

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
GSWS9576: "Emancipation" and the Afterlife of Slavery

****Be advised that the assignment requirements are under review and may differ in the final version of this course outline****

This essay, research, and presentation-style graduate seminar examines what Rinaldo Walcott describes as "the long emancipation" signaling the unfulfilled promise of freedom despite the legal end to Black people's enslavement. It engages provocations and disruptions to challenge complacent readings of democratic liberalism – or what Charles Mills describes as "racial liberalism."¹ The seminar is informed by the structural violence of the transatlantic slave trade and its manifestations in what Saidiya Hartman signals as the afterlife of slavery - that is, skewed life chances for African descendants in the Black diaspora. We will examine contested ideas and arguments about freedom, rights, racial progress, and reparations, drawing on theoretical critiques from Black Studies. The seminar is divided into four interconnected modules listed below - in each we will think about how gender and other intersecting categories shaped slavery, freedom, law, liberalism and capitalism. The central goal of this course is to create a conversational space to grapple with ideas/readings in the Black intellectual tradition informed by feminist and queer critical traditions.

Course Objectives

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

- Understand the history and politics of emancipation in Black scholarship.
- Examine struggles for emancipation in Black life.
- Address the meaning(s) of the afterlife of slavery and its manifestations.
- Examine how (democratic) liberalism thwarts desire for Black freedom.
- Understand the ramifications of slavery through archival research.
- Address how Black scholars and activists re-imagine possibilities for rights and freedom beyond idealized liberal notions.

Learning Objectives

Students will develop their written, presentation, and research skills in these ways:

- Participating weekly in class discussions to become confident speakers.
- Organizing and delivering concise and thoughtful presentations based on readings.
- Through written assignments, students will sharpen their skills of exposition, thesis development and defense, critical writing, and consideration of multiple perspectives.
- Assessing and choosing appropriate materials for written projects.

Assignment Instructions and Evaluation: These assignment and evaluation tools are designed to fulfil the course and learning objectives outlined above:

¹ Mills, C.W. (2008). "Racial Liberalism." *PMLA*, 123(5): 1380-1397. (By which he means that, "conceptions of personhood and resulting schedules of rights, duties, and government responsibilities have all been racialized)."

(1) Attendance and participation – 10%

This involves attending each class and contributing questions to a seminar-style discussion.

(2) Weekly presentation/written analysis of one course reading – 30%; written paper (20%); presentation and discussion questions (10%)

Weekly class format is as follows: **1)** a general summary of the themes in the readings, and **2)** at least one question from each student for discussion. **3)** a presentation by one student based on a reading for the week.

This means that each person must sign up to lead a conversation based on a course reading. This is a two-step process. **First**, write a critical analysis of your chosen article in consideration of (guiding) questions such as: what are its core arguments and theories? How are the arguments supported? Do you have points of disagreements with the article? How does it dialogue with other course materials? (8-10 double-spaced pages). **Second**, present this paper to the class in oral form (i.e. read your paper and pose at least two important questions at the end for group discussion and reflection). The presentation should take 15-20 minutes followed by approximately 10 minutes of discussion. Please give me a hard copy of your paper at the start of the class. This is an analytical rather than descriptive assignment. Do not use the limited time to summarize the article.

(3) Archival-based research project and presentation – 30%

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce students to archival research methods and consider the ethical implications of studying slavery. Locate and analyse digitized archival materials (e.g., slave ship logs, runaway advertisements, court cases, or abolitionist pamphlets) related to slavery. Prepare a 10-minute presentation a) how you went about researching your topic, b) what you found, and c) what you learned. As well as a 3000-word report on how these documents illuminate the institutionalization of slavery and its lingering effects. Please include a reflection on the ethical considerations of working with such materials. More detailed explanation of the assignment will follow in conversation with librarians at Weldon who will assist students in the research process. Depending on how many students are enrolled, this could be undertaken as a group assignment.

(4) Final 15-page essay – 30%

You have two options for this assignment. The first is an engagement with a talk by Dr. Robin Kelley that we will watch/listen to on February 27th; and the second is a talk by Dr. Jovan Lewis that we will watch/listen to on March 6th. As you watch both talks, take careful note and jot down questions and ideas as they come to mind. These will help you to decide on a topic/thesis for the assignment. Here are the instructions:

Option 1

This 15-page essay-style paper is based on the talk that we will watch and listen to on February 27th by Dr. Robin Kelley who presents a comprehensive and thematic discussion about racial capitalism – which is the topic of focus for this week. As a group, we will listen to and discuss the talk. Our discussion will focus on the main ideas, themes, theories and concepts raised by the

speaker. Students are required to choose an idea, theme, or concept from the talk and develop this into a paper using additional course and external sources. These sources must include: at least one relevant course reading with substantive argumentative or theoretical frameworks that can be applied to an analysis of your topic; three additional (external, scholarly) peer-reviewed journal articles, two book chapters, and additional, online sources (magazine or news article) to support your arguments.

Option Two

The second option is a talk by Dr. Jovan Scott Lewis that interrogates the connections between Black repair, racial (global) capitalism, and organized scamming among a group of impoverished young men in Jamaica. The talk/book raises significant questions about anti-black violence in the form of capitalist exploitation and how Black people respond to this. In conversation with the readings for today, choose a theme from the talk for a critically written analysis. This will involve taking this theme, question, or idea from the talk and using additional sources to develop this into a 15-page essay.

COURSE POLICIES

(*Please note that minor adjustments or changes can be made to the course outline at any time*)

Here is the link to information about Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at Western:

https://grad.uwo.ca/about_us/policies_procedures_regulations/index.html

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

Support Services:

"Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help" (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>). Remember that there is a lot of help/support here at Western; I can help you find/access it if you need.

Please also consider the Post-Secondary Student Helpline as a resource: 1-866-925-5454, or, if in immediate crisis, 911 (but please note: police may be first responders?) or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

Graduate students should also know that, if they are employed at Western as GTAs, they are entitled to access services associated with Western's Employee Assistance Program ("Life Works").

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence Supports

If you have experienced, or are experiencing, GBSV: please know there is support at Western and in the wider London community (and very likely in your own home community). Western has prepared information about survivor support services at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html; included there specifically is info for ANOVA (formerly the Sexual Assault Centre of London) which has a 24-hour crisis & support line: 519 642-3000. To connect with the GBSV case manager at Western/set up an appointment, email support@uwo.ca.

If you're feeling a bit at sea, please feel welcome to reach out to me. I am not a trained counselor, but I can help you access resources. Please know you're not alone.

Accessible Education: The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies is "committed to accessible education as a matter of policy and as a social justice issue" (*Handbook for GSWS Instructors*) – and it's equally important to me that you feel both individually and structurally supported. Please feel welcome to let me know if my teaching style or other conditions related to the course are posing unanticipated challenges. From SGPS: "Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction" (<https://grad.uwo.ca/resources/regulations/6.html>). You may wish to connect with Accessible Education at 519-661-2147 or aew@uwo.ca and/or visit http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/academic_accomodation.html to find out the full range of services available.

You can also review the policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Submitting Assignments:

This course requires that you submit electronic copies of written work to Turnitin.com through the Owl Brightspace. (For this course: Here's the statement on use of Turnitin from the University:

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under licence 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 (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

(<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

Please note that **you cannot submit assignments in GSWS 9463B prepared for other courses or program milestones**. I'm happy to chat about appropriate overlap if you're unsure.

(Remote) Attendance in classes:

In graduate courses especially, students are expected to attend all classes (in-person or via zoom, as per course format under covid conditions), read assigned texts thoughtfully and critically, participate in discussions, present materials, ask questions, and be good listeners.

Please contact me if you miss more than one class. (This is not meant as surveillance but for us to stay connected; GSWS has a department policy such that, if more than two classes are missed, a student may be required to re-take the course.)

Scholastic 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.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2009/pg113.html>."

And re: Plagiarism, especially:

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

UWO Statement on Plagiarism: https://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/pdf/scholastic_offences.pdf

Owl and Zoom:

Use of Owl Brightspace is required for this course. All course information, including the schedule of readings and assignments, is available there; please go to owl.uwo.ca.

My office hours are posted on page 1 of this syllabus. I'll try to respond promptly to your email but substantive inquiries should be reserved for office hours rather than via email.

Prerequisites

For graduate students in home units outside GSWS: you will need to have permission from me and from your home unit Grad Chair (or equivalent) to take this course. Special permission cannot be grounds for appeal.

GRADING SCHEME

Assignments will be graded according to the scheme provided by Western University. I have copied this table below for reference:

Grade	Percentage
A+	90-100% (One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level)
A	80-89% (Superior work which is clearly above average)
B	70-79% (Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory)
C	60-69% (Competent work, meeting requirements)
D	50-59% (Fair work, minimally acceptable)
F	Below 50% or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty.

See also: [Code of Student Conduct](#)