

University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies,
Centre for Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction
Winter 2027
(Preliminary Syllabus – Subject to Change)

GSWS 9600B/4470G: Narratives, Archives, Memory of Gender & Race ©¹

We are located on the traditional land of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandron peoples and we complicate the meaning of this location in our course.

Instructor:	Dr. Kate Korycki
Email:	kate.korycki@uwo.ca
Class Meeting & Location:	Thursday: 10:30-1:30 & TBD
Office hours & Location:	TBD
Class Website:	TBD

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

This course rests on the Indigenous wisdom that storytelling and relationships are central to our collective and individual self-understandings. As such, the course investigates how stories of the past constitute, justify, and make invisible the present-day systems of stratification; and conversely, it explores how stories are used to mobilize and sustain challenges and resistance to those systems. Drawing on political and critical theory, collective memory, political sociology and transitional justice literatures, this course examines how the present shapes the stories we construct, and how the past, and stories we tell about the past, shape the present.

The course is concerned with the power of stories, that is, their content, narrative structures, and contexts under which they were produced and consumed. “The past is a foreign country,” Tony Judt famously said; but this does not mean that one cannot enter that country and see it, but the entry and the seeing are skills that need learning. We will attempt that learning here. We began with a notion that *all* communicative modalities need interpretation, as none of them are natural, but constructed or performed “facts.” We will therefore attempt to read deeply, and to interpret and analyze text – a text may be an interview, a film, a novel, a city, a statue, or a history book – for its embedded meanings. We will also attempt to render stories of others in ways that remain true to the original, that is, we will practice conscious writing. Finally, this course has an experiential learning component – we will actively practice treating our shared time and space as a public space and will practice navigating it accordingly – details will be discussed in first class.

¹ This is a cross-listed course: it gathers graduate students (GSWS9600) and undergraduate students (GSWS4770). In OWL it can only be listed under one course number: GSWS9600.

Required Readings:

Students will need to purchase or borrow the following books (prices listed are from Amazon, but students are encouraged to borrow the texts, or buy them used and not on Amazon): (a) a memoir by Annie Ernaux, *Shame* (\$12.03); (b) Massey Lectures by Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (\$19.95; the lectures are available as audio, on line, free); and (c) a novel by Yishai Sarid, *The Memory Monster* (\$23.50).

All other readings will be available free of charge, online, through OWL Course Reading link.

Assignments & Expectations:

In this *seminar*, we read, we write, and we talk. There is a lot of reading and writing, and a lot of the latter is done in class. Curiosity about the material, analyzing & working through problems, transforming the ways in which we see the word, and grappling with complexity are encouraged & nurtured. Furthermore, we follow a model of active & participatory learning. This means that students read and think about the assigned readings before class; & they come to class ready to write, share & clarify their ideas. Also, the classes build on one another, so if a student misses a class, it is important that s/he/they reads the assigned material and reviews notes from volunteer note takers.

In terms of assignments: 40 points are connected with readings (20 points for in-class writing and 20 points for in-class discussion); 50 points are earned through research & writing. Readings-related work is done as the classes progress and ends on April 1. Research writing is delivered through options specified below and delivered before April 4. (Final research paper submission requires a medical certificate if it is to be extended – see more below). Additional 10 points are earned for a final presentation of research done on April 1.

In-class writing refers to 10 short written submissions related to course readings. Each is ~500 words. They are done before, in, or after class – schedule will be listed with readings in the final syllabus. They may involve descriptions, summaries, reflections, analysis. Always, they will rely and refer to readings done for class. With the exception of seminar 1 and 12, students earn 2 points for class writing. If you miss a class and wish to get the writing points, you may submit the writing by Monday of the week following the missed class (Monday 8pm); if you do not submit the writing, you forfeit the points. Most submissions will be discussed in class, some will be assessed by peers, 4 will receive personalized comments from professor.

In-class discussion refers to weekly exploration of readings done together. Each week's contribution earns up to 2 points. They are awarded based on quantity, quality of remarks but also a spirit of discovery and listening to others. There are no points for not talking in class, and there is no make-up for the discussion points if someone misses a class.

Students research writing depends on their degree:

1. PhD students will write up to 6,000 words-long paper related to the themes of the course, which may be used for candidacy and/or publication.
2. MA students write up to 4,500 words-long paper related to the themes of the course, which may be used for their IRP/Thesis.
3. BA students will write up to 3,000 words-long paper related to the themes of course.

Students are encouraged to submit their work for review up to three times. You decide when you do this, but note: a) no version may be submitted before the previous one is returned by me, b) I need one week (7 days) to comment on submitted papers (there is no exception to this rule), and c) no work will be accepted after April 4. ALL paper topics *must* be cleared by me by February 4 – this means ALL students have to write up to 500 words outlying their research question and how they plan to answer it. If your paper topic and plan is approved, you may submit draft one and get detailed comments, or you may submit final draft only for summative comments and grade.

If the students decide – during our the first seminar – to set common deadlines for each version of the paper, they will be posted in the final syllabus.

Instructions on the shape of the writing assignment and each stage will be posted on OWL and will be discussed in detail in class 3 of the course. I am of course happy to talk in office hours as you go along. Please note, there has never been a paper that has not been improved by conversation with me! ☺

Course Structure and Policies:

Weekly class meeting happen on Thursday from 10:30-1:30.

In most classes, we will discuss important learning issues: ‘what is a university,’ ‘what is a thesis,’ ‘what is academic integrity,’ ‘what is causality,’ ‘how do we uncover meaning,’ ‘how to formulate a ‘why’ question,’ ‘how do we write precisely.’ In each class, we will address what you find unclear in the readings. Come ready with questions.

In each class, we will test your comprehension of the readings, and we will practice writing. Low-stakes writing may happen more than once in a class. The point is to give you time to prepare your answers before you share them with the group and also to sharpen your thinking and understanding, and to practice writing with clarity. Each class will also involve small-group and/or whole class conversations. You are welcome to bring notes of the readings to class and quiz.

In each class, there will be a very short lecture, clarifying the readings, and/or a movie.

Our weekly classes are not recorded & posted to OWL. Furthermore, no materials generated in this class may be recorded or copied without permission, fed to AI, or posted to commercial sites. They may be used, with attribution, in students' learning and writing. Weekly PowerPoint will be posted on OWL on Tuesday following the class – this is to allow all those to miss the class to submit their writing.

Absenteeism: the course structure discourages it as 50% of your grade is earned in-class! You do not need to advise me of absences or seek my approval, but note that if you miss more than two classes, I ask that you speak with me to decide the path forward. (As per GSWS policy, more than two absences put you at risk of having to retake the course. Please note, that the two allowed absences are NOT in addition to any sickness and emergencies you may encounter – the allowed absences are there to accommodate illness and emergency!)

Discussion etiquette: to ensure best learning, I look for a) depth of engagement with readings b) listening and respect for the views of others, c) a spirit of discovery, and finally d) a commitment to collective learning – this requires not only affirmation but also good, honest, and respectful disagreements. To paraphrase bell hooks on love, in this course, we look for commitment to 'making each other grow,' not staying the same; and we listen to Sarah Schulman who counsels, that 'conflict is not abuse.'

There is no computer/phone use in class (unless a specific assignment requires it)! Please bring your notes and texts printed or written. Using technology WILL affect participation grade. There is a growing body of work that shows how our continued attachment to screens harms our health, learning, capacity to communicate and connect, and how it undermines the livability of the planet. We will practice being present in the class with no screens (2 students who are willing to share their notes with all others will be allowed to use a laptop on a condition that their internet is turned off. If you want to be a note taking volunteer, please see me after class 1).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a profound waste of time and a direct participation in the destruction of planetary life. It is a waste of *your* time, because if you do not learn to read, research, analyze, and write well, what is the point of being in university? A degree is not worth the paper it is printed on, if not accompanied by knowledge and skills you are here to acquire. In other words, if you spend 4 years + in University training a bot how to do the job you hope to get on exit, the bot will get your job! Secondly, your use of AI is waste of *my* time. I want to read your thoughts and teach you; teaching a bot destroys my soul. Thirdly and in a different vein, 100 of words written by chatdgp requires 0,5 liters of water to produce – think about this for a minute (water is not an infinite resource and it is necessary for life to go on)!

All this to say: if you use AI, you have to disclose the extent to which you did this (you have to leave the prompts in the text!). If you do not, you are presenting work that you did not write as yours (this is both a lie and an academic offence). I will NOT penalize the use of AI if disclosed but I will also offer fewer comments. If I suspect undisclosed use of AI, I will ask for your research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. I may also ask you to reproduce your entire argument orally. An inability to produce requested materials and/or answer questions to *my* satisfaction, may result in a failed assignment. Please

note, I will have a lot of samples of your writing from each week in class, so if your prose changes dramatically in your paper, I will have good grounds to suspect AI use.

Communication with the professor: I warmly encourage and invite talking to each other and me - as opposed to writing. All students can bring their questions to class or office hours. As to emails: I may take up to 48 hours to respond to emails, outside of weekends. Please note, there are many emails to which I don't respond individually – either your question is brilliant, in which case I'll answer via a class announcement, or in class; or the answer is in the syllabus/OWL, which you are strongly encouraged to read 😊

Contesting a Grade: After you receive a grade, read your comments and wait at least two days before you write to anybody about it (there will be a 48 email embargo after assignments are returned). If you have questions concerning received grade, please come to discuss it in office hours. If, after this conversation, you wish to contest received grades, you should submit a one-page single-spaced, typed request, within two weeks of the returned assignment. The request has to outline the reason why you think you deserve higher points (“needing” a higher grade is NEVER an acceptable reason for grade appeal - as per departmental policy! Lack of clarity is also not grounds of appeal – if you are unsure, ask questions). Specific reference should be made to the instructions and guidelines for that assignment. The request should include the graded assignment. Students should note that points could go up or down as a result of an appeal. Requests for appeals outside of the two-week window will not be considered.

There are no appeals on the small in-class writing or class discussions, but students are encouraged to ask me for their cumulative grade on an ongoing basis.

Note, ALL grade-related questions have to be asked in office hours - not email. In other words, if you email about a specific grade, I will not respond but assume that you have sent me a heads-up and are coming to office hours to discuss.

Weekly Topics

- 1. Jan 7 – Introductions:** to course & each other (do not skip this class)
- 2. Jan 14 – Framework:** category, identity, social construction
- 3. Jan 21 – Framework:** category, identity, boundary, binary, relationality
- 4. Jan 28 – Identity as a verb**
- 5. Feb 4 – Collective memory**

Feb 5 – Paper 1 DUE

- 6. Feb 11 – Narratives and their shapes I**

Feb 18 – NO CLASS (Reading Week)

7. Feb 25 – Narratives and their shapes II
8. Mar 4 – Narrated “I” and structures
9. Mar 11 – Narrated “we” and structures
10. Mar 18 – Monument, Museum, City as texts
11. Mar 25 – Narrated “others”
12. Apr 1 – Research Presentations

Western University & Arts and Humanities’ General Policies

- Our work in this course is guided by the [University’s Scholastic Discipline](#) document and all offences are taken seriously.
- Students with disabilities work with **Accessible Education (Student Experience)**, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or other testing.
- Requests for consideration on specific assignments - or **Absence Declarations** - should be submitted to the [Office of the Registrar](#). As per Senate [policy](#) undergraduate student may file **ONE** such request per course and all consideration requests must be filed within 48 hours of the assignment. Note, that if assignments have built in flexibilities or if they require medical documentation and the documentation is not provided, the requests for excused absence are denied. DO NOT use your absence declaration on missed class and note that the paper in this class has both flexibility AND requires a medical certification for delay in final submission.
- **Academic Advising** - as opposed to Accessible Education or Office of the Registrar - offers support whenever students face issues affecting their studies, including guidance on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Academic Advising should be sought at student’s home faculty (the contacts for all faculties is found [here](#)).
 - NOTE! NO consideration of an extension or absence declaration is “approved” until it is approved by the professor in the course!
- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help students improve their learning skills. They offer presentations on time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

- Students should review the [policy](#) for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test.
- Students who are in acute emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) to obtain help.
- If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support [here](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities required statement on Gender-based and sexual violence: “Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [this](#) website. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](#).”

Please note: under the new Gender-based and Sexual Violence [policy](#) instructors are required to refer any and all incidents of sexual violence disclosed in class. The student will then be contacted by the GBSV Survivor Support Case Manager and can receive and decline assistance of that office.

- Additional student-run support services are offered by the [University Student Centre](#).