

University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies
Fall 2026
(Preliminary syllabus – subject to changes/updates)

GSWS1024F: Introduction to Equity, Diversity and Human Rights©

We study, research and live on the traditional lands of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Attawandaron and Huron-Wendat peoples and we consider and complicate the meaning of doing this work on these lands, in our course.

Professor:	Dr. Kate Korycki
Email:	kate.korycki@uwo.ca
Class Meeting Time & Location:	Wednesday 1:30-4:30 & TBD
Office hours & Location:	TBD
Class Website:	TBD
Teaching Assistants:	TBD

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

Welcome to University! Welcome to Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies! Welcome to GSWS1024G!

This introductory course surveys history, theory and practice in the fields of equity, diversity, and human rights, and it does so when EACH of these concepts is under attack and changing. We thus locate our explorations in the broader conversation about the multiple meanings of social justice and their implication with enduring systems of social stratifications, like gender, race and class. To pursue this agenda, we read texts from anthropology, sociology, political theory, gender and feminist studies, and law. We also track select stories and news from the world. This 'conversation' between theory and reality, will help us understand each better: news will help us understand concepts, and concepts will help us grapple with complex social world.

In this class the students will learn the foundational concepts of social studies, like structure and agency, state and nation, universal and particular, individual and collective, forward looking/progressive or retrospective justice, as well as gender, race, class, culture and citizenship. They will also gain introductory knowledge of different visions of social justice. In terms of skills, students will practice summarizing and analyzing complex reading material, writing with clarity and precision, exploring ideas by reading, thinking, listening and sharing, doing research to answer analytically significant questions; managing time and grades. This course has an experiential learning component – we will actively practice treating our shared

time and space as a public space and will practice navigating it accordingly – details will be discussed in first class – do not miss it ☺.

Readings:

Students will find all the course readings (including links to videos) in the Course Reading tab on OWL. There is NO COST to access the readings. The final lineup and schedule will be included in the final version of the syllabus.

Assignments and Expectations:

In this course, curiosity about the material, working through problems, struggling to understand, transforming the ways in which we see the world, analyzing and grappling with complexity are encouraged, nurtured and rewarded. Further, the students are expected to have read and thought about the assigned weekly 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 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 imperative that s/he/they reads the assigned material and reviews notes taken by student volunteers, which will be posted on OWL (it is not appropriate to ask the professor or the TA to redo a lecture - it is of course fine to discuss the content of the course to seek clarification and deepen understanding).

Students' effort and performance will be assessed in the following way:

- Meetings with TAs – up to 5 points (ongoing)
- Participation (in-lecture talking and writing) – up to 15 points (ongoing)
- Midterm – up to 20 points (Oct 28)
- Research Paper – up to 30 points (Nov 20)
- Final Exam – 30 points (**University administration announces the date later in the fall**)

Meetings with TAs: you are strongly encouraged to talk to your TA during office hours. You will be assigned to the same TA for the duration of the semester during the first lecture and you will be able to see them during 8 weeks of the course – the schedule of weeks with office hours will be posted by your particular TA. You can get up to 5% of course grade for seeing your TA at least 5 times (1/visit). Note, you earn the points when you come to discuss course content, and/or preparation of papers and exams! The intention here is to support you in your assignments and in navigating your first year in university, and to reward search for understanding and engagement with course material. There is no make-up for not coming to see your TA.

Participation (in-lecture talking and writing): during the first class you will be put in a small group of up to 4 people (the groups will stay more or less the same through the semester to help you build connections). You will earn 0,5 points for attending each class (for the maximum of 5); the other 10 points will be awarded based on your in-class engagement. More specifically,

during 10 lectures – except 1 and 6 – you will be asked questions about required readings and you will talk about them in small groups. You will then compose individual short answers to your questions and the class will debrief them in general discussion. The aim is to reward attendance and active engagement with course material; it is also meant to help you hone your speaking and writing skills. There is no make-up for missed classes, simply a suggestion to attend class in the future. In-lecture writing is done by hand, with no computer assistance.

Midterm Exam will take place in class **6 (Oct 28)** and will cover all material from weeks 2-5 (lectures as well as required readings and news items). You will have 2 hours to write it. It will include ‘define and explain the significance’ type of questions and up to two short essays questions. No electronic devices will be allowed (unless you write with Accessibility Services). **You will have to provide medical documentation if you miss this test due to an emergency** - more on this is University policy below). If your consideration request is granted by the professor, you will write a make-up exam on an alternative date.

Research Paper will be up to 2500 words long. You will be required to use class materials AND do additional empirical research in order to answer one of three questions posted online. The paper will be due on OWL (via Turnitin) at 11:55 pm on **November 20**. It will be accepted with no questions asked and with no penalty until 11:55pm on **November 22**. Since the submission deadline has a built-in flexibility (or a 48-hours grace period), no further accommodation/extensions will be granted. NOTE, you must submit your paper via OWL; NO paper that has not gone through Turnitin will be accepted!

Final Exam will be announced in the fall and will take place in the Examination Period after the last day of class in December. It will be 2 hours long, in-person. It will cover ALL course material and will consist of up to 7 short essay answers. No electronic devices will be allowed (unless you write with Accessibility Services). **All final exams are automatically subject to medical documentation requirement for consideration of a make-up.** If you miss the exam, and if the consideration is granted, you will write the make-up final on an alternative date.

Course Structure and Policies:

Weekly class meets once per week between two-three hours. There are NO tutorials. Each class will have a lecture component and a small group discussion component. In most classes, we will also discuss important learning issues: ‘what is a thesis?’ ‘what is academic integrity?’ ‘how to write a good paper?’ ‘what is a university?’ ‘what is a normative, explanatory or descriptive paper?’ In each class, we will address what you find unclear in the readings. Come ready with questions, examples, comments. (If you need to be late, you do not need to inform anybody beforehand, but please be mindful that lecture will proceed and enter quietly.)

Our weekly classes are **not recorded**. Furthermore, no materials generated in this class may be recorded or copied without permission, or fed to AI, 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. Notes from note taking volunteers will also be posted to OWL. They cannot be posted before class, as they contain answers to weekly prompts. ☺)

Absenteeism: This course rewards active class participation and discourages absenteeism and inattentiveness (15 points of class grade rides on attendance). You do not need to advise me or your TA of absences or seek approval, but note that if you miss more than **two classes**, I will ask that you *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 provided to accommodate illness and emergency!

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

Assignments: deadlines are not suggestions; they are real. All class work is done in class; the research paper has a built-in submission flexibility, it thus has no further extensions; if you miss the midterm or the final exam, you need to seek Academic Consideration and you need to provide medical documentation. Please note, emergencies do happen, so plan for this possibility and do the work early. Not all emergencies can be accommodated!

Computer Use: No electronic devices of any kind are allowed in the class. All headsets and phones have to be turned off and placed in your bag. Presence of electronic devices will be treated the same way as during exams – it lowers your grade to 0 for that class! Up to three student volunteers will use laptops to take notes (they will submit their notes to the professor to be posted to OWL; the volunteers have to agree to turn off their internet). No electronic aids are allowed during class examinations (mid-term and final), unless you write them in Accessibility office.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is prohibited for generating ideas and writing student responses (this applies to ALL writing done for this class, including the writing done IN class). Use of Generative AI is permitted only to correct grammar and spelling. If AI use on prohibited grounds is suspected, the professor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. The professor will also ask the student to explain the full argument orally. An inability to produce requested materials and answer questions to professor's satisfaction, may result in a failed assignment.

Turnitin: the paper in this class will undergo textual similarity review by the commercial plagiarism detection software 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. As per above, no paper will be accepted unless submitted through OWL and routed to Turnitin (it is the students' responsibility to ensure this is done successfully).

Contesting a Grade: After you receive a grade, read your comments and wait **at least two days** before you write to anybody about it (TAs will be authorized to establish email embargos and

not respond to emails for 2 days before or after the assignments). If you have questions concerning received grade, please contact your TA and come to office hours to discuss it. If, after this conversation, you wish to contest received points, you may 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 TAs: Teaching Assistants help you navigate your path through the course; they are also here to grade your work. But, there are XX of them and XXX of you, so keep this in mind before emailing! If you have a question, check the syllabus, check the OWL site, come to office hours and hopefully you will have found your answer. If you do need to email, please note that TAs will specify their reply times and please respect them.

IMPORTANT: If you do email your TA, please cc the professor – I will not respond to the emails, but will want a documentation of your conversations. I may intervene, if I consider the tone of emails inappropriate. In your communications, please use formal address and professional tone and conventions – you are in professional relationship with senior colleagues whose expertise you seek and need to navigate the course.

Communication with the Professor: Please bring your questions to class or direct them to your Teaching Assistants, or come to see me in office hours. If you do email me, I will take up to 48 hours to respond outside of weekends and 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 the answer is in the syllabus, which you are **strongly** encouraged to read.

Note, ALL grade-related questions have to be asked in office hours - not email. In other words, if you email anybody about a specific grade, we will not respond but assume that you have sent us a heads-up and are coming to office hours to discuss.

Activities Calendar, Weekly Topics

1. **Sept 9:** Introduction to each other and the course (DO NOT MISS THIS!)
2. **Sept 16:** Individual & society, or agency & structure
3. **Sept 23:** Freedom and equality, or negative & positive rights
 - **Sept 30 – No class – Truth and Reconciliation Day**
4. **Oct 7:** (Human) Rights, a history
 - **Oct 14: No class – reading week**
5. **Oct 21 :** Global institutions & states, or universalism & particularism
 - **Oct 28: In-class midterm exam**
6. **Nov 4:** How are rights gained? Social movements and social change
7. **Nov 11:** Diversity & order & hierarchy (human? animal? tree? planet?)
8. **Nov 18:** Diversity and equality (race, gender, class)
 - **Paper Due on Nov 20**
9. **Nov 25:** Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) & Culture Wars
10. **Dec 2:** Justice in (post?-) neoliberal age
11. **Dec 9:** Review

Western University & Arts and Humanities' Policies & Supports (don't skip this!)

- Our work in this course is guided by the [University's Scholastic Discipline](#) document and all offences are taken seriously.
- Students are strongly encouraged to view the updated [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and select "Enroll in Course" to begin. The tutorial is designed to help students understand the meaning of academic integrity and develop the skills necessary to avoiding academic offences. The tutorial will take 60-90 minutes. Students who successfully complete this tutorial will earn a certificate. Topics include:

- What academic integrity means and why it matters
 - Strategies to avoid misconduct (e.g., citation, collaboration, time management)
 - Common scholastic offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, falsification)
 - Consequences of violations and how to uphold integrity in your work
- 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 - **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 other assignments that also require it, are listed above.)
 - **Academic Advising** - as opposed to Accessible Education or Office of the Registrar - 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 should be sought at student's home faculty (the contacts for all faculties is found [here](#)).
 - NOTE! No consideration of an extension or absence declaration is “approved” until it is approved by the professor in the course!
 - 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](#) 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.
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities required statement on Gender-based and sexual violence: “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.”
- Please note: under the new Gender-based and Sexual Violence [policy](#) instructors are required to refer any and all incidents of sexual violence disclosed in class. 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](#).