

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
GSWS 9550 Feminist Theory
Fall 2026

Instructor: Helen Fielding (Philosophy/Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies)

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Land Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Neutral peoples, on lands connected to several Treaties including Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, Treaty 21 Longwoods and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This place continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples who are recognized as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society.

Course Description:

In this course we orient our reading towards making sense of the worlds we live from feminist, decolonial, and queer theoretical perspectives. In these theories there is no theory/practice divide. Theories emerge out of lived experiences and evolve accordingly. Theories help us to make sense and help to guide us in our analyses. That's why they need to come out of our lived experiences. They also need to come from listening to the experiences of others. Theories that are top down impose perspectives on others. Instead, theories are negotiations, questions, and queries. We dialogue with theories about our research questions. We will engage with readings that help us to ask meaningful questions about our own research and the research of others, and that will guide us in our own thinking and practices. Our primary goal here is to understand the texts and to find the voices that speak most saliently to our own research.

Course Objectives

This course will enable students to:

- Articulate how feminist theories shape academic research
- Draw on feminist theories to further research projects
- Understand the ways in which feminist theory intersects with practice
- Recognize social and ethical issues in relation to feminist theory.
- Develop critical thinking and writing skills
- Make sense of their own research projects

Course Materials

- Copies of articles will be made available through Owl Brightspace or through Weldon library

Evaluation

Essay 1	20% (5-7 pages) due Monday, Oct. 19th
Final Essay	40% (10-12 pages) due, Friday, Dec. 18th
Class Presentation	10%
Participation	10%
Conference presentation	20% (Dec. 2)

Short essay: In this first short essay students will be expected to take up a theme or argument that runs through two or more readings and come to a conclusion about this theme. You are allowed some overlap between your presentation and your essay, but it's not required.

Final essay: The final essay may be connected to the first one as a continuation and deepening of the initial discussion; but it could also be on a new topic. Students are encouraged to apply course readings to an area of their own research.

Class Presentation: Over the semester, students will work in pairs to present for 30 minutes on the readings through the lens of a chosen theme for the week they sign up. The presentation will include involving classmates in discussion through whatever means deemed appropriate by the presenters. Presenters for the day will be expected to have read at least one of the "recommended readings".

Participation: Participation will be assessed in terms of having read the texts, participating appropriately in class and small group discussions. Class attendance is mandatory.

Conference Presentation: Students will prepare an essay proposal based on their chosen theme and present their research in progress in the Conference to be held the last class of the semester. Each student will present on their theme for 10 minutes and there will be 5 minutes for discussion of each paper. The goal will be to provide everyone with constructive and helpful feedback for their projects in process.

Statement on Academic 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.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers will be submitted through OWL Brightspace and subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking 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 of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com

<http://www.turnitin.com>.

Generative AI Usage: Generative AI may not be used to analyze or write your assignments for you. You may use AI tools for copyediting purposes and to locate sources – but you must read and analyze those sources yourself. If you choose to use AI, you are accountable for the integrity of the research. You must disclose how and when you used AI, and which tools you used, in the first footnote or endnote of your assignment.