

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

GSWS 2265G: Youth Activism

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Johnston

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Office: Lawson Hall 3249

Office Hours: T & Th 12:00-1:00pm, or by Appt

Class Location: AHB-1B04

Class Time: Wed: 10:30am-1:30pm

Prerequisite(s): GSWS 1020E, or 1.0 course from GSWS 1021F/G, GSWS 1022F/G, GSWS 1023F/G, GSWS 1024F/G.

*Email is the best way to contact me. Please allow at least 24-48 hours for me to respond to you.

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London.

Course Description

There has been considerable discussion about the recent level of youth civic and political engagement, as scholars have spent the last two decades debating how youth engage, how much they engage, and how that engagement has changed. In this course, we will highlight how these areas of work overlap, particularly the connections among gender, youth activism, and non-traditional political participation. Understanding the state of youth activism and the factors that encourage youth participation is particularly important because, as we will discuss throughout the semester, youth have played a crucial role in many of the most effective social movements going back to the 1960s, and the youth of today will shape what politics looks like for the next generation. The course is divided into three sections. First, we will examine the foundational features of youth activism and political participation writ large. Second, we will investigate current youth activism in action by looking at local, national, and global movements such as Black Lives Matter, March for Our Lives, the Occupy Movement, and Fridays for Future. And, finally, by using the groundwork established in the first two-thirds of the course, we will explore how youth are changing the content and shape of political engagement today.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to help students:

- Understand how young people participate in politics and social movements, as well as how social movements operate more broadly.
- Explore the history of youth political activism, particularly in North America, and the challenges facing youth activists in the twenty-first century.
- Develop a working knowledge of contemporary youth activist movements at the local, national, and global levels.

- To better understand the interconnectedness of gender, race, and class in youth movements related to policing, federal laws and policies, climate change, among other areas of engagement.
- Identify how youth are changing political engagement in the digital age.

Evaluation

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|----------------------------------|----------------|
| • Seminar Presentation (15 mins) | 20% |
| • Seminar Reflection | 5% |
| • Response Papers (3 Total) | 30% (10% Each) |
| • Participation | 15% |
| • Final Research Essay | 30% |

Seminar Presentation (15 mins) (20%)

You will deliver a 15-minute seminar presentation on a youth activist or youth-led activist organization of your choosing, followed by leading a 5-10-minute class discussion on your topic. Some example subjects include Autumn Peltier, Amanda Gorman, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez and the Earth Guardians, YouthCAN, the Black Youth Project, among several others. Only one person may cover a particular activist or organization, so I encourage you to sign up to present once you have your subject in mind! While you must examine and analyze your source material for the class, the style and nature of your presentation will be up to you (i.e., an interactive lecture, a panel discussion, or a multimedia presentation). Make sure your presentation contextualizes your subject for the class (e.g., the person's or organization's historical background), properly cites any relevant research, and forwards a specific thesis.

Presentation Dates: January 19th – March 9th

Seminar Reflection (5%)

During the week following your seminar presentation, you will submit a 1-2 page self-reflection that:

- Briefly describes how you developed your presentation.
- Assesses how your presentation unfolded. Consider examining the layers of your presentation such as what worked, what surprised you, what was challenging, and how you sought to overcome such challenges.

Due: One Week Post-Seminar

Response Papers (30%)

Over the semester, you will write three (3-4 pages, double-spaced) responses to one of the weekly readings, though only one response paper may be submitted per week. These responses must be submitted on the day your selected readings are covered in class. While the deadlines for these responses are generally up to you, at least two responses must be completed before reading week, while the third response must be submitted by March 23rd. These responses should not be summaries of course readings; rather, you should respond to a text's ideas and argument(s), thinking through them and how they connect to the larger themes of the course. You may also use these responses as an opportunity to develop your own ideas for the final research essay.

Due: Two Responses by February 16th, 2022; Final Response by March 16th, 2022

Participation (15%)

I expect that all students will complete assigned course readings/viewings and will be prepared to discuss those readings on the appropriate day. Class discussion will comprise a large part of our course, and while I recognize that not all students are comfortable speaking in class, I do expect that all students will be engaged and actively listening. Weekly prompts will be posted in the discussion forums on OWL, allowing for additional opportunities to think through and discuss the weekly readings with your peers. Please get in touch with me at any point if you feel the nature of this course is making your participation difficult.

In the event we are online and meeting via Zoom, I will assign each student to be a co-host on a rotating weekly basis. As co-host, the student will assist with any technical issues that arise, monitor the chat and periodically inform the instructor of any questions/comments, and summarize any discussion that takes place in the chat for the other students. Please note: the chat should only be used for class purposes. I will notify you as to when you are the co-host before the second-class meeting.

Final Argumentative Research Essay (30%)

You will write an 8–10-page research essay that examines a topic youth activists are addressing today. The essay must contain a clear and arguable thesis and incorporate a least five scholarly sources. Each of you must clear your topic with me no later than **Wednesday, March 16th, 2022**.
Due: Wednesday, March 30th, 2022

Required Course Texts

- 1) The Founders of March for Our Live. *Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement*. RAZORBILL, 2018.
- 2) Henry Jenkins, Sangita Shresthova, Liana Gamber-Thompson, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, and Arely Zimmerman. *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*. New York University Press, 2016. (Available Free Online via NYU Press' [Open Square](#))
- 3) Additional readings to be posted on OWL (in PDF form or links to online articles)

GSWS 2265G: General Course Guidelines & Policies

Students are expected to be both physically and mentally present in class; participation is integral to the learning experience. Use of electronic devices in-class should be for academic purposes only.

A Note on Sensitive Content: The content and discussions in this course will necessarily engage with some topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will do my best to flag especially graphic or intense content as a warning prior to any viewing or discussion, and to moderate exchanges of ideas in the spirit of constructive dialogue and empathy.

Course Delivery: Please expect for this course to be delivered in person for the upcoming term. However, there is a possibility that this might change to a hybrid or fully online setup depending on the developments around the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a change will be announced by the department / university closer to the beginning of term.

Submitting Assignments: All assignments are due in-class on the date stated on the class schedule. You are expected to submit both a hard copy of the assignment as well as an electronic version through Turnitin via OWL. All papers should be submitted as .doc or .dox files.

Late Assignments: It is your responsibility to submit assignments on time. Any assignment handed in after the due date will receive a 2% grade deduction for each day late following the due date. This late policy will apply to all assignments for which no application for extension has been made. Late assignments will not be accepted two weeks past the due date. Should you need an extension for any reason, please contact me by email at least 48 hours prior to the day an assignment is due to discuss an extension. If you have a medical or personal emergency notify me as soon as possible to request an extension. In-class assignments cannot be made up unless the absence is excused.

Attendance Policy: The very nature of this course requires that you attend regularly to do well. You are expected to come prepared to class each week. It is crucial to note that mere attendance is insufficient to warrant a good participation grade. Students will be evaluated based on the quality and regularity of their contributions to class discussions.

Owl: The use of OWL is necessary for successful completion of this course. This includes accessing readings as stipulated in the course outline, downloading instructions and guidelines for assignments, and submitting assignments OWL. All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website.

Communicating with Instructor: Email is the best way to communicate with me. It may take up to 24 hours for me to respond to you during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. Standard email etiquette is expected. *Note: No emails explaining absences please.* If your absence merits reasonable accommodation (for example, for observing religious obligations, representing the University in an official capacity, medical emergencies, compassionate grounds, etc.), please get in touch with your academic counsellor.

Accommodation, Absenteeism, and Deadlines: Students seeking academic accommodation for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. The same is true for accommodation requests pertaining to known disabilities or medical conditions. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Please find UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness here:

https://www.uwo.ca/arts/counselling/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Classroom Behaviour: Everyone is expected to behave in a manner befitting of adults in a social and intellectual community setting. As such, everyone is expected to familiarize themselves with Western's Code of Conduct, <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>, especially section E (Examples of Prohibited Student Conduct). Occasionally, topics and information of a sensitive nature may crop up in class, so it's important for everyone to adhere to respectful and sensitive behaviour, and to provide comments and opinions in the context of discourse that is both constructive (not pedantic or inflammatory) and self-reflexive (critical of one's assumptions).

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/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Final Exam: This course does not have a final exam; persistent absenteeism may be rendered grounds for failure in the course, in accordance with the policy of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of a text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate, and by proper referencing such as footnotes and citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses plagiarism checking software. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Turnitin: All required papers may be 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 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 licencing agreement currently between the Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>.)” (<https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/TurnItIn.html>)

Note for Students with Disabilities: Please contact gswsugchair@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you. You may also contact aew@uwo.ca to find out the full range of services available to you.

Missed Assignments and Academic Accommodation: Academic Accommodation must be requested within 28 days of the missed assignment.

Western Academic Policies and Statements

Masking Guidelines: Students will be expected to wear triple layer, non-medical, paper masks at all times in the classroom as per University policy and public health directives. Students who are unable to wear a mask must seek formal accommodation through Western Accessible Education, and present medical documentation. Students are not permitted to eat or drink while in class to ensure masks stay in place. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks. Students unwilling to wear a mask as stipulated by Western policy and public health directives will be referred to the Dean, and such actions will be considered a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Course Absences due to Daily COVID Screening Questionnaire: Missed assessments (e.g., presentations, essays, quizzes, tests, midterms, etc.) require formal academic considerations (typically self-reported absences and/or academic counselling). Methods for dealing with missed work and course content are at the discretion of the instructor(s). Students should be aware that

some learning outcomes cannot be easily made up and may need to be completed in a subsequent year. Your instructor will provide you with further information as to how this applies within this course. Students who demonstrate a pattern of routinely missing coursework due to self-reported COVID symptoms, and therefore do not demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course, will not receive credit for the course.

Contingency Plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% Online Learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor. In the event that online learning is required, a stable internet connection with working microphone and webcam will be required. As has been the case in the past, the decision to pivot to online learning will be made by Western, and not individual instructors or departments (excepting temporary online instruction in the event of instructor illness).

Absence from Course Commitments

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences](#)

In the interest of the health and safety of students and health care providers, you are no longer required to seek a medical note for absences this term. If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness you should use the [Illness Reporting Tool](#). This tool takes the place of the need to submit a medical note and the Self-Reported Absence System formally used by undergraduate students.

You are required to self-report every day that you are ill and unable to complete course commitments. Details about when you should submit missed work, the format of the missed work can be found in the Section 7. Evaluation above. Students should communicate promptly with their instructor and use this tool with integrity.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

The policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be viewed [here](#).

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Academic Offenses

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed [here](#) to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

Accessibility Statement

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered **e-mail account** provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

Turnitin and other similarity review software

All assignments will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. Students will be able to view their results before the final submission. 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 Western University and [Turnitin.com](#).

Arts and Humanities Academic Policies and Statements

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

Rounding of Marks Statement

Across programs, we strive to maintain high standards that reflect the effort that both students and faculty put into the teaching and learning experience during this course. All students will be treated equally and evaluated based only on their actual achievement. **Final grades** on this course, irrespective of the number of decimal places used in marking individual assignments and tests, will be calculated to one decimal place and rounded to the nearest integer, e.g., 74.4 becomes 74, and 74.5 becomes 75. Marks WILL NOT be bumped to the next grade or GPA, e.g. a 79 will NOT be bumped up to an 80, an 84 WILL NOT be bumped up to an 85, etc. The mark attained is the mark you achieved, and the mark assigned; requests for mark “bumping” will be denied.

Support Services

The following links provide information about support services at Western University.

[Appeal Procedures](#)

[Office of the Registrar](#)

[Academic Support & Engagement](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

Course Timetable

Unit I: The Foundations of Youth Activism and Political Participation

Week 1: January 5, 2022

Class introductions, review syllabus, and definitions: adolescence & youth activism.

Week Two: January 12, 2022

Historicizing Adolescence & Youth Political Activism

Read: Nancy Lesko, "Cold War Containments: Freedom, Youth, and Identity in the 1950s" (OWL)

Holly V. Scott, "Introduction: The Youth Frame" (OWL)

Jessica Taft, "Introduction: Growing Up and Rising Up (OWL)

Carol Hanisch. "The personal is political." (1969)

<http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>

Week Three: January 19, 2022

Youth Activism Today

Read: Jennifer Earl, Thomas V. Maher, and Thomas Elliott. "Youth, Activism, and Social Movements." *Sociology Compass* 11.4 (2017). (OWL)

Ruth Milkman. 2017. "A New Political Generation: Millennials and the Post-2008 Wave of Protest." *American Sociological Review* 82.1: 1-31.

Henry A. Giroux. "Neoliberal Violence against Youth in the Age of Orwellian Nightmares," *Young People and the Politics of Outrage and Hope*, edited by Peter Kelly, Brill, 2019. (OWL)

Week Four: January 26, 2022

Intersectional Youth

Read: Alcides Velasquez and Robert LaRose. "Youth Collective Activism through Social Media: The Role of Collective Efficacy." *New Media & Society* vol. 17, no.6, 2015, pp. 899-918. (OWL)

Veronica Terriquez. "Intersectional Mobilization, Social Movement Spillover, and Queer Youth Leadership in the Immigrant Rights Movement." *Social Problems*, vol. 62, no.3, 2015, pp. 343-362. (OWL)

Elliott, Thomas, et al. "Recruiting Inclusiveness: Intersectionality, Social Movements, and Youth Online." *Non-State Violent Actors and Social Movement Organizations*, vol. 41, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017, pp. 279-311. (OWL)

Week Five: February 2, 2022

Obstacles in Youth Politics

Read: Clay, Kevin L. and David C. Turner III. "'Maybe You Should Try It This Way Instead': Youth Activism Amid Managerialist Subterfuge," *American Educational Research Journal* 58.2 (2021). (OWL)

Jessica Taft, "Hopeful, Harmless, and Heroic Figuring the Girl Activist as Global Savior" (OWL)

Malcolm Gladwell. "Small change." *The New Yorker* 4.2010 (2010): 42-49.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell>

Unit II: Youth Activism in Action**Week Six: February 9, 2022****Youth & The Occupy Movement**

Read: Sarah Gaby and Neal Caren. 2016. "The Rise of Inequality: How Social Movements Shape Discursive Fields." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 21.4: 413-429. (OWL)

Ruth Milkman. "Millennial Movements: Occupy Wall Street and the Dreamers." *Dissent*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2014, pp. 55-59. (OWL)

Reimer, Mavis. "'It's the Kids Who Made This Happen': The Occupy Movement as Youth Movement." *Jeunesse, Young People, Texts, Cultures*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-14. (OWL)

Week Seven: February 16, 2022**Youth & Black Lives Matter**

Read: Perri Campbell. "Occupy, Black Lives Matter and Suspended Mediation: Young People's Battles for Recognition in/ between Digital and Non-digital Spaces," *Young (Stockholm, Sweden)*, vol. 26, no. 2, SAGE Publications, 2018, pp. 145-60. (OWL)

Nikita Carney, "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media," *Humanity & Society*, vol. 40, no. 2, SAGE Publications, 2016, pp. 180-99. (OWL)

Bernardine Dohrn and William Ayers, "Young, Gifted, and Black: Black Lives Matter!" *Contemporary Youth Activism: Advancing Social Justice in the United States: Advancing Social Justice in the United States*, edited by Jerusha Conner, and Sonia M. Rosen, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2016. (OWL)

Stephen Levingston, "Children have changed America before, braving fire hoses and police dogs for civil rights," *Washington Post* 3.2018:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/02/20/children-have-changed-america-before-braving-fire-hoses-and-police-dogs-for-civil-rights/>

Randy Richmond, "VIDEO, ANALYSIS: Passion, Pain, and London's Landmark Black Lives Matter Rally," *The London Free Press*
<https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/video-analysis-reflecting-on-londons-landmark-black-lives-matter-rally>

Due: Two Responses Papers Must Be Submitted By This Date*

Week Eight: February 23, 2022

Reading Week: No Class

Week Nine: March 2, 2022**Youth & March for Our Lives**

Read: *Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement* by The Founders of March for Our Lives

Watch: "Emma Gonzalez's Powerful March for Our Lives Speech in Full" *Guardian News*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u46HzTGVQhg>

"Parkland Students Find Their Voices as Activists at the March for Our Lives" *ABC News*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udLc_Dd2BAE

Week Ten: March 9, 2022**Youth & Climate Change**

Read: Jenny Ritchie, “Movement from the Margins to Global Recognition: Climate Change Activism by Young People and in Particular Indigenous Youth” (OWL)

Jens Marquardt. “Fridays for Future’s Disruptive Potential: An Inconvenient Youth Between Moderate and Radical Ideas.” *Frontiers in Communication*, vol. 5, 2020, pp. 1-18. (OWL)

Marlene Cimons, “Meet Xiye Bastida, America’s Greta Thunberg” by *PBS*

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/peril-and-promise/2019/09/meet-xiye-bastida-americas-greta-thunberg/>

Jamie Margolin, “I Sued the State of Washington because I Can't Breathe There. They Ignored Me” by *The Guardian*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/06/i-sued-the-state-of-washington-because-i-cant-breathe-there-they-ignored-me>

Watch: “The Global Crisis and The Power Youth Have to Stop It! | Xiuhtezcatl Martinez | TEDxFrontRange” *TEDx Talks*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4pEebeF7vk>

Watch: “How Teens Started the Zero Hour Movement” by *Grist*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_j3eJXD09o

Unit III: Changing Youth Politics**Week Eleven: March 16, 2022**

Read: Henry Jenkins, et al. *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*

- Ch. 1 “Youth Voice, Media, and Political Engagement: Introducing Core Concepts”
- Ch. 2 “‘Watch 30 Minute Video on Internet, Become Social Activist’? *Kony 2012*, Invisible Children, and the Paradoxes of Participatory Politics”
- Ch. 3 “‘Decreasing World Suck’: Harnessing Popular Culture for Fan Activism”

Due: Final Response Paper Must Be Submitted By This Date*

Week Twelve: March 23, 2022

Read: Henry Jenkins, et al. *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*

- Ch. 4 “Between Storytelling and Surveillance: The Precarious Public of American Muslim Youth”
- Ch. 5 “DREAMing Citizenship- Undocumented Youth, Coming Out, and Pathways to Participation”
- Ch. 6 “Bypassing the Ballot Box: How Libertarian Youth Are Reimagining the Political”

Week Thirteen: March 30, 2022

Read: Henry Jenkins, et al. *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*

- Ch. 7 “‘It’s Called Giving a Shit!’: What Counts as ‘Politics’?”
- Afterword: “Necessary Learning”

Barbara Ferman, “The role of social justice frameworks in an era of neoliberalism: Lessons from youth activism” (OWL)

Due: Final Argumentative Research Essay