

Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies
GSWS 1020 002 – Thursdays

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

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.

Lecture:

Tutorial: GSWS 1020E includes a tutorial 5-6x/term.

Instructor: Professor Cayen

E-mail: lcayen2@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Tues 12:30-1:30, Weds 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

See syllabus page in OWL for any weekly changes/rescheduling

Office Location:

Phone:

Zoom link for Office Hours:

- Want to talk but can't make office hours? Send me an e-mail with a few specific times that work for you in the coming days and let me know if you want to meet in my office, on the phone, or by zoom.

TAs: Information to be posted on OWL

Calendar Description:

A survey of selected topics in the study of gender structures and the status of women in historical and cross-cultural perspective. These will include consideration of social and psychological processes by which gender identity is established in the individual, its institutional manifestations, and its articulation with class and race structures.

No prerequisites

Longer Description:

This course is an introductory and interdisciplinary survey of the diverse and changing roles of gender, sex, and sexuality in contemporary society. Together we will tackle several questions over the course of the year, including:

- How does gender and women's studies contribute to our thinking of particular issues, institutional practices, and changing global dynamics?
- How do principles of feminist thought allow us to navigate controversial issues, including those related to tensions or exclusions in resistance movements?

- What are the possibilities – and responsibilities – of local and international feminist interventions for social justice?

In 2025-2026 we will explore, among other topics, the following: challenges to the sex and gender binary, including transgender, non-binary, and intersex identities; intersectionality and solidarity across gender, race, class, and ability; constructions of masculinities and femininities; the operation of state power on gender- sexual- and other minorities; colonialism and Indigenous resistances; and activism and protest, including through art. Above all, in this class, we will strive to make connections between our everyday lives, global structures, and agentic work for gender equality/equity/freedom.

Learning Objectives

This course will enable students to:

- Investigate the history of gender and feminism, and the issues facing gender and sexual minorities today, both locally and globally;
- explain how gender operates as a site of social and political control;
- demonstrate how the social construction of gender is related to sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, (dis)ability and age;
- analyze and deconstruct the representation of gender and sexual minorities in disciplines such as history, literature, science, and in popular culture and media;
- assess and evaluate key theoretical debates, differences and similarities in feminist thought and in the pursuit of social change.

In addition, the course will assist students in developing aptitude in:

- analytical/critical thinking;
- oral and written communication skills; and
- research.

Assignments and Evaluation

Course and Tutorial Engagement	10%
Case Studies (4 over the year, best 3)	15%
Midterm Test (Dec)	15%
Art and Activism Assignment (Jan 8)	10%
Research Essay Check-in (Feb)	5%
Research Essay (5-6 pages, Mar 10)	15%
Final Exam (April)	30%

More details for assignments will be given in class and posted to the course website on OWL.

Course and Tutorial Engagement (On-going, 10% (5% per term))

Tutorial is a space for you to meet in smaller groups and discuss course concepts, practice skills ahead of assignment due dates, and connect with your peers about issues that matter to you. You should come each week with a question from readings or lecture to spark discussion. You will have the opportunity to contribute orally and in writing to earn your grade. We reward effort and thoughtfulness over perfection: it's ok (ideal, even!) to ask questions about things you aren't sure about.

Tutorials run 6 times in Term 1 and 5 times in Term 2, dates indicated in the schedule below. All tutorials are required.

Academic Consideration: This course requires weekly participation across 12 weeks each term. You may miss one tutorial without penalty; you do not need to notify us, use a SAP, or notify your academic counsellor for this. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for Course and Tutorial Engagement will be denied.

Case Studies (Various dates, 15%)

There will be 4 cases over the year and you will be graded on your 3 highest cases, worth 5% each. You and your peers will be given a case study packet to read prior to class on a scenario of relevance to GSWS along with some preliminary reflection questions. In-class you will form small groups to collectively negotiate answers and possible solutions. Group submissions to OWL and/or oral discussion/presentation in class will be graded.

Dates for Section 001 (Tuesday's lecture):

Oct 21
Dec 2
Feb 10
Mar 24

Dates for Section 002 (Thursday's lecture):

Oct 9
Nov 20
Feb 12
Mar 26

Academic Consideration: This assignment is offered 4x over the year and you must complete 3 to earn your grade. You may complete all 4 cases to replace your lowest grade (or to continue practicing your application skills in the course!) Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied.

Midterm (December Exam Period, 15%)

The midterm exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar: date to be announced. The midterm may consist of multiple choice-style questions, short answer questions, and an essay; specific format and sample questions will be distributed in advance. The mid-term will run in-person. If the University/Covid/other compels our move to online delivery, the exam will be delivered via OWL *without* the use of ProctorTrack or similar software. 2hrs.

Academic Consideration: If you (need to) miss the Midterm, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so via https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup midterm). https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf. Make-up exams are scheduled in January.

Art and Activism (Jan, 10%)

Alone or with a partner and taking a course reading as a point of reference, create a piece of art that ‘responds’ to a particular issue you care about or an experience you have had moving through the world as a gendered being (keeping in mind the ways in which sexuality, race, class, dis/ability, age, religion, nationality, or.... intersect with gender). The format for this assignment is flexible and could include an infographic, a comic, a piece of art (e.g., painting, dance, poetry, music, etc), or another method of your choosing in consultation with your TA or the prof. ‘Gallery Walk’ presentations in tutorial will run on the following dates, with make-up dates for illness specified:

Dates for Section 001 (Tuesday’s lecture):

Art submission deadline: Jan 8

Gallery walk: in tutorial, Jan 13-16

Make-up gallery walk: in tutorial, Jan 27-30

Dates for Section 002 (Thursday’s lecture):

Art submission deadline: Jan 8

Gallery walk: in tutorial, Jan 13-16

Make-up gallery walk: in tutorial, Jan 27-30

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with a no-questions-asked 3-day grace period. This means that you can submit your art assignment on Sunday, Jan 11 without penalty. The gallery walk comes with a no-questions-asked make-up date for illness as specified above. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied. Art assignments will still be accepted past the extended deadlines with a late penalty of 2% per day.

Research Essay Check-In (Various dates Feb, 5%)

Ahead of the final research essay, visit your TA or the Professor during their office hours and discuss your plans. You should come with: a research question, a course reading, and 3 properly

formatted citations for appropriate academic sources to support your work. More details and guidance are provided in the assignment instructions below.

TAs will hold additional office hours the weeks of Feb 3, 10, and 24. They may or may not be available during reading week. Hours will be posted by Jan 19. Sign-up with your TA in advance, starting Jan 19, to secure your preferred timeslot. The professor will be available for meetings where your course schedule conflicts with your TA's offerings.

Academic Consideration: This assignment can be completed on a variety of dates across the month of Feb. Book early to secure your preferred timeslot. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this assignment will be denied.

Final Research Essay (March 6, 15%)

Write a research essay (5-6 pages) on a question of interest to you and the course (e.g., a topic with relevance to an intersectional approach of the field (broadly defined) of gender, sexuality, and women's studies). Then, conduct academic research that can help you explore or answer that question through an argumentative thesis.

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with a no-questions-asked 2-day grace period. This means that you can submit this assignment up to midnight on Sunday, Mar. 8 without penalty. Since flexibility is already provided, requests for academic consideration for this paper will be denied. Papers will still be accepted past the extended deadline with a late penalty of 2% per day.

Final Exam (April Exam Period, 30%)

The final exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar: date to be announced. The final exam may consist of multiple choice-style questions, short answer questions, and an essay; specific format and sample questions will be distributed in advance. The final exam will run in-person. If the University/Covid/other compels our move to online delivery, the exam will be delivered via OWL *without* the use of ProctorTrack or similar software. 2 or 3 hrs, TBA.

Academic Consideration: If you (need to) miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so via https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup midterm). https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf. Make-up exams are scheduled in May.

Class Readings

There is no textbook to purchase; all readings will be posted to the Course Readings portal: <https://ares.lib.uwo.ca/ares/>

Policies and Procedures

Please keep abreast of all relevant policies and announcements from Western's Administration, as things might change quickly as we continue to adjust to our return to in-person teaching and learning. Not all of your rights and responsibilities are detailed below. And please: ask questions about anything at all that you want clarification on or don't fully understand.

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Recognition of First Nations Territory

Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are 3 local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.

What does this look like and mean to me in the context of this course?

I'm still learning and working to decolonize and Indigenize my thinking, learning, and pedagogical approach. For me, this means adding readings by Indigenous authors (I focus on Canadian discussions for my own edification). I'm working also at moving away from "pan-Indigenous" conversations by talking about 'Mohawk women from Kahnawake' rather than 'Indigenous people in Canada', for example. And, it means being humble: being open to student requests and suggestions and committing to revising and expanding the syllabus offerings every year.

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Support Services

Western's Senate recently approved a new policy on Academic Consideration. Please read it here: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

These policies have already been integrated into the assignment structure of this course. If you have questions about how to navigate this policy, please contact me or your Academic Advising Office/Academic Counsellor: Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling

and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help

Note for students with disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students. You may also contact http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html to find out the full range of services available to you.

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 the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Statement on Academic Offences and the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Submit electronic copies of all written assignments to Turnitin.com through links in OWL.

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 licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com.

(<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

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

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes an academic offense; not knowing is not an adequate defense. Some advice to be aware of includes, but is not limited to, the following: write assignments yourself and in your own words; **do not use AI or other paraphrasing or essay-writing services**; do not submit an assignment to this class that has previously been submitted elsewhere; cite both direct quotes as well as the paraphrased ideas of others.

If you use a Generative AI app to help with your assignment, you **must** identify every part of your assignment that you did not write yourself. Anything else is a violation of academic integrity and subject to all the same penalties as more traditional types of plagiarism.

You may be asked to explain your essays orally and to answer questions about both the actual essay and your research process (e.g., you may be asked to show the steps you took to write the essay, answer questions about your sources or argument, and have adequate knowledge of your topic).

It is better to submit nothing than to submit something that has any amount of plagiarism in it. Save your academic record: consult with me for more time if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Attendance Policy and/or Participation policy for final exams

Please note the attendance policy of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies and The University of Western Ontario: Students who have not engaged sufficiently in class and/or tutorials as determined by the instructor can be debarred from writing the final exam in the course, according to the procedures established under Examinations/Attendance in the policy on *Attendance Regulations for Examinations*.

Women's Studies supports the following: In classes without final examinations, persistent absenteeism (defined by the Department as three [3] weeks in half courses, and six [6] weeks in full courses) may be rendered grounds for failure in the course (after due warning is given).

You will be required to read for each class. Plan to read critically rather than just for content. You are expected to have read all assigned materials prior to each class period/prior to completing asynchronous lessons and to be prepared to participate in discussions. Participation grades are based on mandatory tutorials. This includes attending regularly, reading each week's assignment, asking insightful questions, contributing to discussion in a positive way, and being respectful to the views of others (worth 10% of your year). We reserve the right to give reading quizzes as part of your participation grade if it seems necessary (i.e., if class members do not keep up with the reading). No single portion (attendance, discussion, questions, etc.) determines your overall tutorial participation grade.

You might consider these tips when assessing your role as a participant in this course:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.

- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” or “playing devil’s advocate” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all written and verbal communications. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

See also: [Code of Student Conduct](#)

Prerequisites

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

Contact Info

Office hours are designated for you! I’ll be in my office and on Zoom during the hours posted to page 1 of the syllabus: drop-in for a one-on-one meeting to ask questions about the material and get clarification on assignments, no appointment necessary. Please do not wait until the week before assignments to ask for help as my time may become limited (and your need for an answer more urgent). I’m also very happy to chat as I’m setting up for class, during break, or just after class lets out.

Have a question? Proceed thusly:

1. Double check the syllabus, assignment outlines, OWL announcements, lessons pages and lecture slides to make sure the answer isn’t already provided.
2. Can the answer wait until you see me in class? Ask us then; sometimes it’s a good reminder for me about something I might need to fill the class in on, and it helps cut down on my e-mail.
3. No luck? Feel free to e-mail me!

How to E-mail Effectively:

I am teaching many classes this year and anticipate a high volume of e-mails – please help me keep it manageable by asking questions in class or using my drop-in office hours whenever possible.

When e-mailing:

Use a subject line: our course code and a flag to the e-mail's content is great. EG: "GSWS 1020 – reading missing" or "GSWS 1020 – meeting request"

Please use a salutation ("Hi Professor Cayen,"), clearly identify yourself ("I am in your Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies Course and my TA is *TA's name*"), and then proceed with your question. Please be sure to indicate what you have tried already so that my response can be more efficient (eg: instead of saying "I don't know what I'm supposed to read this week", you might say: "I know the syllabus says to read bell hooks this week, but when I go to the Course Readings link from OWL there are two articles by bell hooks listed. Do I read both of them?") Then, sign off with a thanks and your name!

This is a good format to follow when e-mailing your TAs as well.

We will endeavor to reply promptly, but if you have not received a reply within 48-72 hours (excluding weekends) please re-send your e-mail. Use your UWO email address, as emails not so identified may automatically be screened out as spam. Be sure to check your own UWO e-mail address at least once a day.

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Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Grading Scheme

Essays, exams, and other assignments will be assessed according to the following criteria. Ask questions prior to submitting assignments if you would like more guidance on how to meet the learning outcomes of this course.

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Grading Criteria

A+ (90 to 100)

One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A (80 and up)

Superior work which is clearly above average

- Challenging and specific thesis that is clearly developed
- Correct and interesting sentence structure
- Sophisticated writing style
- Appropriate documentation
- Quotations well integrated into the text, with proper documentation
- Evidence of originality or independence of thought
- Provision of strong analysis

- Complexity, and subtlety in approach to subject
- Well-organized with a logical development of the argument

B (70 to 79)

Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

- Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs
- Correct sentence structure
- Adequate documentation
- Allowance for some (minor) problems such as:
 - errors in factual content or interpretation
 - some minor errors in terminology or general writing skills
 - occasional lapses in clarity, including vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure
- Provision of some analysis

Note: A grade in the range of 75-79 indicates an essay that borders on an A but has some significant flaw that prevents giving out the higher grade.

C (60 to 69)

Competent work, meeting requirements

- Generally correct but tends to provide more description than analysis
- Tends to be too general or superficial in the handling of material
- Weaknesses in argument including a descriptive thesis, a mechanical approach, lack of adequate evidence, documentation, or support
- Problems with grammar or matters of style
- Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression

D (50 to 59)

Fair work, minimally acceptable

- Does not provide an argument or a line of thought
- Major difficulties with logical structure, and expression of ideas
- Topic has not been thought through
- Errors of grammar and diction interfere with understanding
- Over-generalization with inadequate support, evidence, or documentation

F (49 and down)

Fail

- Assignment submitted does not apply to course
- Basic requirements of the assignment are not met

Plagiarism with intent to deceive (to be handled by the department)