

Note: This outline is preliminary for 2026-2027 and is subject to change.

**Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies
GSWS 1020 001 and 002**

**The University of Western Ontario (Western University)
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.

Calendar Description:

A survey of selected topics in the study of gender structures and the status of women in historical and cross-cultural perspective. These will include consideration of social and psychological processes by which gender identity is established in the individual, its institutional manifestations, and its articulation with class and race structures.

No prerequisites

Longer Description:

This course is an introductory and interdisciplinary survey of the diverse and changing roles of gender, sex, and sexuality in contemporary society. Together we will tackle several questions over the course of the year, including:

- How does gender and women's studies contribute to our thinking of particular issues, institutional practices, and changing global dynamics?
- How do principles of feminist thought allow us to navigate controversial issues, including those related to tensions or exclusions in resistance movements?
- What are the possibilities – and responsibilities – of local and international feminist interventions for social justice?

In 2026-2027 we will explore, among other topics, the following: challenges to the sex and gender binary, including transgender, non-binary, and intersex identities; intersectionality and solidarity across gender, race, class, and ability; constructions of masculinities and femininities; the operation of state power on gender- sexual- and other minorities; colonialism and Indigenous resistances; and activism and protest, including through art. Above all, in this class, we will strive to make connections between our everyday lives, global structures, and agentic work for gender equality/equity/freedom.

Learning Objectives

This course will enable students to:

- Investigate the history of gender and feminism, and the issues facing gender and sexual minorities today, both locally and globally;
- explain how gender operates as a site of social and political control;
- demonstrate how the social construction of gender is related to sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, (dis)ability and age;
- analyze and deconstruct the representation of gender and sexual minorities in disciplines such as history, literature, science, and in popular culture and media;
- assess and evaluate key theoretical debates, differences and similarities in feminist thought and in the pursuit of social change.

In addition, the course will assist students in developing aptitude in:

- contributing to a learning community
- analytical/critical thinking;
- oral and written communication skills; and
- research.

Assignments and Evaluation

Course and Tutorial Engagement	10% + 10%
Community Engagement	5%
Art and Activism	10%
Midterm	15%
Research Check-in	5%
Paper	15%
Final Exam	30%

More details for assignments will be given in class and posted to the course website on OWL.

Course and Tutorial Engagement (On-going, 20% (10% per term))

Contributing to a learning community is a key outcome of this course. It is crucial to note that good course engagement is not the same as attendance alone. Students are expected to arrive to class with materials read and notes taken, ready to contribute to discussion and active learning activities. Ask questions about anything you are unsure of! You can contribute to this grade via in-class writing, reading quizzes, small group discussion, etc.

In addition, tutorial is a space for you to meet in smaller groups and discuss course concepts, practice skills ahead of assignment due dates, and connect with your peers about issues that matter to you. You should come each week with a question from readings or lecture to spark discussion. You will have the opportunity to contribute orally and in writing to earn your grade.

We reward effort and thoughtfulness over perfection: it's ok (ideal, even!) to ask questions about things you aren't sure about.

Tutorials run 6 times in term 1 and 5 times in term 2, dates indicated in the schedule below.

Academic Consideration: This course requires weekly participation across 12 weeks each term. You may miss one in-class activity/tutorial per term without penalty; you do not need to notify us, use a SAP, or notify your academic counsellor for this. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for Course and Tutorial Engagement will be denied.

Community Engagement (Term 1, event date of your choosing/Nov 6, 5%)

Choose one public event, protest, rally, or similar in London, the surrounding area, or your home community (for example, you might consider campus events for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation or spontaneous happenings on Concrete Beach or in Victoria Park for current social issues. Check in with the prof or your TA to see if your plan fits.) Attend the event and submit a reflection on the experience, including photos or screenshots of the event poster and a selfie from the day. Bring a friend with you! Guiding questions for the reflection will be provided on OWL.

Academic Consideration: This assignment is to be completed at an event time convenient for you between Sept-Nov. The written reflection is due Nov 6 and comes with a no-questions-asked 3-day grace period. This means that you can submit your written reflection up to Nov 9 without late marks. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied. Assignments will still be accepted past the extended deadlines with a late penalty of 2% per day.

Art and Activism (Nov 19-24, 10%)

Alone or with a partner and taking a course reading as a point of reference, create a piece of art that 'responds' to a particular issue you care about or an experience you have had moving through the world as a gendered being (keeping in mind the ways in which sexuality, race, class, dis/ability, age, religion, nationality, or.... intersect with gender). The format for this assignment is flexible and could include an infographic, a comic, a piece of art (e.g., painting, dance, poetry, music, etc), or another method of your choosing in consultation with your TA or the prof. 'Gallery Walk' presentations in tutorial will run on the following dates, with make-up dates for illness specified:

Dates for Section 002 (Thursday's lecture):

Art submission deadline: Nov 15

Gallery walk: in tutorial, Nov 19

Make-up gallery walk: in tutorial, Dec 3

Dates for Section 001 (Tuesday's lecture):

Art submission deadline: Nov 20
Gallery walk: in tutorial, Nov 24
Make-up gallery walk: in tutorial, Dec 8

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with a no-questions-asked 3-day grace period. This means that you can submit your art assignment up to Weds, Nov 18 (for Thursday's section) or Mon, Nov 23 (for Tuesday's section) without penalty. The gallery walk comes with a no-questions-asked make-up date for illness as specified above. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied. Art assignments will still be accepted past the extended deadlines with a late penalty of 2% per day.

Midterm (December Exam Period, 15%)

The midterm exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar: date to be announced. The midterm may consist of multiple choice-style questions, short answer questions, an essay, or a journal article reading analysis; specific format and sample questions will be distributed in advance. The mid-term will run in-person, 2 or 3 hours.

Academic Consideration: If you (need to) miss the Midterm, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so via https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup midterm). https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf. Make-up exams are scheduled in January.

Research Essay Check-In (Various dates Feb, 5%)

Ahead of the final research essay, visit your TA or the Professor during their office hours and discuss your plans. You should come with a research question, a course reading, and 3 properly formatted citations for appropriate academic sources to support your work. More details and guidance are provided in the assignment instructions on OWL.

TAs will hold additional office hours the weeks of Feb 1, 8, and 22. They may or may not be available during reading week. Hours will be posted by Jan 22. Sign-up with your TA in advance, starting Jan 22, to secure your preferred timeslot. The professor will be available for meetings where your course schedule conflicts with your TA's offerings.

Academic Consideration: This assignment can be completed on a variety of dates across the month of Feb. Book early to secure your preferred timeslot. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied. No meetings will be available past Feb 26.

Final Research Essay (March 12, 15%)

Write a research essay (5-6 pages) on a question of interest to you and the course (e.g., a topic with relevance to an intersectional approach of the field (broadly defined) of gender, sexuality, and women's studies). Then, conduct academic research that can help you explore or answer that question through an argumentative thesis.

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with a no-questions-asked 3-day grace period. This means that you can submit this assignment up to midnight on Monday, Mar. 15 without penalty. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this paper will be denied. Papers will still be accepted past the extended deadline with a late penalty of 2% per day.

Final Exam (April Exam Period, 30%)

The final exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar: date to be announced. The final exam may consist of multiple choice-style questions, short answer questions, an essay, or a journal article reading analysis; specific format and sample questions will be distributed in advance. The final exam will run in-person, 2 or 3 hours.

Academic Consideration: If you (need to) miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so via https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup midterm). https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf. Make-up exams are scheduled in May.

Class Readings

There is no textbook to purchase; all readings will be posted to the Course Readings portal: <https://ares.lib.uwo.ca/ares/>

Approx. 8 readings will need to be printed and brought in hard copy (not digital) to facilitate in-class activities. Please set aside some money for printing these (needed by Week 6). See library print services here:

- <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/printing/index.html>