

Note: course outline is preliminary for 2026-2027 and subject to change

GSWS 2220E – Feminist Theory and Practice for Change

**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.

Course Description

How have feminists working across diverse approaches changed the ways we see, read, and think? Against what traditions have they resisted, and in what new directions do their works lead us? What are the relationships between feminist analyses, artistic/imaginative production, research methodologies and tabulations, the politics (even violence?) of representation, and ... our gendered material realities? How does theory inform practice, and vice versa? What are the ethical implications – and responsibilities – of feminist writing, innovation, research, and action?

This course studies feminist engagements with the (de)construction of historically raced, classed, and gendered/sexed subjectivities, and works with a diverse range of theoretical approaches in interdisciplinary and intersectional contexts. Together we will explore how the practices of producing knowledge have real-life effects. We will attend to the ways feminist in(ter)ventions at once resist, expand, and explode conventional approaches and ways of knowing, being, and doing. Ultimately, we examine the implications of feminist analyses and methods – with a focus on ever-creative feminist resistance and innovation for social transformation.

Learning Objectives

Building on introductory courses in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, work in GSWS 2220E will enable students to:

- Understand and demonstrate the relationship between theory and practice, particularly in feminist work;
- Learn how feminist theory and practice are shaped by the intersecting axes of race, class, sexuality, gender, and (dis)ability, and to apply intersectional approaches;
- Recognize and critically assess some of the major feminist approaches and debates across research, theory, and practice;
- Assess, both personally and analytically, the implications of feminist theory and practice in relation to our gendered material and everyday realities;
- Trace and critique how historical, political, and social factors impact the development of feminist theory, research practice, and culture as resistance;
- Contribute to a learning community;
- Improve oral and written communication;
- Augment proficiency in critical thinking, research, and analytical skills.

Evaluations and Assignments

Term 1

Participation	10%	(ongoing)
Feminist Art Review	5%	(2-3 pages, Oct 12)
Application Essay: Archival Activism	15%	(5-6 pages, Nov 30)
Midterm	20%	(Dec exam period)

Term 2

Participation	10%	(ongoing)
Self/Reflection	5%	(2-3 pages, Feb 8)
Application Essay: Education Plan	15%	(5-6 pages, March 22)
Final Exam	20%	(Apr exam period)

Participation: Contributing to a learning community is a key outcome of this course. It is crucial to note that good participation is not the same as attendance alone. Students are expected to arrive to class with materials read and notes taken, ready to contribute to discussion and active learning activities. Ask questions about anything you are unsure of! You can also contribute to this grade via written reflections, reading quizzes, informal presentations on your written assignments, etc.

Feminist Art Review: In term 1 we will go on a class field trip for a tour of the MOTHERGROUND exhibit at Museum London. Following this visit, write a short paper (2-3 pages) reflecting on the connections between the exhibit and arguments or theories from our course readings.

Application Essay: Archival Activism: Assess a selection from the Rise Up digital archive of feminist activism. In an argumentative essay (5-6 pages), identify how theoretical concepts from our course are mobilized through these actions and issues.

Self/Reflection: Using feminist theory/concepts from the term and a course reading as a starting point, reflect on the ways in which the feminist theory/concepts you take up provide insight and relevance (or not) to an experience you have had (and which you feel resourced to engage). This is an in-class writing activity.

Application Essay: Education Plan: Unpack and critique the ways in which a problematic discourse (i.e. transphobia) has been studied in academe, how feminist theorists have responded to the discourse, how it figures in popular culture, and how it impacts people's everyday lives in an argumentative essay (5-6 pages). You will design an education plan for students in elementary or high school in Ontario that challenges the dominant discourse.

Midterm and Final Exam: To be scheduled in the December and April exam periods. 2 hours, short answer and essay.

Readings

There is no textbook to purchase. All readings will be available via the Course Readings portal or by PDF on OWL.

Term 1: we will visit the MOTHERGROUND exhibit at Museum London. Please set aside \$10 for the group tour if you are able; pay-what-you-can/sliding scale available.