

WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

GSWS 2440G Reproductive Justice

Winter 2025

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Auger

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Prerequisite(s): GSWS 1020E, or 1.0 course from GSWS 1021F/G, GSWS 1022F/G, GSWS 1023F/G, GSWS 1024F/G, GSWS 1030F/G, or permission from 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.

Course Time: Thursdays 1:30-4:30

Room: UCC 65

Office Hours: TBD

Land Statement

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.”

Department Course Description

Through an intersectional, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural approach, this course examines reproductive justice. Topics may include abortion, birth control, sex education, choice rhetoric, human rights, bodily autonomy, forced sterilization, reproductive racism, reproduction and disability, eugenics, war and reproduction, and infertility. Specific content will vary year-to-year depending on the instructor.

Detailed Course Description

GSWS 2440G takes an interdisciplinary, intersectional, cross-cultural, and historical approach to exploring reproductive justice. This course shows students how access to reproductive healthcare impacts folx differently based on their intersectional identities and experiences. The course begins by defining reproductive justice. We will then consider reproductive medicine and abortion in the ancient world. We will differentiate ancient knowledge and attitudes about reproduction and abortion with those of later and contemporary societies. The course unpacks how racism, ableism, and 19th century protestant revivalism fueled writings of American eugenicists. Students will see how these writings influenced the Nazi sterilization of, and the eventual mass murder of disabled folx. We will learn about the sterilization of disabled and Indigenous folx in Canada. The course will recognize how the advent of hormonal contraception influenced modern feminist movements. The course will unpack the different approaches to decriminalizing abortion in the late 20th century in the United States and Canada. Students will consider the rise of the pro-life movement, purity culture, and recent successes to limit reproductive freedoms in the United States. The course will consider what these ongoing judicial rulings mean for patients seeking care as well as what this legislation means for medical practitioners. We will examine how a lack of access to reproductive healthcare particularly impacts Bipoc folx. Students will learn about reproductive activism in the Queer community. We will consider current legislative efforts in Canada and the United States to limit gender affirming care for trans youth. The course will conclude by examining how technology impacts reproductive healthcare including period tracking apps, IVF, and controlling genetics.

Course Objectives

1. to understand the nature and complexities of reproductive politics
2. to understand that reproductive injustice is both historical and ongoing in contemporary of society
3. to understand how people's intersubjective identities impact their relationship to and experiences with reproductive justice
4. to understand how bodily autonomy is key to reproductive rights
5. to learn about reproductive justice in history and trace how historical debates and attitudes surrounding reproduction figure in contemporary debates and attitudes regarding reproductive justice
6. to understand how reproductive freedoms may impact people's lives
7. to understand how lacking access to reproductive education and healthcare may impact people's lives

8. to understand the importance of broadening language regarding reproduction and gender
9. to develop students' analytical skills in course assignments and in discussion making connections between themes and content;
10. to enhance students' written and oral communication skills specifically their ability to clearly articulate, support, and organize arguments;
11. to develop students' written communication skills particularly focusing on organizing essays, developing a clear writing style, and accurate use of grammar;
12. to help students become more comfortable articulating thoughtful analysis, summary, reflections, and observations to their peers.

Course Materials

Required Text

Kaur, Rupi. *Milk and Honey*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2015. (Amazon \$21.00 Hard cover, Paper back \$19.00, Kindle edition \$11.99)

All subsequent 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. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Evaluation Breakdown

Participation	15%
Documentary Response	15%
Book Response	30%
Exam	40%

Assignment Description

Participation (15% of Final Grade)

This class involves student engagement in the learning process through active contributions to class discussions. 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.

Documentary Response (15% of Final Grade) 3 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman Font MLA citation style. Flexible submission period: **Thursday February 6, 2025-Sunday, February 9, 2025 at 11:55 pm**

Following viewing the 2017 National Film Board of Canada Documentary *Birth of Family* (Tasha Hubbard) in week four of our class, students will write a response to the documentary. In this response, students will provide an argument about what the documentary teaches viewers about the importance of reproductive justice. Please draw on at least two course readings to help support your analysis.

Critical Book Response (30% of Final Grade) 7-8 pages double spaced, Times New Roman-Font, MLA citation style) **Due: Thursday, March 13-Sunday March 16, 2025 at 11:55pm**

After reading Rupi Kaur's book *Milk and Honey*, please write a critical response to the book. This book has been banned in a number of school districts in the United States. Your thesis should deal with why people find this book threatening and what it teaches readers about reproductive justice. Please draw on 2 readings from our course to help support your analysis.

*Trigger warning- this book deals with topics including childhood gender-based and sexual violence. Should you be uncomfortable with this book, you may suggest another self-reflective book on reproductive justice for you to write on for your assignment.

Final Exam (40% of final grade)

Students will complete an in-person examination during the April exam period. The exam will consist of short answer questions as well as an essay response.

Course Policies

Learning Environments and Email Policies

Participants enrolled in this class are expected to complete the required course readings, attend all class sessions, respectfully contribute to classroom activities and discussions, and complete course assignments on time. Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors. I will try to reply to emails within twenty-four hours during the work week. Please do not expect an immediate response. Put the course code in the subject line of the email. Be as specific as possible with your questions. Specific questions receive specific answers. I may not respond to emails on weekends or during the evenings. However, I will check my email every twenty-four hours during the work week. If your question is more appropriately handled in-person, please feel free to make an appointment during my office hours or see me after class.

Technological Requirements

Electronics such as computers and smartphones are permitted in-lecture. However, please be respectful and refrain from using your electronics for outside activity during class. Please have your telephones set to silent. No aids are permitted for this exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted. Our learning environments (including online) will be respectful spaces.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Academic Consideration

Flexible submission deadline statement (Documentary Analysis Assignment and Critical Book Review assignment)

Please note that because the submission deadline for the assessment already includes flexibility in the form of a submission period, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

*Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term.

When a student receives academic considerations or academic accommodations which overlap with the built-in flexibility of the assessment, the longest period of accommodation will determine the deadline. The built-in flexibility of the assessment should not be taken to extend any considerations or accommodations.

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/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

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.

Documentary Assignment: Submissions will not be accepted even with academic consideration following Thursday, February 23 at 11:55 pm

Critical Book Response: Submissions will not be accepted even with academic consideration following Thursday, March 27 at 11:55 pm

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Late Penalty

Students are expected to submit each of the assignments by the deadline listed. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration and they are permitted to submit their assignment (**during the flexible assignment deadline**) without a late penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond **flexible assignment deadline** past the deadline, a late penalty of 2% per day will be applied

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/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

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 instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student 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/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

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” <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

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](#).

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 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/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

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

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 the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, 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 USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Reading Schedule

Unit 1: Theoretical and Historical Foundations

Week 1: Defining Reproductive Justice Thursday, January 9, 2025

Mutcherson, Kimberly M., editor. Introduction. *Feminist Judgments : Reproductive Justice Rewritten*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 1-12.

“We make the road by walking: Trans-inclusive language and reproductive justice.” *Choicewords Blog, Urge (Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equality)*, June 12, 2013. <https://urge.org/we-make-the-road-by-walking-trans-inclusive-language-and-reproductive-justice/>

Liddell, Jessica L., and Sarah G. Kington. ““Something Was Attacking Them and Their Reproductive Organs’: Environmental Reproductive Justice in an Indigenous Tribe in the United States Gulf Coast.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2021, pp. 666-, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020666>.

Week 2 Reproductive Healthcare in History Thursday, January 16, 2025

Flemming, Rebecca. “Fertility Control in Ancient Rome.” *Women’s History Review*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2021, pp. 896–914, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1833491>.

Cook, H. (2004). ‘Conferring a Premium on the Destruction of Female Morals’: Fertility Control and Sexuality in the Early to Mid-Nineteenth Century.” *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (1st ed., pp. xiii–xiii). Oxford University Press. 62-89. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199252183.001.0001>

Unit 2: Eugenics

Week 3: Eugenics, 19th Protestant Revivalism in the United States and the Nazi T4

Program Thursday, January 23, 2025

Strings, Sabrina. “Good Health to Uplift The Race.” *Fearing the Black Body : the Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. New York University Press, 2019. 169-187.

Rotzoll, Maike, et al. “The First National Socialist Extermination Crime: The T4 Program and Its Victims.” *International Journal of Mental Health*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2006, pp. 17–29, <https://doi.org/10.2753/IMH0020-7411350302>.

Herzog, Dagmar. “From the Disability Murders Archive: Ernst Klee’s Confrontation of the Public with Nazism’s First Genocide.” *Disability in German-Speaking Europe*, 2022, pp. 110–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781800105850.006>.

Week 4: Indigenous Mothering, Residential Schools, and Sterilization Programs in Canada

Thursday, January 30, 2025

Finestone, Erika, and Cynthia Stirbys, “Indigenous Birth in Canada; Reconciliation and Reproductive Justice in the Settler State.” *Indigenous Experiences of Pregnancy and Birth*. Edited by Tait Neufeld, Hannah, and Jaime Cidro, editors. Demeter Press, 2017. 176-202.

Rule, Elizabeth. “Seals, Selfies, and the Settler State: Indigenous Motherhood and Gendered Violence in Canada.” *American Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 4, 2018, pp. 741–54, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0061>.

Clarke, Erin. “Indigenous Women and the Risk of Reproductive Healthcare: Forced Sterilization, Genocide, and Contemporary Population Control.” *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2021, pp. 144–47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-020-00139-9>.

Unit 3: Feminism, Hormonal Contraception, and Reproductive Activism in the 20th Century

Week 5: The Birth Control Pill and Feminist Movements Thursday, February 6, 2025

Randolph, Sherie M. “Not to Rely Completely on the Courts: Florynce ‘Flo’ Kennedy and Black Feminist Leadership in the Reproductive Rights Battle, 1969–1971.” *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2015, pp. 136–60, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2015.0010>.

Adams, Heather Brook. “Goodbye, ‘Post-Pill Paradise’: Texturing Feminist Public Memories of Women’s Reproductive and Rhetorical Agency.” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 105, no. 4, 2019, pp. 390–417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2019.1657238>.

Jones, Reilly, et al. “‘We Wish We Had the Option’: A Qualitative Study of Women’s Perspectives and Experiences with Contraception in a Provincial Prison in Ontario, Canada.” *Health & Justice*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2024, pp. 15–15, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-024-00269-6>.

Week 6: Roe V. Wade Thursday, February 13, 2025

Ziegler, Mary. *Roe V. Wade and the Rise of the Rights Argument. Abortion and the Law in America : Roe v. Wade to the Present*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 11-26.

Axelson, Sarah M., et al. “Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients Who Obtained Care Out of State Prior to the Overturning of Roe v. Wade.” *Women’s Health Issues*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2024, pp. 142–47, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2023.10.003>.

Matthews, Hannah. *Abortion is Mine. You or Someone You Love : Reflections from an Abortion Doula*. Atria Books, 2023. 26-48.

Week 7: Abortion Politics in the Canada Thursday, February 27

Johnstone, Rachael. “Between a Woman and Her Doctor ?The Medicalization of Abortion Politics in Canada.” *Abortion : History, Politics and Reproductive Justice after Morgentaler*. Edited by Shannon Stetter, et al., UBC Press, 2017, 217-238
<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774835756>.

Bashevkin, Sylvia. “Explaining Feminist Movement Impact: Provincial Abortion Policies in the Wake of Decriminalization, 1988–2018.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2023, pp. 504–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000227>.

Unit 4: Politics, Purity Culture, The Dobbs Decision

Week 8: The Pro-Life and Purity Movement Thursday, March 6

Kelly, Casey Ryan. “Melodrama and Postfeminist Abstinence: The Twilight Saga.” *Abstinence Cinema : Virginity and the Rhetoric of Sexual Purity in Contemporary Film*. Rutgers University Press, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813575131>. 24-53.

Natarajan, Madison, et al. “Decolonizing Purity Culture: Gendered Racism and White Idealization in Evangelical Christianity.” *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2022, pp. 316–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843221091116>.

Week 9: The Dobbs Decision and its Consequences Thursday, March 13

Kaplan, Louise. "The Overturn of Roe v. Wade: Reproductive Health in the Post-Roe Era." *The Nurse Practitioner*, vol. 47, no. 10, 2022, pp. 5–8, <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NPR.0000873552.13618.91>.

Chrisphonte, Pascale, and Eraka Bath. "Overturning Roe v Wade and Planned Parenthood v Casey: An Assault to Reproductive and Racial Justice and the Mental Health of Youth." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2024, pp. 393–95, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2023.08.013>.

Singh, Susheela, and Gilda Sedgh. "Global Implications of Overturning Roe v Wade." *BMJ (Online)*, vol. 378, 2022, pp. o2025–o2025, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o2025>.

Week 10: Queering Reproductive Politics Thursday, March 20

Patton-Imani, Sandra. Queer in the 'Heartland' Allegories of Family, Race, and Equality, 2009 *Queering Family Trees Race, Reproductive Justice, and Lesbian Motherhood*. New York University Press, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.18574/978147986659>. 221-246.

Sutton, Barbara, and Elizabeth Borland. "Queering Abortion Rights: Notes from Argentina." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 20, no. 12, 2018, pp. 1378–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1437221>.

Cohen, Cathren, Wilson, Bianca D.M., and Kerith J. Conron. *Implications of Dobbs on Reproductive Health Care Access for LGBTQ People Who Can Get Pregnant [2022]*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute, 2022.

Unit 5: Moving Forward? Technology and Reproduction

Week 11: Learning About Reproductive Health Menstruation, Period Apps, and Sex Education Thursday, March 27

Polzer, J., Sui, A., Ge, K. and Cayen, L. (2022). Empowerment through participatory surveillance? Menstrual and fertility self-tracking apps as postfeminist biopedagogies. In Fellows, J. and Smith, L. (Eds.), *Gender, Sex, and Tech! An Intersectional Feminist Guide*. Canadian Scholars and Women's Press. 163-184.

Rubinsky, Valerie, et al. "‘I Thought I Was Dying:’ (Un)Supportive Communication Surrounding Early Menstruation Experiences." *Health Communication*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2020, pp. 242–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2018.1548337>.

Lieberman, Lisa D., and Eva S. Goldfarb. "Sex Ed in the Post-Roe World: Implications for Public Health Education." *Health Education & Behavior*, vol. 49, no. 6, 2022, pp. 919–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10901981221125429>.

Week 12: Reproductive Technology: IVF and Genetically Engineering Children Thursday, April 3, 2025

Letterie, Gerard, and Dov Fox. "Legal Personhood and Frozen Embryos: Implications for Fertility Patients and Providers in Post- Roe America." *Journal of Law and the Biosciences*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2023, pp. lsad006–lsad006, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jlb/lsad006>.

Borenstein, Jason. "The Wisdom of Caution: Genetic Enhancement and Future Children." *Science and Engineering Ethics*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2009, pp. 517–30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-009-9183-9>.