

~ Provisional Outline; May be Subject to Minor Revision Prior to Sept. 9 ~

Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

GSWS 3355E: FEMINIST ACTIVISM

September 2024-April 2025

Instructor: Dr. Kim Verwaayen kjverwaa@uwo.ca

Office hours: Via Zoom Wed. 11:00 am- noon, informally after class, or by appointment.

Class Meets: Mondays 1:30-4:30 pm, Room TBA

Feminism, across its various places and points of genesis, is fundamentally tied to the concept of *protest* – with aims for disruption and, ultimately if arguably, structural transformation. In the current global climate, many feminists are articulating more-than-ever an urgent need for active feminist interventions in wide and interconnected areas of everyday life. This course examines a variety of issues and interventions to understand what feminist action can accomplish. Some of the questions we engage include: What tools do various feminist activists take up, for what specific kinds of aims, and with what successes and why? What can we learn from the failures or exclusions of feminist activism? What are the relationships between past or historical movements and contemporary contexts, individual and collective action, community organizing and institutions, local and global solidarities? How can feminist protest genuinely avoid divide-and-conquer politics to be the ethical, intersectional, accountable requirement of feminism in the 21st century? (How) Can we materialize meaningful change?

It is the commitment of this course that, in addition to studying feminist activism in the classroom, students engage in a Community Engagement Learning (CEL) project sustained over the course with a community organization or other partners to encourage students' implementation of their learning – beyond the borders of the classroom.

Assignments

Participation	(Attendance, listening, idea-building, etc.)	20%
Sparker with Write-Up	(with questions & leading a discussion)	20%
Annotated Bibliography	(4 sources; due any time before Nov. 4)	10%
Group Project Check-In/Report	(in class; 1/term – 5% each: Nov 18/Feb 10)	10%
Final Community-Based Group Project (or alternate assignment)*	(due Mar. 24; with individual component & grade; includes final presentations in last class)	40%

Note Re: Final Community-Based Group Project

Students, Working In Small Groups, Will Be Paired Early In Term 1 With A Community Partner To Complete A Collaborative Project. Projects will be decided on the basis of the partners' needs and students' interests. At the beginning of the semester, students will have an opportunity to meet each partner and to rank their choice of community organization. Students are expected to complete approx. two hours of work toward the partner project (or alt. assignment, with approval, as equivalent) weekly. Each student will submit a 2-page individual reflection with the final project, which indicates their individual contribution to the deliverable and which will assist in marking it. More detailed instruction will be provided when we meet in September. Due March 24. Groups will present their projects (including, hopefully, to the partners) in the last class.

***Alternate Assignment: This is a “Plan B” option only. An alternative assignment requires special circumstances and advance instructor approval.**

Texts

Readings for GSWS 3355E will be available through the Owl home page.

Learning Objectives

Work in GSWS 3355E should enable students to:

- Be familiar with various feminist actions for change in both local and global contexts;
- Understand various explanations for why some feminist movements succeed and some fail, with critical attention to the lessons that can be learned from both positive and negative outcomes;
- Recognize the ethical stakes associated with the aims, tools, strategies, targets and partners involved in feminist action, with ability to assess inclusions and exclusions across interlocking forms of oppression and intersectional axes of identity, such as race, class, sexuality, gender, and (dis)ability;
- Engage with a community organization or other partner in a “volunteer” capacity, learning from the partner how best to implement one’s skills/learning as required by the partner;
- Understand and experience some of the rewards – and challenges – of community-based work, both broadly and particularly;
- Improve oral and written communication, including for diverse audiences; and
- Augment proficiency in critical thinking, research, and analytical skills

Course Policies

Our course policies in GSWS 3355E will follow requirements and standards as determined by University Senate Policy (but may be tailored, where permitted, to the particularities of the course). Please see the final course outline available by the first day of class, or contact me in advance at kjverwaa@uwo.ca with “GSWS 3355E” included in the subject header.

Please note: The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies recognizes the First Nations territory on which the University is located – the traditional lands 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”

(<http://indigenous.uwo.ca/universitywide/Indigenous%20Strat%20Plan%20-%20Draft%20V9.pdf>)

LET’S HAVE A FABULOUS YEAR!