

**\*\*Previous Outline\*\***

**Western University  
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

**GSWS 3324F/3204F - Contemporary topics in Critical Race Studies  
September to December 2025**



**Instructor:** Erica S. Lawson  
**Location:** TBA

**Time:** Wednesdays 10:30 am – 1:30 pm  
**Office Hours:** TBA

**Course Description:**

This course examines the historical and intersectional roots of racism, its contemporary manifestations, and how it is resisted in protest movements. The course is organized thematically to address prominent topics in critical studies about race. These include (but are not limited to): anti-Black racism, critical race theory, Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and anti-Asian hate. Among the questions that frame the course are: What is racism and its formations? How does race shift and change over time? And how is race debated and contested in the twenty-first century? We will explore these, and other questions, with academic sources from across disciplines, as well as in popular culture/media, documentaries, and podcasts.

**\*Please Note\*:** Conversations about race and racism can be empowering, but they can also be triggering. Racism, colonialism, and Islamophobia, for example, are not merely abstract. They are rooted in deep historical realities, can be felt in embodied ways, and manifested in what Saidiya Hartman describes as ‘afterlives’: “(e.g., the afterlife of slavery and colonialism).” The

readings, films, documentaries, discussions, podcasts, and such, addressed in the course, may be difficult; with this in mind, I encourage you to debrief and to take care of yourselves.

**Prerequisites:** GSWS 2220E or GSWS 2273E or permission of the Department

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, and as a group, we should know (among other things):

- How racism is conceptualized and operationalized
- How people become racialized
- How race privilege works
- Critical Race Theory
- How racism is denied (e.g., in favour of euphemisms like “colourblind-ness”)
- How racism continues to be challenged on multiple fronts

Through our assignments, lectures, and discussions, we will also:

- Sharpen our critical analytical and presentation skills
- Improve our writing and editing abilities
- Learn how to read theory closely and critically
- Apply theory to an informed assessment of world issues and events
- Develop an understanding of the politics of racial power

**\*\*Note:\*\*** From time to time, I will pose questions from readings to be addressed in small group discussions and shared with the rest of the class. This means that you must come prepared to discuss the readings.

**Assignments and Evaluation: (Please review assignment instructions in the “Assignment” Tab in Brightspace)**

1. Analysis of one of two documentaries: 15%, 3-4 pages (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> or Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>)
2. Analysis of one of two course readings: 15%, 3 – 4 pages (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>)
3. Two hour quiz: 25%; two short answers and a long answer (Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>) – 25%
4. Annotated Bibliography: 15% (Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>)
5. Final Essay: 20%, 8-10 pages; (Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>; extended deadline if necessary – Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>)
6. Attendance and Participation: 10%