

Western University
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
GSWS 2283F Desiring Women
Fall 2026

PRELIMINARY COURSE OUTLINE
SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Auger

Email: lauger3@uwo.ca

No prerequisites

Land Acknowledgement

“Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are 3 local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.”

Department Course Description

This course looks at how female sexuality and subjectivity is experienced, understood, represented and theorized across a range of disciplines; these may include art, literature, media, psychology, anthropology, sociology, biology and medicine. It explores how female sexual desires, practices and identities are shaped in relation to individual, cultural and social meanings of female sexuality. No prerequisites. 3 hours, 0.5 course

Detailed Course Description

This course examines how female desire, sexuality, pleasure, and subjectivity are experienced, understood, represented, and theorized historically as well as in contemporary society. The course will explore how female sexual desires, experiences, and identities are shaped in relation to society and culture. Students will unpack women's desire in four units: the first unit will develop a theoretical framework for the course. The second unit will explore desire, sexuality, and subjectivity in history. The third unit will unpack female desire, sexuality, and subjectivity in contemporary popular culture. The final unit will explore desire, sexuality, and subjectivity in every-day life. Core course questions include: What is desire? What does our interdisciplinary approach reveal about the nature of desire, pleasure, sexuality, and

subjectivity? How do people experience desire and articulate their sexual selves? How have social perceptions of desire changed over time? How do axes of race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, culture, religion, location, and time impact women's desire? How are social understandings regarding power connected to desire? How do societies influence desires, sexualities, and identities? How do people challenge dominant discourses regarding desire?

Evaluation Breakdown

Participation	15% of final grade
In-Class Journal Reflections	20% of final grade
Romance Novel Study	25% of final grade
Final Exam	40% of final grade

Assessment Descriptions

Participation (15% of final grade ongoing)

This class involves student engagement in the learning process through active contributions to class discussions in-class. It is crucial to note that mere attendance is insufficient to warrant a good participation grade. Students will be evaluated based on the quality and regularity of their contributions to class discussions.

In-Class Journal Reflections (4x5%= 20% of final grade)

Students will write **four in-class responses over the course of the term**. These responses will be written on paper during our class time. You will be asked to respond to the following question: How does this week's topic further your understanding of desire as a concept and how does this topic resonate with you? Students will be evaluated based on their ability to adequately and thoughtfully answer the above questions, based on the extent to which they draw on course content, themes, and terms, and based on their level of analysis. **This is an open-book in-class activity. Students will have 30 minutes to complete the in-class journal reflection. Please contact the Professor if you have academic accommodations for course assessments.**

Romance Novel Study (25% of final grade) 6-7 pages in-length double spaced MLA Citation style submission period

Read a romance novel from the list below and write a paper analyzing this novel based on the following questions: What does your chosen romance novel teach its readers about desire, pleasure, sexuality, gender, and subjectivity? How may the book's message impact readers' understandings of and feelings towards desire, pleasure, sexuality, gender, and subjectivity? Your study should be organized and formatted as an essay and your thesis should be your answer to the above questions. You will be required to draw on **three course readings** to help support your argument and further your discussion. Proper MLA citation method and standard margins should be used in this assignment. Please use Times New Roman 12 font and double space.

You may choose from the following novels: Any novel from Jenny Han's To All The Boys I've Loved Before series (original series), Kody Keplinger's The Duff novel, Michelle L. Teichman's novel The Space Between, any novel in Elle Kennedy's Off Campus Series, and

Rachel Reid's novels *Heated Rivalry* or *the Long Game*.

Final Exam (40% of final grade)

The finale exam will take place in the December exam period and will consist of short answer questions and an essay questions.

Required Texts

All readings will be included in our weekly folders on our OWL site. Students will need to purchase **either the Paperback, Kindlebook, or audiobook version of their chosen Romance Novel for the Romance Novel Study Assignment.** Prices as of May 2026

Jenny Han

To All the Boys I've Loved Before **Amazon:** Paperback \$17.99 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$19.11

PS, I Still Love You **Amazon:** Paperback \$16.99 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$18.26

Always and Forever Lara Jean **Amazon:** Paperback \$14.99 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$18.26

Kody Keplinger

The Duff **Amazon:** Paperback \$11.00 Kindle Edition \$11.99 Audible Book \$21.40

Michelle L. Teichman

The Space Between **Amazon:** Paperback \$11.77 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$21.91

Elle Kennedy

The Deal **Amazon:** Paperback \$31.77 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$31.26

The Mistake **Amazon:** Paperback \$22.28 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$23.38

The Score **Amazon:** Paperback \$34.90 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$24.07

The Goal **Amazon:** Paperback \$34.31 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$16.75

The Legacy **Amazon:** Paperback \$35.85 Kindle Edition \$9.99 Audible Book \$15.25

Rachel Reid

Heated Rivalry **Amazon:** Paperback \$17.71 Kindle Edition \$11.99 Audible Book \$23.93

The Long Game **Amazon:** Paperback \$18.95 Kindle Edition \$11.99 Audible Book \$40.12