

Note: This outline is preliminary for 2026-2027 and may change before our first meeting in September. Feel free to email Laura @ lcayen2@uwo.ca if you have any questions about the course.

**The University of Western Ontario
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

GSWS 9459: Professional Development

Details in this syllabus may change with sufficient notice to the class.

Course description

This course is intended to assist graduate students in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies with their professional development. The emphasis will be on developing practical skills for being successful as a graduate student, including developing pedagogical skills as a teaching assistant, literature reviews, grant writing, cv development, abstract writing and submission, knowledge mobilization, and the peer-review process for publishing in journals and edited collections. The course also highlights opportunities for alt-academic and non-academic career skill development.

Learning Objectives

This course will prepare students to:

- Develop professional skills in research, teaching, and service
- Translate their academic skills to non- and alt-academic career paths
- Contribute to a learning community and collaborative departmental culture
- Situate their experiences in the context of the intersecting roles and relationships of a (gendered, racialized and/or otherwise othered) student, teacher, researcher, disciplinary colleague, grant seeker, worker, and citizen.
- Assess and negotiate the competing demands and functions of the university as a neoliberal institution undergoing processes of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and decolonization

Assignments

Over the course of the term, you will demonstrate a record of performance in teaching, research, and service.*

Teaching and/or Non-Academic Paths

- AI policy for academic and/or non-academic contexts

- Course outline or guest lecture lesson plan
- Teaching philosophy OR Advocacy work plan (Kitchen table conversation starters OR Outline for lobbying an elected official)

Research

- Lit review (8-9 pages plus completed strategy worksheet and milestone meetings)
- Peer review process
- Knowledge mobilization product

Service

- Show up every week (not enough on its own to pass)
 - GSWS events, including our Speaker Series and others as shared throughout the term, are required
- Contribute to the ‘committee’ and learning community, including through weekly discussion of readings and in-class activities

All assignments are required and need to be submitted and considered satisfactory in order to earn a Pass in the course. Deadlines are embedded in the weekly schedule below.

*Visit [UWOFA's Collective Agreement](#) with Western University to see how Teaching, Research, and Service are considered in academic promotion and tenure: ‘Promotion, Tenure, and Continuing Status’, p. 281.

Class Structure

Most classes each week will start with an open call for contributions and participation: what are your reflections on the readings? How are you applying the lessons from academic texts to your plans for non-academic work? What workshops, speaker series, or community events have you attended on campus? How are you adapting guidelines for ‘success’ in a PhD program to your commitments to fight against the neoliberal, colonial, ableist, etc. institution of higher education? What’s going on with students in your tutorial or in your relationship with your supervisor that you’d like to talk out with your peers?

Following this call, we will move on to guided discussion of the texts, skill instruction, dedicated time to develop your written and oral deliverables for each week, and end with a class debrief about next steps. You are expected to come to class each week with all materials read, notes taken, ready to contribute to discussion (this means making an effort to initiate points for discussion, offering curious and constructive questions to the contributions of others, and listening respectfully and without distraction).

This is a required course and thus your attendance is required to complete in-class activities and contribute to a community of practice around professional development. If you will be absent, you should e-mail me as a courtesy to let me know and plan to complete and submit the week’s activity on your own time using support and guidance from the syllabus, readings, and a classmate. Class time is your time to complete the work in a collegial and supported

environment: make use of your peers and the professor to make what you are doing in your degree as relevant to your own needs as possible.

Readings

There is no textbook to purchase; texts and articles are available online via OWL and the Course Readings portal through Western Libraries.