

**The University of Western Ontario**  
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies  
GSWS9524A Feminist and Gender Perspectives on/in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts

September – December 2022

**Tuesdays** 10:30 am – 1:30 pm

**Instructor:** Erica S. Lawson

**Office Hours:** TBA

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**Location:** xxxxxxxx

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### **Course Description**

This graduate seminar surveys feminist scholarship on the organization of gender in war, peace, and post-conflict societies as these are debated across the disciplines and lived “on the ground” in everyday ways. We begin the course with an examination of how scholars and practitioners theorize the root causes of war. The seminars that follow are guided by the following exploratory questions: How did the Cold War change the ways in which conflict is fought? How does the concept of “state failure” limit our understandings of conflict? How does feminist scholarship address the social construction of gender in civil war, post-conflict and transitional justice projects? What are the problematics of representing women as “peacemakers” and how do such representations implicitly re/produce the idea of war as militarized masculinity? What is the role of the state and the international community in pursuing post-conflict, human rights and transitional justice goals? How do post-conflict societies undertake peacebuilding, what challenges do they face, and what questions do they grapple with because of limited resources and fragile infrastructure? What is the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in dealing with war crimes and grave human rights abuses? How do women fare in post-conflict societies? We will explore these questions largely, but not exclusively, through scholarship in feminist security studies, African Studies, and International Relations.

### **Course Objectives**

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

- Understand (in part) the organization of the “global order.”
- Discuss feminist debates about gender in civil war and post-conflict initiatives.
- Identify and compare multiple theoretical perspectives.
- Understand the systemic and material factors that shape how and why civil wars occur, how they impact people's lives, and how global/regional actors support war for profit.
- Apply an intersectional approach to gender in civil war and post-reconstruction activities.
- Address how communities organize to end war and their activities to sustain peace.

### **Learning Objectives**

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

- By participating weekly in class discussions, students will become more confident speakers.
- By 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.
- By developing the confidence to make clear arguments and ask informed questions.
- By assessing and choosing appropriate materials for written projects.

## Evaluation

**1. Attendance and Seminar Participation – 15%:** Please note that these are discussion (not lecture-based) seminars. This means that the success of each class depends on close attention to the readings and preparedness to share ideas, ask questions, offer critique, and analysis.

**2. Presentation and Paper - 35%:** Each student is expected to lead a thoughtful and critical presentation/discussion (not a summary), of a selected article for 15-20 minutes. In other words, you will be presenting an 8-10 page-double-spaced paper based on your assessment of the article. Broadly, the objectives of the presentation and discussion are to: **a)** address the article's conceptual framework and underlying assumptions; **b)** articulate a grasp of its core arguments and how they are developed, **c)** address how it dialogues with another reading or issue, and **d)** pose two discussion questions with which to engage the class for approximately 10-15 minutes. Give careful thought to your questions and frame them in ways that will encourage engagement with the topic. Please hand in a copy of your paper, along with your questions, at the beginning of the class.

**3. Final paper (with an optional 250-word abstract) - 50%:** Each student is required to write a final paper, 20-25 pages, doubled spaced, including references. Make substantive use of at least one reading from the course (not the one you choose for your presentation), but all other sources must be external. If you wish - (optional) - you may write an abstract to be submitted for instructor's review and comments – this is an opportunity to work out your ideas. The essay topic must address one aspect, or some combination of a contemporary issue, pertaining to the course. Due (Abstract): November 29<sup>th</sup> by 5pm AND Due (Final paper): December 20<sup>th</sup> by 5:00pm. Please send your abstract via email, as an attachment, so that I can respond quickly. The final paper must be submitted to me via email and uploaded to Turnitin.

From time to time, I may show relevant documentaries or clips that reflect and support themes in our readings; as well, we may have a few guest lectures who are experts in an issue related to the course.

### Here are some of the criteria that I use to assess written work:

- Appropriate grammar and sentence structure.
- Clear and precise use of language (i.e., clear definition and explanation of terms).
- Concise articulation of the issue or problem that the paper addresses.
- Coherent development of arguments.
- Arguments supported by clear evidence
- Clear referencing of materials (APA or Chicago Style – latest version).
- An examination and interpretation of arguments in ways that illuminate hidden assumptions, meanings, contradictions, or inconsistency (in other words, an analytic rather than an overly descriptive assessment of the topic/issue).

### GSWS Grading Criteria (see GSWS Handbook for details):

- A+ (90 to 100) – Excellent work
- A (80 and up) - Superior work
- B (70 to 79) Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- C (60 and up) – Competent work, meeting requirements
- D (50 to 59) – Fair work, minimally acceptable
- F (49 and down) – Assignment does not apply to course; basic requirements are unmet; plagiarism)

**\*\*The instructor reserves that right to make slight changes to the syllabus\*\***