

GSWS 2205G

Making Men: Critical Studies in Masculinity

Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies | Winter 2024

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Who is a man? What *makes* a man?

These questions lie at the heart of the convergence of feminist, ethnic, and sexuality studies into the field of “critical masculinity studies”, which aims at its core to interrogate how certain discourses created hegemonic gender assumptions and binary categories that in turn foreground the institutionalization of certain power relations across all aspects of social and political life. By drawing from a wide range of theoretical tools, critical masculinity studies provides us with a number of frameworks with which to analyze the asymmetries and hierarchies that have helped construct men, manhood, and masculinity.

In emphasizing the social construction of men, manhood, and masculinity as constitutive of the enormous capital they command, this course aims to advance a more critical view whereby such concepts are seen not as impenetrable bastions of historically oppressive power, but as privileged nodes that have been instrumentalized within discursive ideological networks. Through an examination of diverse media sources (literature, film, art, critical journalism, news articles, music, memes, etc.) and their treatment of issues like “guy” culture, male body image, homosociality, aggression, family, success, and male sexuality, this course encourages the centrality of critical reflection in understanding the oftentimes violent negotiation of masculinity across various intersectional sites, and the refraction of those dynamics in men’s relationships with themselves, other men, women, and institutions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. synthesize concepts from masculinity studies in order to read and think critically about the construction of masculinity across various historical and intersectional contexts;
2. analyze the social operation of literary, artistic, historical, and cultural artifacts as specific cues that belie prevailing sexual scripts and identities, or that otherwise demonstrate the tensions, anxieties, and aspirations embedded in masculinity and male culture;
3. reflect on their experiences in dealing with men, manhood, and masculinity, with the view of identifying points of potential intervention;
4. enhance their ability to express themselves both orally (through in-class participation and oral examinations) and in writing (through quizzes, essays, and other written assessments).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation / Attendance:	10% (8% + 2%)
Case Study Analysis:	10% (group work)
Note Cards:	15% (5 briefs of around 200 words each, lowest score dropped)
Oral Examination:	15%
Midterm Exam:	20%
<u>Critical Essay:</u>	<u>30% (1750-2000 words)</u>
TOTAL	100%

A. Class Participation and Attendance

All students are expected to (1) complete all reading assignments and (2) participate in class discussions. Being a critical reader, manifested in the ability to dialogue with assigned texts and formulate informed questions or opinions, is a skill that this class will try to foster. Please come to class prepared to share insights, ask questions, be critical of your own assumptions, and keep an open and collegial demeanour towards others. **Remember that ATTENDANCE IS NOT PARTICIPATION.**

Regular attendance is critical in getting the most out of the course. As such, attendance will be checked every class using the Note Card system (see below). University policy on absences and accommodations for legitimate reasons will be observed. While attendance in every class is necessary, engagement is also of paramount importance. Attendance entails: being on time and staying for the duration of class time—lateness is disruptive.

Your participation will be evaluated based on how well you meet the following criteria: **understanding of the material; interest and enthusiasm; and quality and consistency of contribution.** Participation refers to meaningful immersion with the course material, demonstrated through thoughtful, consistent, and collegial engagement in class discussions, group activities, office hour consultations, and other instances where critical thought can be observably performed. This is a GSWS course and it is therefore a reasonable expectation that you verbalize your insights around the readings and materials in discussion-based formats. Unless you have a documented speech disability or a case of debilitating social anxiety recognized by your academic counselor, I expect your engaged participation in each class.

B. Case Study Analysis

A case study analysis focuses on a scenario presented to students that involves a number of issues or problems that must be dealt with in accordance with certain parameters (e.g., conceptual, legal, moral, ethical, etc.). Case study assignments usually require students to identify problems and issues in a scenario, to demonstrate their developing knowledge of theories and concepts, and to make decisions and recommendations based on these to either prevent or solve some of the issues in that scenario. The case should therefore lead students to a critical response given the situation or an experiential understanding of the given case. The activity can also lead to an understanding of the ramifications of their decisions. In a case analysis, the learning can involve recording and synthesizing information on a case, indexing it to other cases, and/or adapting a solution to the given case. (adapted from Flinders University and University of Illinois-Springfield notes on Case Studies). More details to be provided.

The CSA will be done in small groups of 3-4 students. There will be ONE case each week, usually in the form of a short text or video clip, and groups will be randomly assigned to a week to discuss that week's case.

C. Note Cards

You will need to submit a total of FIVE (5) note cards throughout the term. A note card is an interpretive summary providing the main argument of **ONE** Required Reading. The form for the note card will be provided and must be submitted IN PRINT (handwritten is fine; no digital submissions). You choose which weeks you would like to submit a note card, and on which Required Reading out of the ones assigned for that week.

Note cards will be collected at the beginning of each pre-determined class period. Late notecards will not be accepted, nor will note cards submitted at the end of the class period. This is to help ensure that you put in the reading work before the lecture. Each note card will be marked up to 10 points; however, your lowest note card grade will be dropped (5 submitted, 1 dropped, 4 recorded).

In each note card, you must provide the main argument/s or thesis statement of your chosen required reading, as well as the primary concept/s or term/s discussed in the text where applicable. Note cards should be succinct and can be in bullet points or no more than 5-6 sentences long. You may include quotes, supporting details, or examples from the text. When note cards are returned, you may then use them as review material for future assessments.

On weeks you are not writing a note card, the note card form will be counted as your attendance. If you are present in class but are choosing not to write the note card, you should still submit your note card but don't forget to mark the box at the bottom of the form (see form).

D. Oral Examination

The Oral Exam will be a brief virtual discussion between the instructor and group of 4-5 individuals on the week's material. The topics will vary from week to week, and may come in the form of defining terms, synthesizing concepts, contextualizing an image, explaining a quote or statement, elaborating on a lecture point, debating an issue, etc. A sign-up sheet will go up in the first two weeks, and the Oral Exam schedule will be ongoing throughout the term. Oral Exam sessions may be recorded for assessment review.

E. Midterm Exam

The midterm exam comprises identification-, short answer-, and essay-type questions.

F. Critical Essay

The Critical Essay will either be a semiotic analysis of a visual text or a short autoethnographic essay. In either instance, it will be a critical consideration of masculinity in practice.

Students will produce a paper (max. 2000 words) detailing their insights and relating their observations with at least TWO assigned readings for the course (no outside readings are required). Detailed instructions to follow.

REQUIRED READINGS / COURSE CALENDAR

(please refer to the separate Course Calendar document)

- 1) Reeser, Todd. *Masculinities in Theory*. 2nd edition. Wiley-Blackwell, 2023.
- 2) Additional readings to be posted on OWL (in PDF form or links to online articles): If a reading is not in *Masculinities in Theory*, it will be on OWL.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

(Your Western login credentials provide you access to these software via OWL.

Please contact WTS if you have any issues with access)

- 1) Zoom for office hours, meetings, Oral Exams, etc.

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar will be posted on OWL, alongside weekly readings, by the first day of class. Note that materials labeled as Supplementary Readings are just that: to help enrich your understanding of the topics discussed. They may also be used as references in your Critical Essay.

DELIVERY: IN PERSON

GENERAL COURSE GUIDELINES

Students are expected to be both physically and mentally present in class; participation is integral to the learning experience. Use of electronic devices in-class should be for academic purposes only.

A. Email

Email correspondences will be sent often and the OWL site will be updated regularly. Please use your UWO email account for official inquiries and correspondences, and please allow up to 24 hours for a response (up to 48 hours over the weekend). Standard email etiquette is expected. **NO ESSAYS SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

NO EMAILS EXPLAINING ABSENCES PLEASE. If your absence merits reasonable accommodation (for example, for observing religious obligations, representing the University in an official capacity, medical emergencies, compassionate grounds, etc.), please get in touch with your academic counsellor.

B. Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of a text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate, and by proper referencing such as footnotes and citations; otherwise, this is considered plagiarism. The use of Artificial Intelligence software to generate work for submission is another categorical example of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses plagiarism checking software such as Turnitin and GptZero. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

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 licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com.

C. Accommodation, Absenteeism, and Deadlines

All requirements must be submitted in a timely fashion, unless there are serious mitigating circumstances with official, university-approved documentation. Late submissions will incur a **5% Not Following Directions (NFD)** penalty if submitted within three days of the deadline, but this may only be allowed **ONCE** throughout the term. **No late submissions will be accepted thereafter.**

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below:

Potentially missing an Oral Exam: Please email me within 24 hours of your scheduled oral exam to let me know if you will be unable to make it. I may be able to accommodate rescheduling an Oral Exam to a different date or time slot.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade except the Oral Exam: For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

In general, students seeking academic accommodation for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. The same is true for accommodation requests pertaining to known disabilities or medical conditions. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Please find UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness here: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

D. 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/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

E. (Virtual) Classroom Behaviour and Netiquette

Everyone is expected to behave in a manner befitting of adults in a social and intellectual community setting. As such, everyone is expected to familiarize themselves with Western's Code of Conduct, <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>, especially section E (Examples of Prohibited Student Conduct). Occasionally, topics and information of a sensitive nature may crop up in class, so it's important for everyone to adhere to respectful and sensitive behaviour, and to provide comments and opinions in the context of discourse that is both constructive (not pedantic or inflammatory) and self-reflexive (critical of one's assumptions).

Honour Pledge, adapted from UBC's Statement on Respectful Environment:

"On my honour, as a Western University student, I commit to exercise responsibly my freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry, in ways that recognize and respect the dignity of others, and with careful regard to the dynamics of different relationships within the university environment, in order to uphold a respectful environment where the human dignity of each individual is valued, and the diverse perspectives, ideas and experiences of all members of the community are able to flourish."

F. A Note on Sensitive and Potentially Uncomfortable Content

The content and discussions in this course will necessarily engage with some topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will do my best to flag especially graphic or intense content as a warning prior to any viewing or discussion, and to moderate exchanges of ideas in the spirit of constructive dialogue and empathy.

However, remember that when we find ourselves outside our comfort zones, it can be an opportunity for learning. You may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. You are free to leave the room at any time, but please know you will be responsible for any course material you may have missed while you were gone. Also, problematic language exists in our social world and thus may be encountered throughout this course in an academic context, so be forewarned. If you have any questions or concerns about course content or climate, don't hesitate to let me know.

It is important to reiterate that all students should be able to feel welcome in this classroom, so please be mindful of how your verbal and bodily language can contribute to an accountable yet affirming learning environment. If you overhear or witness something that would contribute to a disempowering classroom climate for yourself or others, please let me know immediately.

G. Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **NOT** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

H. Support Services

OWL and Technology Support: Western Technology Services (WTS) 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

I. Recognition of First Nations Territory

The instructor would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples, and acknowledge the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nations groups of this land and place in Southwestern Ontario.

** Front images from Rolling Stone and Instagram