

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES
GSWS 9310
SEX IN TRANSIT: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSNATIONAL SEXUALITIES
WINTER 2027

Instructor: Cornel Grey

Class Time:

Location:

Office:

Phone:

Email:

Office Hours:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate seminar examines sexuality as a transnational formation shaped through histories of empire, colonialism, racial capitalism, migration, medicine, kinship, media, and law. Across the term, we will consider how sexual and gendered categories emerge through uneven relations of power and how people build forms of intimacy, mobility, survival, and political imagination within and against those conditions.

Readings draw from feminist, queer, trans, Indigenous, Black, postcolonial, and decolonial scholarship. Together, they invite us to think across place and scale. Throughout the course, we will ask how concepts travel, how places are made meaningful, and how sexuality becomes a site through which global power is organized and contested. Students will develop research projects that connect theory to specific contexts, sources, and public debates. The course supports students in building interdisciplinary research skills while reflecting on the political and ethical stakes of studying sexuality transnationally.

Course Objectives

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

- Analyze sexuality and gender as transnational formations shaped by colonial histories, migration regimes, global markets, medical systems, militarism, and state power.
- Engage key debates in transnational feminist, queer, trans, Indigenous, Black, postcolonial, and decolonial studies.
- Locate theoretical concepts in specific geographic, political, cultural, and historical contexts without reducing places to illustrative case studies.
- Examine how intimacy, kinship, health, labour, mobility, and recognition are governed across uneven scales of power.
- Develop interdisciplinary research questions that connect course concepts to archives, policies, media objects, cultural texts, activist movements, or empirical sites.
- Translate scholarly debates for different audiences through seminar facilitation, public-facing writing, and independent research.

ASSESSMENTS

Seminar Facilitation (20%)

Students will lead one seminar discussion by identifying the central stakes of the week, placing readings in conversation, and generating focused questions for collective discussion.

Place and Concept Brief (15%)

Students will write a short brief that places one course concept in relation to a specific geographic, political, cultural, legal, archival, or media context.

Public-Facing Op-Ed (15%)

Students will translate a scholarly debate from the course into an accessible public-facing argument on a contemporary issue related to transnational sexuality, gender, intimacy, mobility, health, kinship, or political economy.

Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (20%)

Students will develop a proposal for their final research project, including a research question, scholarly context, and annotated bibliography.

Final Research Paper (30%)

Students will complete an original research paper that engages course concepts and develops an argument about a clearly defined object, archive, case study, policy, cultural text, movement, or empirical context.

WEEKLY TOPICS**WEEK 1, LOCATING SEXUALITY**

Introduces transnational sexuality studies through debates about place, scale, knowledge production, and the movement of feminist and queer concepts across uneven geopolitical contexts.

WEEK 2, DECOLONIAL DESIRES

Examines sexuality, desire, relation, and kinship through decolonial, Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and queer critiques of settler colonialism, tourism, and liberal sexual recognition.

WEEK 3, MAPPING METHODOLOGIES

Considers how scholars study sexuality transnationally, with attention to mapping, archives, ethnography, Caribbean methodologies, African sexualities research, and the ethics of locating knowledge.

WEEK 4, PLATFORMED DESIRES

Explores digital media, online intimacy, camming, virtual ethnography, and platform economies as sites where desire, labour, race, gender, and global markets are reorganized.

WEEK 5, BODIES AT THE BORDER

Focuses on migration, deportability, asylum, sexual citizenship, and border materiality, asking how bodies, documents, objects, and legal categories become entangled in regimes of movement and exclusion.

WEEK 6, PRIDE AND EMPIRE

Traces the politics of global LGBTQ rights, homonationalism, homocolonialism, and transnational solidarity, with attention to how “progress” and “homophobia” are mobilized across imperial and diasporic circuit.

READING WEEK

No class

WEEK 7, RAINBOW STATES

Examines pinkwashing, Pride infrastructures, settler colonialism, and state branding, asking how LGBTQ inclusion can become attached to national image-making, urban space, tourism, and geopolitical legitimacy.

WEEK 8, BIOSEXUAL CITIZENS

Investigates the governance of sexual health through biocitizenship, surveillance, HIV/AIDS, PrEP, risk, suspicion, and the uneven marketization of care across national and transnational contexts.

WEEK 9, INTIMATE MILITARISMS

Analyzes how sexuality becomes militarized through torture, nationalism, domestic security, demographic anxiety, war, and the production of racialized and gendered enemies.

WEEK 10, REPRODUCTIVE ROUTES

Examines abortion pills, surrogacy, fertility industries, and reproductive travel to understand how reproduction moves through global markets, legal contradictions, racial capitalism, and everyday forms of kinship.

WEEK 11, POLICING KINSHIP

Focuses on how states assess family legitimacy through migration law, adoption, birth tourism, marriage fraud discourse, and the recognition or rejection of intimate and reproductive ties.

WEEK 12, EROTIC ECONOMIES

Considers sex work, trafficking discourse, sexual humanitarianism, tourism, and transnational markets, with attention to how race, nation, labour, and mobility shape the political economy of desire.

WEEK 13, TRANS MOBILITIES

Concludes with trans migration, asylum, prisons, documentation, gender self-determination, national security, and survival, asking how trans life is constrained and remade across carceral and border regimes.