lives. These assignments will help students fulfil several learning objectives, including their critical thinking and oral communication skills.

4) Final Paper Proposal 5%

In week eleven students will be asked to submit a one page outline of their proposed topic for their final paper. This proposal will include a rough outline of the proposed topic, including three sources the student intends to use for their paper. The proposal will ensure that students think about their topic early, and that they begin research well in advance of the final due date. This assignment will also give me the opportunity to provide feedback on the student's topics and provide guidance if necessary.

5) Final Paper: 30%

For their final assignment students will write a research paper of 4000-5000 words due in week 12. Students may write on any topic, as long as it is related to the course themes of reproductive rights and justice. Students are required to use at least five scholarly sources, not including course readings. Although students must show significant independent research, the paper should also have an argumentative thesis and should show original analysis.

The research paper represents an opportunity for students to explore in depth an issues that is of interest to them. Students may choose to write about a topic covered within the course, or they may choose a new topic not addressed within the course. The assignment will help students develop their research, writing, and critical thinking skills and to demonstrate their ability to incorporate course material and concepts into an original, analytical piece of research.

Class Expectations:

Students are expected to attend all classes having done all of the required readings, and should be prepared to discuss these readings during class. This course does not have a final exam; persistent absenteeism may be rendered grounds for failure in the course, in accordance with the policy of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research.

For students without academic accommodation, assignments will be penalized 2% a day, including weekends

Academic Offences:

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site":

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/hadnbook/exam/courseoutliens.pdf>

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the Detection of plagiarism. All papers

submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com” (<http://www.turnitin.com>) (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>).

Notes for Students with Disabilities: Please contact we-ugrad@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

Medical Policy: students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests exams, participation components, and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg117.html>) and (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

Course Topics

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

Week 2: Introduction to Key Themes and Concepts

Week 3: Historical Perspectives on Reproductive Choice: Contraception and Abortion in Early Canada

Week 4: the Formalized Eugenics Movement

Week 5: Population Control and International Development Policy

Week Six: International Development Policy Continued

Week Seven: Legalizing and Accessing Abortion and Contraception in Contemporary Canada

Week 8: Complicating Contemporary Abortion Debates: Interventions from Critical Race and Disability Theory

Week 9: Maternal and Fetal Health

Week 10: Prevention or Support? Case Studies of Teenage Mothers and Women living with HIV/AIDS

Week 11: Birthing Practices, Medicalization and Reproductive Justice

Week 12: Assisted Reproductive Technologies as Sex Liberation: Potentials and Limitations

Week 13 ARTs, Reproductive Stratification and International Surrogacy

Please Note: This course outline is subject to change before the beginning of term.