

University of Western Ontario  
Department of Gender, Sexualities and Women's Studies  
Winter 2026

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**GSWS2710G Marriage: Feminist and Queer Perspectives (FINAL)**

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We are located on the traditional land of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawanaron peoples and we complicate the meaning of our being here in our course.

Instructor:	Dr. Kate Korycki
Email:	<a href="mailto:kate.korycki@uwo.ca">kate.korycki@uwo.ca</a>
Class Meeting and Location:	Wednesday 1:30-4:30 @ UCC 54B
Zoom Office hours:	After class & Friday 10-11am on zoom (link on OWL)
Class Website:	<a href="https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home/157525">https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home/157525</a>
Prerequisites:	None; all are welcome!

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**Course Description and Learning Objectives:**

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Marriage is a powerful, old and seemingly universal institution. It is connected with “legitimate/illegitimate” sex and children, but also love, intimacy, community and care. It is also concerned with circulation of wealth, gender roles, social hierarchies, cultural codes and national scripts. In our current neoliberal times, marriage and a bio-family are set up as the only legitimate community of care an individual has. This course interrogates all these ideas and connections. It examines what makes marriage an institution; it looks to its history and connection to culture, religion, and state; it scrutinizes how marriage continues as a site of gender reproduction and how it is concerned with race and class. It explores the role of media and marriage's as well as wedding industrial complex; finally, it explores recent and profound queer innovations in and challenges to marriage, and its heterosexual ideal.

In terms of content, the students will (1) gain familiarity with the foundational concepts of social studies, like structure, institution and agency, and also culture, gender, race and class; and (2) explore how marriage is structured by broader political, economic and social forces and how it is implicated in the reproduction of gender and sexuality. In terms of skills, the students will practice (3) exploring ideas by reading, thinking, writing, listening and sharing; (4) researching and answering analytically significant questions; (5) writing with integrity, clarity and precision; (6) exercising time- and grade-management.

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## Readings:

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Students will find all readings in the Course Reading tab on OWL – the particulars will be listed in the weekly schedule below.

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## Assignments and Expectations:

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In this course, curiosity about the material and struggling to understand, transforming the ways in which we see the world, analyzing and grappling with complexity are encouraged, nurtured and rewarded. This means that getting things right is less important than thinking deeply about them! Further, the students are expected to have read and thought about the assigned readings; they are expected to write about them weekly during class; and they are expected to talk/clarify their understandings in our weekly class.

Note: It is NOT possible to pass/do well in this course without reading, thinking, writing and/or talking in each class! Also, the classes build on one another, so, if a student misses a class, it is important that s/he/they reads the assigned material and asks a colleague to share notes from the class meeting (it is not appropriate to ask the professor for this).

Assignments include weekly **in-class attendance, writing & talking** based on readings (maximum 30 points), a **2500-word research paper** submitted for review in **three stages** (maximum 10, 20 and 30 points each), and an open book **quiz**, for those wanting to rise their grades (maximum 10 points).

Deadlines: all in-class work is done during class time; **IF** you miss a class, you may submit a detailed but brief (no longer than 400 words) summary of **all** the weekly readings by Monday following the missed class. Paper version 1 is due on **February 6** (up to 500 words), paper version 2 is due on **March 6** (1,200 words), paper version 3 (2,500 words) is due on **March 27**. The quiz will take place in the final class on **April 1**. Detailed guidance and requirements on written assignments will be posed on OWL by the end of second week of the course and will be discussed at length in class.

The writing assignments are **due** on or before 11:55pm on the dates specified above. They come with a no-questions-asked 2-day grace period and will be accepted until 11:55pm of the Sunday following the due date. The built-in academic consideration is there to help deal with emergencies and health-related delays. There will be no penalty for submitting the work between the due date and end of grace period, but there will be no further extensions either.

To build research, writing and time management skills, the students are required to begin working on each version of the paper, **7 days prior to due date**. No extension request will be considered for emergencies falling on the due date as this is covered by the grace period. If a student has medically documented emergency falling in the 7 days preparation period, they may seek consideration, via Academic Advising. Please note, it is always the professor who approves the consideration and version 2 of the paper is designated as requiring medical certificate.

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## Course Structure and Policies:

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Weekly class meeting happen on Wednesday between 1:30 - 4:30.

In most classes, we will discuss important learning issues: ‘what is a university,’ ‘what is a thesis,’ ‘what is academic integrity,’ ‘what is causality,’ ‘how do we uncover meaning,’ ‘how to formulate a ‘why’ question,’ ‘how to write precisely.’ In each class, we will address what you find unclear in the readings. Come ready with questions.

In each class, we will test your comprehension of the readings, and we will practice writing. Low-stakes writing may happen more than once in a class. The point is to give you time to prepare your answers before you share them with the group and also to sharpen your thinking and understanding, and to practice writing with clarity. Each class will also involve small-group and/or whole class conversations. You are welcome to bring **paper** notes of the readings to class and quiz.

In each class, there will be a short lecture, clarifying the readings, and/or a movie.

Our weekly classes are not recorded & posted to OWL. Furthermore, no materials generated in this class may be recorded or copied without permission, or posted to commercial sites. They may be used, with attribution, in students’ learning and writing. Weekly PowerPoint will be posted on OWL on Monday following the class – this is to allow all those to miss the class to submit their writing.

Computer/Phone Use is prohibited. Computer may be used by up to 3 students who are willing to send the notes to me weekly to be posted on OWL for all to use. Use of a phone in a classroom outside of breaks **WILL** result in lowering of participation points. No computers or phones are permitted during in-class writing or the quiz (unless the student writes in the Accessibility office).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a profound waste of time and a direct involvement in the destruction of the planetary life. It is a waste of *your* time, because if you do not learn to read, research, analyze, and write well, what is the point of being in university? A degree is not worth the paper it is printed on, if not accompanied by knowledge and skills you are here to acquire. In other words, if you spend 4 years in University training a bot how to do the job you hope to get on exit, the bot will get your job! Secondly, your use of AI is waste of *my* time. I want to read your thoughts and teach you; teaching a bot destroys my soul. Thirdly and in a different vein, 100 of words written by chatdgp requires 0,5 liters of water to produce – think about this for a minute (water is not an infinite resource and it is required for life to go on)!

All this to say: if you use AI, you have to disclose the extent to which you did this (you have to leave the prompts in the text!). If you do not, you are presenting work that you did not write as yours (this is both a lie and an academic offence). I will NOT penalize the use of AI if disclosed but I will also not offer comments. If I suspect undisclosed use of AI, I will ask for your research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. I may also

ask you to reproduce your entire argument orally. An inability to produce requested materials and/or answer questions to *my* satisfaction, may result in a failed assignment. Please note, I will have a lot of samples of your writing from each week in class, so if your prose changes dramatically in your paper, I will have good grounds to suspect AI use.

Discussion Etiquette: In assessing class participation, I look at a) the quantity, and b) the quality of remarks, as well as c) *listening and respect* for the views of others, and d) a spirit of discovery. Our class conversations are explorations, not a competition.

Absenteeism: You do not need to advise me of absences or seek my approval, but note that if you miss more than **two classes**, you must *speak* with me to decide the path forward. This is in agreement with GSWS policy in which more than two absences put you at risk of having to retake the course. Please note, that two allowed absences are NOT in addition to sickness and emergencies you may encounter – the allowed absences are there to accommodate illness and emergency! Please note, I do take attendance.

Contesting a Grade: If you have questions concerning points received on one of your Research Essays, you are welcome to visit me during office hours. If, after our conversation, you wish to contest received points, you should submit a one-page single-spaced, typed request, within two weeks of the returned assignment. The request has to outline the reason why you think you deserve higher points. Reasons do not include your ideas about how you disliked the assignment and how “bad and/or unclear” you feel it was – if you didn’t like the assignment, you should have left the course, and if you were unclear about requirements, it was your responsibility to ask questions. Reasons also do not include a claim that you “need” a higher grade – as per GSWS policy, this is not an allowable appeal ground. An appeal is a learning exercise, in which you critically confront your own writing vis-à-vis posted instructions. It has to be specific and concrete: ‘I did this, I did not do that; where the professor claims I did not do this or that, I believe I did this here and there....’ This is NOT a hostile/adversarial process but an exploration in which I may miss something and you are welcome to point it out. Note, the marks may go up and down, but they rarely go down 😊.

Requests for appeals outside of the two-week window will not be considered.

There are no appeals on the small in-class and make-up writing or quiz.

Communication with the Professor: I strongly encourage and invite talking to each other and me - as opposed to writing. Thus, all students can bring their questions to class or office hours. Email is the most discouraged form of communicating and I take 48 hours (outside of weekends) to respond. Also, there are many emails to which I don’t respond individually – either your question is brilliant, in which case I’ll answer it via a class announcement, or in class; or the answer is in the syllabus, or on OWL, which you are strongly encouraged to read and visit often.

All grade related questions have to be asked in person, not email. If you send an email about a grade, I will assume you are sending me a heads-up about coming to discuss it in office hours.

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## **Weekly Topics & Readings (may be changed or reduced as the course progresses)**

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### **Week 1: Introduction to class and each other**

### **Week 2: Marriage as Universal Institution (or wealth and clans)**

- Stephanie Coontz, “Chapter 2: The Many Meanings of Marriage.” *Marriage, a History*
- Stephenie Coontz, “Chapter 3: The Invention of Marriage.” *Marriage, a History*

### **Week 3: Marriage & Religion (or gender and choice, or female agency)**

- Stephanie Coontz, “Chapter 8: Something Old Something New...” *Marriage, a History*
- Lynn Hunt, “Introduction.” *Women in Eighteen Century Europe*, **pages: 1-8**
- Jia Talentino, “We are not going back to the time before Roe....” *The New Yorker*, June 24, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/07/04/we-are-not-going-back-to-the-time-before-roe-we-are-going-somewhere-worse>
- Katha Polit, “The Women of American Heathland.” *The Nation*, August 31, 2023 <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/rural-decline-women-monica-potts/>

### **Week 4: Marriage & Modern Invention of Gender 1 (or revolution, capitalism and love)**

- Stephanie Coontz, “Chapter 9: From Yoke Mates to Soul Mates,” *Marriage, a History*.
- Sylvia Federici, “Lecture 2: ‘Body Politics in the Feminist Revolt,” *Beyond the Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, and Reclaiming the Body in the Contemporary Capitalism*.

### **Week 5: Marriage & Racism**

- Angela Davis. Chapters **1, 2, 3 and 11** from *Women Race and Class*
- Alexandra Murray, “Marriage – The Peculiar Institution: An Exploration of Marriage and The Women’s Rights Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.”

### **Week 6: Marriage & Love**

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* **pages 1-31**
- Leslie Jamieson, 2024. “The birth of my daughter, the death of my marriage.” *The New Yorker*, January 15: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/01/22/the-birth-of-my-daughter-the-death-of-my-marriage>
- In-class: *Loving*, dir. Jeff Nickols (2017)

### **Week 7: Reading Week – no class**

### **Week 8: Marriage & Modern Invention of Gender 2 (& Economics)**

- Kristen Ghodsee: “Capitalism Between the Sheets,” *Why women have better sex...*

- Kristen Ghodsee, “To each according to her needs,” *Why women have better sex...*
- Gus Wezerek and Kristen Ghodsee, “Women Unpaid Labor is worth \$10,900,000,000.” *The New York Time*, March 5, 2020:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/04/opinion/women-unpaid-labor.html>
- In-class: *Who’s Counting, Marilyn Warring on Sex , Lies and Global Economics*, dir. Terre Nash, 1995, National Film Board, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/whos\\_counting/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/whos_counting/)

### **Week 9: Marriage & Modern Invention of Gender 3 (*habitus & gender scripts*)**

- Terry O’Reily, “The Happy Homemaker: How Advertising Invented a Housewife.” *CBC, Under the Influence* **July 8 AND July 22, 2023 (TWO Episodes!!!!)**
- Arlie Hochschild, **Chapters 2, 3 AND 15** from *The Second Shift*. (chapters are short and 15 is the most important as it deals with husbands)
- Pat Mainari. 1970. “The Politics of Housework.”  
<https://www.niu.edu/~rfeurer/labor/Politics%20of%20Housework.pdf>

### **Week 10: Marriage & Wedding (& economics = Wedding Industrial Complex & Disney)**

- Chrys Ingraham, Chapters **1 AND 2** of *White Wedding: Romancing Heterosexuality Popular Culture*
- Carrie L. Cokely, “Someday My Prince Will Come: Disney and Heterosexual Imaginary and Animated Film.”

### **Week 11: Marriage & Desire (& sexuality & backlash)**

- Jane S. Schacter, 2009. *The Other Same-Sex Marriage Debate*, 84 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 379
- Marianna Valverde, "A New Entity in the History of Sexuality: A Respectable Couple."
- Sophie Elmhirst, 2024. “The Rise and Fall of the Trad Wife.” *The New Yorker*, March 29.

### **Week 12: Queering Marriage AND/OR The End of Marriage (polygamy, polyamory, abstention, divorce)**

- Chris Roulston, 2021. “Queer Parenting and the Challenge to Queer Theory.” *Special Issue of Studies in Canadian Literature: Queer Bodies/Corps Queer* (SCL) 46.1: 1-28.
- Andrew Solomon, “How Polyamorists and Polygamists are Challenging Family Norms.” *The New Yorker*, March 15, 2021: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/03/22/how-polyamorists-and-polygamists-are-challenging-family-norms>
- Jenifer Wilson, “How did Polyamory Become so Popular?” *The New Yorker*, December 25, 2023: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/01/01/american-poly-christopher-gleason-book-review-more-a-memoir-of-open-marriage-molly-roden-winter>

### **Week 13: Quiz**

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## Western University & Arts and Humanities' General Policies & Supports

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- Our work in this course is guided by the [University's Scholastic Discipline](#) document and all offences are taken seriously.
- Students with disabilities work with **Accessible Education (Student Experience)**, which provides **recommendations for accommodation** based on medical documentation or other testing. The office also handles all requests for accommodated exams – read the [policy](#) and register for services and exams [here](#).
  - NOTE! Sign up for tests and exams has to be done at least 10 days prior to the scheduled time of the exam! If a student changes their mind, and decides to write with the rest of the class, they must cancel the accommodated exam, or they will be charged \$25.00 fee.
- Requests for consideration on specific assignments - or **Absence Declarations** - should be submitted to the [Office of the Registrar](#). As per Senate [policy](#) student may file **ONE** such request per course and all consideration requests must be filed within 48 hours of the assignment. Note, that if assignments have built in flexibilities, or if they require medical documentation and the documentation is not provided, the requests for excused absence are denied. (Final exams ALWAYS require medical documentation and any other assignments that do, are listed above.)
- **Academic Advising** - as opposed to Accessible Education - offers support whenever students face issues affecting their studies, including guidance on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Academic Advising is where you present evidence of illness/emergency when making Absence Declarations (above). Academic Advising should be sought at student's home faculty (the contacts for all faculties is found [here](#)).
  - NOTE! NO consideration of an extension or absence is “approved” until it is approved by the professor in the course! Professor decides this based on class design, built-in accommodations and other relevant factors.
- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help students improve their learning skills. They offer presentations on time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.
- Students should review the [policy](#) for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test.

- Students who are in acute emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](mailto:MentalHealth@Western) to obtain help.
- If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support [here](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities required statement on Gender-based and sexual violence reads as follows: “Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [this](#) website. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).”

Please note: under the new Gender-based and Sexual Violence [policy](#) instructors are required to refer any and all incidents of sexual violence disclosed to them. The student will then be contacted by the GBSV Survivor Support Case Manager and can receive and decline assistance of that office.

- Additional student-run support services are offered by the [University Student Centre](#).