

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
Fall 2026

GSWS 4242F- Preliminary Course Outline
Postcolonial Feminism: Gender and Empire

The Department acknowledges that we are located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, and Attawandaron peoples.

1. Course Information

Course Title: Postcolonial Feminism: Gender and Empire

Course Number: GSWS 4242F

Term: Fall 2026

Meeting Time: TBD

Location: TBD

Course Format: In-person seminar, three hours per week

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: GSWS 1020E or GSWS 1021F/G or GSWS 1022F/G, or permission of the Department.

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.

2. Instructor Information

Course Instructor: Shambhavi Siddhi

Email: ssiddhi@uwo.ca

Office hours are held virtually via Zoom by appointment.

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting the instructor. Please include the course code (GSWS 4242F) in the subject line of every email. Emails will receive a response within 48 hours during regular working hours (Monday–Friday, 9 am – 5 pm). Emails that do not include the course code in the subject line, or that are not sent from a Western (@uwo.ca) email address,

are not subject to the 48-hour response window. Before emailing, please check the syllabus; questions already answered in the syllabus may not receive a response.

Instructor	Email	Office	Office Hours
Shambhavi Siddhi (Course Instructor)	ssiddhi@uwo.ca	TBD	TBD

3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, and Delivery Mode

Course Description

This course examines decolonial feminist critiques of empire and its enduring impacts. Students analyze how colonial power shapes gender, sexuality, and resistance through intersectional frameworks. Themes include epistemic violence, nationalism, labor, and women's resistance movements in the Global South.

Postcolonial feminism is a central critical framework within Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. The course interrogates the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism and centers the experiences of women in the Global South, foregrounding the legacies of colonialism, neocolonialism, and Eurocentrism in shaping contemporary gendered lives. Students engage with foundational and contemporary works by scholars including Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, María Lugones, Saba Mahmood, Lila Abu-Lughod, Jasbir Puar, Angela Davis, Sara Ahmed, and others. Across the term, we situate gender alongside race, class, caste, religion, sexuality, nation, and location, and consider how women in postcolonial contexts resist patriarchal and colonial forces through activism, intellectual labor, and cultural expression.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze colonial and nationalist appropriations of gender.
- Examine the intersections of race, class, caste, gender, religion, and location in shaping women's experiences in postcolonial struggles.
- Analyze epistemic violence as theorized by Spivak and others, identifying how dominant discourses silence marginalized voices.
- Investigate how women in postcolonial societies resist patriarchal and colonial forces through activism, scholarship, and cultural expression.
- Read and analyze foundational postcolonial feminist works and apply their insights to contemporary issues.
- Reflect on ethics in feminist scholarship and the practice of centring marginalized voices in research.

Course Schedule

The course meets weekly on Thursdays. Fall Reading Week (October 10–18, 2026) falls between Weeks 5 and 6, and there is no class meeting on Thursday October 15, 2026. The course consists of twelve teaching weeks. The midterm examination is administered asynchronously online via OWL during the window between Weeks 7 and 8 (Friday October 30 to Monday November 2, 2026); regular classes proceed on Thursday October 29 (Week 7) and Thursday November 5 (Week 8).

Week	Date	Theme & Readings
1	Sept 10, 2026	Introduction to Postcolonial Feminism — Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” (1988); Said, <i>Orientalism</i> (Introduction)
2	Sept 17, 2026	Decolonizing Feminism — Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender” (2008); Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988)
3	Sept 24, 2026	Intersectionality and Postcolonial Feminism — Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (1991); Paz & Kook, “‘It reminds me that I still exist’: Critical thoughts on intersectionality; refugee Muslim women in Berlin and the meanings of the hijab”
4	Oct 1, 2026	Empire, Sexuality, and Gender — Stoler, <i>Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power</i> (Intro); Oyewumi, <i>The Invention of Women</i> (Preface & Ch. 1)
	Oct 5 – 8, 2026	JOURNAL REFLECTION 1 WINDOW — opens Mon Oct 5 (9:00 am); closes Thu Oct 8 (9:00 am)
5	Oct 8, 2026	Postcolonial Feminism in India — Major, “Pious Flames” (2004); Pan, “Being a ‘Dalit Woman’” (2021)
—	Oct 10–18, 2026	FALL READING WEEK — No class
6	Oct 22, 2026	Postcolonial Feminism and Religion — Mahmood, <i>Politics of Piety</i> (Intro); Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” (2002)
7	Oct 29, 2026	Labor, Migration, and Globalization — Mohanty, “Women Workers and the Politics of Solidarity” (2004); Ansar, “Bangladeshi women migrants amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: Revisiting globalization, dependency and gendered precarity in South–South labour migration”
★	Oct 30 – Nov 2, 2026	MIDTERM EXAMINATION WINDOW (online via OWL) — opens Fri Oct 30 (9:00 am); closes Mon Nov 2 (9:00 am)
8	Nov 5, 2026	Gender as a Category of Analysis — Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category” (1986); Najmabadi, “Beyond the Americas” (2006)

Week	Date	Theme & Readings
9	Nov 12, 2026	Queer and Trans Postcolonial Feminism — Dutta & Roy, “Decolonizing Transgender in India” (2014); Puar, Terrorist Assemblages (Intro); Gopinath, Impossible Desires (Intro)
10	Nov 19, 2026	Indigenous Feminisms and Decolonization — Simpson, As We Have Always Done (Chs. 1 & 4); Ekka & Giangthandunliu, “Theorizing Adivasi/Tribal Feminism” (2024)
11	Nov 26, 2026	Women’s Resistance Movements in Conflict Zones — Malik, “Muslim Women, Agency and Resistance” (2018); Helbich & Jabr, “Becoming Actors of Change” (2022)
	Nov 30 – Dec 3, 2026	JOURNAL REFLECTION 2 WINDOW — opens Mon Nov 30 (9:00 am); closes Thu Dec 3 (9:00 am)
12	Dec 3, 2026	Postcolonial Feminism and Praxis — Davis, “Feminism and Abolition: Theories and Practices for the Twenty-First Century,” in Freedom Is a Constant Struggle (2016); Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life (Conclusion 1: “A Killjoy Survival Kit”)

4. Course Materials

There are no required texts that students need to purchase for this course. All readings will be made available through the course OWL/Brightspace site.

All course material will be posted to OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Technical Requirements

Because the midterm examination is administered asynchronously online via OWL, this course requires a reliable high-speed internet connection and a laptop or desktop computer that meets the technical specifications for writing online timed assessments and accessing OWL/Brightspace. Students are responsible for ensuring their device, browser, and internet connection are stable in advance of the midterm window. Western Technology Services can be reached at 519-661-3800 (ext. 83800) for technical assistance.

Electronic Devices

Laptops or tablets may be used during in-class seminars for note-taking and accessing course readings. For the online midterm examination, students may use only the devices required to complete the exam on OWL; consultation of unauthorized aids, websites, AI tools, or other electronic resources during the exam is prohibited. For the final examination, conditions will be specified in the exam instructions released by the Office of the Registrar.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of generative AI tools (including automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, and similar large language models) is prohibited for the production of submitted written work and during examinations. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask the student to produce research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing the assignment. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, an inability to produce these materials may weigh heavily against the student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of AI tools to create content that is submitted as one's own. The instructor reserves the right to reject any work submitted by a student if the use of AI is even suspected, and may require an unprompted oral examination in lieu of grading the work.

5. Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates

The overall course grade will be calculated as follows:

Assessment	Weight	Due / Window
Journal Reflection 1 (900–1000 words; readings of one week of student's choice from Weeks 1–4)	15%	Opens Mon Oct 5, 2026 (9:00 am); closes Thu Oct 8, 2026 (9:00 am)
Midterm Examination (online via OWL; 700–900 word essay, choice of 3 prompts; Weeks 5 & 6 in conversation)	20%	Opens Friday Oct 30, 2026 (9:00 am); closes Monday Nov 2, 2026 (9:00 am)
Journal Reflection 2 (900–1000 words; readings of one week of student's choice from Weeks 8–11)	15%	Opens Mon Nov 30, 2026 (9:00 am); closes Thu Dec 3, 2026 (9:00 am)
Final Examination	40%	Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the Dec 11–22, 2026 exam period (date TBD)
Participation (engagement, preparation, in-class contribution)	10%	Ongoing across all 12 weeks
TOTAL	100%	

Description of Assessments

Journal Reflection 1 (15%)

Students will write a 900–1000 word reflective essay engaging with the readings from one week of their choice from Weeks 1 through 4. The essay should present a clear central argument and integrate at least two key concepts from the course (for example: intersectionality, epistemic violence, orientalism, the colonality of gender). The purpose of this assignment is to cultivate close reading skills, encourage the synthesis of theoretical frameworks with concrete examples, and develop students' ability to position themselves within ongoing feminist conversations. Working across one week's readings allows students to think with two texts in conversation and to develop an integrative argument rather than a rushed survey of the field. Submission window: opens Monday October 5, 2026 at 9:00 am and closes Thursday October 8, 2026 at 9:00 am (a 72-hour window) via Turnitin on OWL.

Midterm Examination (20%)

The midterm is an online, asynchronous examination administered through OWL. It opens Friday October 30, 2026 at 9:00 am and closes Monday November 2, 2026 at 9:00 am — a 72-hour submission window. Students may begin the exam at any time within this window; once opened, OWL will begin a timer, and students will have ninety (90) minutes to complete the exam. The exam will offer three essay prompts, from which students will write one. Responses should be 700–900 words. Each prompt will ask students to place Week 5 (Postcolonial Feminism in India — Major, Pan) and Week 6 (Postcolonial Feminism and Religion — Mahmood, Abu-Lughod) into sustained conversation: to read sati and Dalit feminism alongside the politics of piety and the discourse of “saving” Muslim women, and to articulate how questions of gender, religion, region, and the politics of representation cut across these texts. Because the midterm includes a built-in 72-hour submission window, academic accommodation is not separately granted for this assessment; students requiring extra writing time should ensure they begin the exam early enough within the window to make use of the flexibility already provided. A reliable laptop or desktop computer and a stable high-speed internet connection are required.

Journal Reflection 2 (15%)

Students will write a second 900–1000 word reflective essay engaging with the readings from one week of their choice from Weeks 8 through 11. As with the first reflection, the essay should present a clear central argument and put at least two course concepts into careful dialogue with the chosen week's texts. The purpose of this second reflection is to track students' intellectual growth across the term, to encourage engagement with the more advanced theoretical material in the second half of the course (queer and trans postcolonial feminism, Indigenous feminisms, conflict and resistance), and to deepen their capacity to write within feminist scholarly conventions. Submission window: opens Monday, November 30, 2026, at 9:00 am and closes Thursday, December 3, 2026, at 9:00 am (a 72-hour window) via Turnitin on OWL.

Final Examination (40%)

The final examination is scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the Fall examination period (December 11–22, 2026). The exam will be written in person at a location and time set by the Registrar. The format will include short-answer questions and essay-style questions that draw on the full range of course materials. The purpose of the final is to assess students' cumulative understanding of postcolonial feminist thought, their ability to argue across multiple thinkers and contexts, and their capacity to produce sustained scholarly writing under timed conditions. Further details regarding format, length, and permitted aids will be made available toward the end of term. Students with accommodation will receive their allotted extra time. Absolutely no late final exams will be accepted; students who miss the final examination must follow the procedure for Special Examinations set out in Section 6.

Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend each weekly seminar, having completed the assigned readings, and to engage actively in discussion. This includes generating questions and ideas to share with the group, listening attentively to peers, and contributing in ways that move the collective conversation forward. Participation will be assessed on the basis of preparation, presence, and the quality of in-class contributions across the term. The purpose of this component is to recognize the seminar as a shared intellectual space and to reward the sustained, collegial work of thinking together — a practice that postcolonial feminist scholarship itself takes seriously.

Built-in Grace Period and Flexible Assessment

All assessments other than the final examination carry built-in flexibility in the form of a 72-hour submission window. Each journal reflection opens at 9:00 am on a Monday and closes at 9:00 am on the following Thursday; the midterm opens at 9:00 am on Friday October 30 and closes at 9:00 am on Monday November 2. Within these windows students choose when to write or submit. After the close of each window, a late penalty of 5% per day (including weekends) will be applied.

Please note that because the submission deadlines for the journal reflections and the midterm already include flexibility in the form of a 72-hour submission window, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for these assessments when they are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility. Academic Consideration requests may be granted only for extenuating circumstances that started before the window opened and lasted for its full duration.

No grace period applies to the final examination. The final examination is scheduled by the Office of the Registrar and is governed by the standard university policy on Special Examinations (see Section 6).

Formal Documentation Designation Statement

Please note that the final examination is central to the learning objectives of this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for the final examination will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for the final examination will be offered the opportunity to write a Special Examination as scheduled by the University.

General Information About Missed Coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs, posted on the Academic Calendar:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, see:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline. Supporting documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of the student's Home Faculty; individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from students.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request without supporting documentation in this course. The final examination is excluded from this provision and always requires formal supporting documentation.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

Where Academic Consideration is granted: missed journal reflections will be granted a new deadline negotiated with the instructor. A missed midterm, where consideration is granted, will be re-weighted onto the final examination. A missed final examination, where consideration is granted, will be addressed through a Special Examination scheduled by the University.

Special Examinations

When a student misses the final examination and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a make-up Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar entry on Special Examinations, especially for students who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

6. Additional Statements

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, here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism is the act or instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own. Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional; either way, plagiarism is a Scholastic Offence. As noted in Section 4, the unauthorized use of generative AI tools to create content submitted as one's own work also constitutes plagiarism in this course.

Statement on the Use of Plagiarism-Checking Software

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 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

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 instructor as soon as possible, but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with the midterm, students should inform the instructor as soon as possible, but not later than one week prior to the midterm. Religious Accommodation requests for the final examination should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of study in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program”

(https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf). Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. More information: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Copyright and Intellectual Property

All course contents (lectures, slides, recordings, transcripts, and instructor-prepared materials) are the intellectual property of the instructor and any guest lecturers. Course materials are not to be shared or distributed in any way without written permission from the instructor.

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:

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.

Support Services

Academic Advising

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 other academic-related matters. Contact info for all Faculties: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) can help students improve their learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for time management, exam preparation, 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.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the University Students' Council: <https://westernusc.ca/services/>