

Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
Western University**1030F/G -Introduction to Black Studies**
January – April 2026**Instructor:** Erica S. Lawson**Office Hour:** Weds. 11:30am 12:30pm (or
appt. on zoom)

Land Acknowledgement: We/I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay- wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-ongk-ton) Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

Course Description: Black Studies is comprised of the knowledge production practices and worldviews among African and African descendant peoples across the globe. Central to world-making, Black Studies is rooted in rich histories, cultures, and philosophies that have given rise to anti-colonial, anti-racist, Pan-African, and civil rights movements, including #BlackLivesMatter. This survey course introduces students to some of the foundational debates, ideas, and practices in the Black intellectual-activist tradition. We will locate a diversity of topics (e.g., liberation movements, racial capitalism, aesthetics, Afrofuturism, disability and queer studies, etc.,) in historical frameworks - with a focus on resistance, resilience, and freedom – to address how these histories inform contemporary, lived experiences. Toward these objectives, we will assess select readings, guest lectures, talks, documentaries, music, poetry, and podcasts focused on addressing Black Studies.

Learning Objectives

- Explore issues of relevance to Black studies
- Address key terminologies in the discipline
- Discuss how resilience and resistance are central to Black life
- Understand key aspects of the Black intellectual-activist tradition
- Examine how historical experiences shape contemporary realities in Black life.

Learning Outcomes

- Familiarity with debates in the Black intellectual tradition
- Improved knowledge about Black histories
- Identify connections between historical experiences and contemporary events
- Improved research and writing skills
- Critical evaluation and analytical skills
- Application of theory/analysis to issues and events

Assignments (Instructions & due dates will be posted in OWL Brightspace). Please submit all written assignments in word (Not PDF) format and upload them to Brightspace.

- Attendance & Participation - 10%
- Creative essay-style assignment – 20%
- Documentary Analysis – 20%
- Commentary on one guest lecture – 15%
- Final exam 35% (date and time TBA)

COURSE POLICIES (*Please note that minor adjustments or changes can be made to the course outline at any time*)

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

Students are encouraged to email the instructor or their tutorial leader if they have questions about the course. Students can expect a response from me within 48 hours during the work week. Students are not guaranteed a response over the weekend, or on holidays. Only emails using your "@uwo.ca" account will be answered.

Please send a follow-up email if you haven't heard from me after 48 hours. I want to hear from you.

COURSE WEBSITE

All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The instructor acknowledges that students have commitments elsewhere (i.e., other courses, jobs, caregiving, etc.), however, enrolment in this course constitutes a commitment to engage meaningfully with the subject material and participate in class. Students are invited to bring in materials (articles, blog posts, YouTube videos, etc.) that they feel are relevant to the week's topic. Note, however, that this is not a substitute for assigned readings. The assigned texts will serve as the basis for our conversation, and you must connect whatever material you are referencing/presenting to the assigned readings so that your peers may participate effectively.

CLASS CONDUCT

Students are expected to arrive on time. Showing up to class late disrupts the flow of conversation and is often distracting.

Please refrain from using electronic devices (i.e., laptops, phones, etc.) unless employed for class purposes. Recordings are not permitted. Electronic devices will not be permitted during in-class tests or exams.

LATE AND OUTSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments will receive a 2% deduction per day. Weekends count for two days penalty. An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class. An alternative assignment will be assigned under special circumstances.

Students seeking academic consideration must submit a request within 28 days of the assignment deadline.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be treated as such in this class. Students should refrain from presenting someone's work, ideas, opinions and/or writing as their own. Proper citation and referencing are key. Ignorance of plagiarism is not an excuse for representing someone's work as your own. I strongly encourage all students to familiarize themselves with the university's policies on academic misconduct. You have the tools to succeed in this course without engaging in academic misconduct. Connect with the instructor or your TA if you have concerns or are experiencing difficulty. We are here to help.

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

TURNITIN

All written assignments must be submitted through Turnitin. Access to Turnitin will be available through the OWL course website. According to university policy: "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."

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Students are prohibited from using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to complete coursework. Submitting work that you did not create yourself violates Western's academic integrity policy. You may, however, use AI software for light editing (e.g., check for grammar, punctuation, etc) of assignments and information-gathering purposes. You are responsible for verifying the accuracy of information gleaned from these platforms. Submitted assignments should be a representation of your intellectual efforts.

ACCESSIBILITY AND WRITING SUPPORT

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at (519) 661-2147 or aeu@uwo.ca for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Please see me during office hours if you are unable to attend class regularly so that arrangements can be made regarding your participation mark. Special consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis. I ask that you meet with me in advance or contact me via email to discuss anticipated absences/delays in your attendance or assignment submission.

I also encourage all students to make use of the Writing Support Centre. For further details, visit <http://writing.uwo.ca>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

The policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be viewed [here](#).

MEDICAL POLICY

I encourage students to read the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness at the following link: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Please do not submit medical notes to the instructor or your tutorial leader.* Contact your academic counsellor and we will work to develop an appropriate solution.

STATEMENT ON GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

PROFESSIONALISM & PRIVACY

Western students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course: All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared. Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission. Permitted recordings are not to be distributed.

COPYRIGHT AND AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING STATEMENT

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The following links provide information about support services at Western University.

[Academic Counselling](#)

[Appeal Procedures](#)

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Development Services](#)
[Student Health Services](#)

GRADING SCHEME

Assignments will be graded according to the scheme provided by Western University. I have copied this table below for reference:

Grade	Percentage
A+	90-100% (One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level)
A	80-89% (Superior work which is clearly above average)
B	70-79% (Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory)
C	60-69% (Competent work, meeting requirements)
D	50-59% (Fair work, minimally acceptable)
F	Below 50% or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty.

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