

Western University
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research
WS 3355E: Feminist Activism
September 2017-April 2018

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Class Meets: Mondays 1:30-4:30 pm, Room TBA; (two hours in class and two to three hours per week working with/on community organization assignment).

Feminism, across its various places and points of genesis, is fundamentally tied to the concept of *protest* – with aims for disruption and, ultimately if arguably, structural transformation. In the current global climate, many feminists are articulating more-than-ever an urgent need for active feminist interventions in broad and interconnected areas of everyday life. This course examines a variety of issues and interventions to understand what feminist action can accomplish. Some of the questions we engage include: What tools do various feminist activists take up, for what specific kinds of aims, and with what successes and why? What can we learn from the failures or exclusions of feminist activists? What are the relationships between past or historical movements and contemporary contexts, individual and collective action, community organizing and institutions, local and global solidarities? How can feminist protest genuinely avoid divide-and-conquer politics to be the ethical, intersectional, accountable work we require of feminism in the 21st century? It is the commitment of this course that, in addition to studying feminist activism in the classroom, students engage in a Community Engagement Learning (CEL) project sustained over the course with a community organization or other partners to encourage students' implementation of their learning -- beyond the borders of the classroom. Please note that the course is currently capped at twenty-two students for CEL group projects. As of July 21st, registration will open to students wishing to take it with an alternate assignment rather than working with, and completing a project for, community partners.

Learning Objectives: *Work in WS 3355E should enable students to:*

- Be familiar with various feminist actions for change in both local and global contexts;
- Understand various explanations for why some feminist movements succeed and some fail, with critical attention to the lessons that can be learned from both positive and negative outcomes;
- Recognize the ethical stakes associated with the aims, tools, strategies, targets and partners involved in feminist action, with ability to assess inclusions and exclusions across interlocking forms of oppression and intersectional axes of identity, such as race, class, sexuality, gender, and (dis)ability;

- Engage with a community organization or other partner in a “volunteer” capacity, learning from the partner how best to implement one’s skills/learning as required by the partner (for students doing the CEL component of the course);
- Improve oral and written communication, and augment proficiency in critical thinking, research, and analytical skills.

Assignments:

A word about the critical response papers: you can write about any article on our list (recommended or required) that **has not yet been discussed in class.**

Participation	(5% Term 1; 5% Term 2)	10%
Sparker	(in groups of two)	10%
2 Critical Reading Responses:	(3-4 pages, each worth 20%; due Oct 16 & Nov 13)	40%
Poster Based on Service Learning Placement/Project	(1 poster; due Feb. 12)	10%
Final Group Project Based Assignment (or alternate assignment TBA)	(10-12 pages; due April 9)	30%

Texts: Readings for WS 3355E will be available through the Owl home page.

Community-focussed projects:

Students, working in small groups, will be paired with a community partner to complete a collaborative project. Projects will be decided on the basis of the partners’ needs and students’ interests. At the beginning of the semester, students will have an opportunity to meet each partner and to rank their choice of community organization. In addition to in-class attendance and participation, students doing the CEL component of the course are required to complete two-three hours of work on the project weekly. More details will be provided when we meet in September. Students who are not working with a community partner will be offered an alternative final assignment with expectation for equivalent hours of work.