

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

**GSWS 3330G
Women Aren't Funny: Feminist Stand-Up Comedy
Winter 2025-26**



The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, and Attawandaron peoples.

Instructor: Prof. Anmol Dutta

Email: adutta24@uwo.ca

Office: UC 1424

Office Hours: Thursdays: 11 am to 1 pm.

In-person and on Zoom (Zoom info available on OWL)

Course Description

Feminist stand-up comedy has often been portrayed as angry, reductive, and hateful within the cultural zeitgeist. In this course, we will discuss what makes women not (only) funny, but dangerous, raging, and unforgiving in their stand-up performance. We will look at feminist stand-up comedy performed in English, through the various intersectional lens of queer performativity, white feminism, immigration politics, Muslim self-representation, vulgarity, disability, and Indigeneity. Some of the comics that we will study in this course include Ali Wong, Hannah Gadsby, Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes, Atsuko Okatsuka, Fatiha el-Ghorri, Tiffany Haddish, Zarna Garg, and Maysoon Zayid among others.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Have a nuanced understanding of the complex intersectional realities that imbue feminist stand-up comedy
- Consider the political and socio-cultural potentialities of feminist stand-up comedy
- Understand the growing importance of stand-up comedy as an emergent field of study
- Learn the histories that pave way to, and shape feminist stand-up comedy as futurist
- Improve critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills

Course Materials

Required Texts

There are no required texts that students need to purchase for this course.

NOTE: **We will likely **not** engage in full stand-up specials; specific timestamps of the weekly viewings will be made available on Brightspace (closer to start date). Students are encouraged to have an active Netflix subscription for easy access to selected stand-up specials. The most basic subscription starts at \$6.99/ month and goes up to \$20.99/ month for a premium subscription**

OWL Brightspace

All course materials, including links to video clips, will be posted on OWL Brightspace. 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.

Electronic Devices

Students may use electronic devices such as iPads, tablets, and/or laptops for notetaking purposes during class. Using cell phones and earphones are strongly discouraged during lecture-hours. Electronic devices of any kind are not permitted during tests and exams.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

In this course, students are strongly encouraged against any use of AI tools. They are, however, permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent, original written work. It is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives.

If AI use is suspected in any written work, 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.

By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment	Breakdown	Weightage	Deadline
Course Engagement	Introduction & Course Expectations (150-200 words)	5%	In-class exercise (beginning of the term)
	Takeaways & Course Response (150-200 words)	5%	In-class exercise (end of the term)
	Attendance	5%	N/A
Classroom Engagement	Classroom Discussion	10%	N/A
	Class Notes to Prof. Dutta	10%	For any 5 weeks of your choice
	Feminist stand-up clip discussion	10%	<i>TBD</i>
Reading Analysis (2-3 pages double spaced)	Assigned Reading (1)	15%	Deadline 1: Feb 9 ; Deadline 2: Feb 15
	Assigned Reading (2)	15%	Deadline 1: Mar 16 ; Deadline 2: Mar 22
Final Submission	Final Essay (2000 words)	25%	Deadline 1: Apr 4 ; Deadline 2: Apr 12

1. Course Engagement – 5% (x3)

- a) **Introduction & Course Expectations (5%):** In Week 2 of our class, in 150-200 brief words, students will write a short introductory blurb about their course expectations, any previous engagement with stand-up comedy, what they are most excited about etc.
- b) **Takeaways & Course Response (5%):** In one of the last classes of the term, students will write a short 150-200-word response about their takeaways from the course, in what ways do their understandings differ from the beginning of the course, their favourite week/topic, etc.
- c) **Attendance (5%):** Class attendance is mandatory throughout the semester.

2. Classroom Engagement – 10% (x3)

a) Classroom Discussion – 10%

Since this is a small, third-year course, the aim is to engage in meaningful discourse within the classroom. My goal is to bring each of your unique voices to the classroom thereby leading to a generative, collaborative classroom discussion. Please note that it is about the quality, and not the quantity of your participation that counts.

b) Class Notes to Prof. Dutta – 10%

Sometimes participation within the classroom space is challenging; contributing to discussions through alternative mediums such as class notes to the instructor offers students an outlet for your thoughts, taking

some pressure off verbal modes of class participation. This way, the pressure to think in real time and say something ‘important’ can be avoided.

By "class notes to Prof. Dutta," I mean that you will hand me your participation-comments in a handwritten note at the end of the class **for any 5 weeks of your choice**. Along with the written participation comment, students will include the date, their name and student number information. Students are also welcome to email the note to professor by the end of day. The email must include the same information required for the written in-class note. Class notes are not to be returned to the student with a grade; rather, they will be graded in similar vein to verbal class participation.

c) Bring a feminist stand-up clip for discussion – 10%

Starting Week 3, an assigned student will bring a 3–6-minute stand-up comedy clip that they deem feminist for in-class discussion. About 20 minutes will be allotted to this exercise every week. One or two students will participate each class, depending on the enrollment. This video clip will be of your own individual choosing. You do not have to ‘present’ on the topic per se; instead, you are required to prepare prompts for discussion and lead this discussion.

You can also pick a different clip of a comic who we are already discussing. It is encouraged that the selected video **relates to that week’s theme/topic**; it could also relate to **themes discussed in previous weeks**. Students are not required to yet are encouraged to run their picks/ideas by Prof. Dutta during office hours or via email. This assignment will be graded based on the quality of the students’ discussion prompts, your use of course materials to engage with the clip, and your role in leading the class discussion.

3. Reading Analysis – 15% (x2)

Students will write a **2-3 pages double spaced** response on an assigned course reading. Analysis **#1** can be selected from **Week 4 or 5** and will be due mid-February Reading Week. Analysis **#2** can be selected from **Week 9 or 10** and will be due late March. This assignment is meant to give students a chance to be creative with the material, analyze, and respond to, and the selected reading by taking a stand on what speaks most to them about the selected reading.

You can consider the following prompts to guide your analysis:

- a) What are the most important arguments that the author(s) are engaging with?
- b) What is your stance on the argument/s? Are you in dis/agreement and why?
- c) How does this reading further inform your understanding of our class discussions or relate to other materials discussed from the course?
- d) How/Why is this reading important or relevant to our current realities/ topical issues?

4. Final Essay – 25%

2000 words. **First Deadline: April 4; Second Deadline: April 12**

The research essay is to give you the opportunity to synthesize in further detail one or more aspects of the concerns, observations, questions, or critiques of feminist stand-up comedy as established in the course. The essay topics will be distributed later in the term. You are expected to **develop your thesis** with reference to the secondary criticism that is relevant to your topic and/or text. You will be expected to use **three-five secondary sources** to help support an argument you would like to make, or to highlight what is distinctive or different about your argument.

Remember that the essay must be your own; it should not be simply a summary of the materials that you consult. The guiding questions to consider are: a) Are these sources reputable? b) Were they authored by acknowledged experts in the field? c) Were they published in respected academic journals or by a

university press? d) And finally, do these sources address the very same issues that are at the centre of your argument?

Additional Assignment Information

**** Additional information about assessments have been posted under “Content” tab in OWL Brightspace under “Assignment Guidelines” ****

Grading Standards and Final Grades

Grade	Percentage
A+	90-100% - One could hardly 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 & eminently satisfactory
C	60-69% - Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59% - Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	Below 50% - Missed assignment/ Below par work not meeting requirements/ Assignment submitted does not apply to course

Course Policies

Email Response Time

Please note that emails will be responded to within 48 hours during regular working hours on Mon – Fri from 9 am-5pm. Please ensure to respect these working hours. When contacting me via email, students *must* include the course code (GSWS 3330G) in the subject line and use your official UWO email account to send the email. Emails without the course code and/or not sent from a UWO email are subject to be overlooked and not be responded to in time.

Essay Policy

The Reading analyses and Final essay must follow current MLA format (MLA 9) and must include a list of Works Cited at the end. There is a helpful online version of the guide here:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html

Please ensure that all your written work is **submitted as a Word attachment on OWL Brightspace**. The essays that are submitted in other formats will receive a grade, without any feedback.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes. In case of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 8 unexcused hours for a half course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination (the final essay in this case), and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the last course drop date. In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend classes will receive 0% for course participation grades.

Late Policy

Assignments that are submitted after the flexibility window i.e. there are two deadlines. Any submissions that surpass the second deadline will be considered overdue, and receive a penalty of **3% per day late**, including weekends and holidays. For any assignments more than 10% of the final grade, students must directly contact their academic counselor. Once I have received a recommendation for accommodation or consideration, then we can discuss the new due date, but not before. Accommodations for medical reasons cannot be given by the instructor, students must go through the proper channels to receive the medical accommodations (see below).

Deadline Flexibility Statement

Since the submission deadline for writing assessments already includes flexibility in the form of a two deadlines within a week's window, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility (after the second deadline).

THAT SAID, I will rarely, if ever deny academic consideration submitted by your academic counselor. If you suspect delays with your assignment, I hope that you feel brave enough to discuss the deadline and its what-have-yous, and I will try my best to come up with a solution together.

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements. 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/>. Requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

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

In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the Final Essay **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Evaluation for Missed Assessments

- a) **No Make-ups or Extensions:** There are NO make-ups or extensions for the three assessments under the Course Engagement and Classroom Engagement category each. Under extenuating circumstances, however, the “bring a feminist stand-up clip” assessment may be rescheduled to a later date, depending on other students' flexibility and our class schedule.
- b) **Extensions:** An extension may be granted for Reading Analysis 1 and 2, and Final Essay through Academic Consideration. For either the first or second Reading Analysis assignment, not both, an extension may be granted without supporting documentation. An extension for the final essay will be contingent on Academic Consideration.
- c) **Assessment Availability:** The submission window for both Reading Analyses, and Final essay will be available for a week after the second deadline, during which late penalties will apply. After

this submission window has closed, the instructor reserves the right to no longer accept submissions even if academic consideration granted.

Academic Accommodation

This course prioritizes accessible learning. [Academic Accommodation](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html) thus 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.” Students with both, visible and invisible disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity.

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

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-driven materials such as PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures for this course are created solely for students’ personal use within the course, and remain the instructor’s (Professor Dutta’s) intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner, Anmol Dutta, may be an infringement of copyright.

You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (both online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor’s content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Support Services Statements

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. The contact information 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 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/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Religious Accommodation

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.

Learning Development and Success

Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> is a fantastic resource to plan your studies. Counsellors at LDS are ready to help you improve your learning skills. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling. They also offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Additional Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or quote or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations.

Plagiarism Checking

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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Course Syllabus

****A detailed course syllabus will be made available on OWL Brightspace by early December****

➔ (Course Topics and Class Schedule can be found on the next page...)

Course Topics and Schedule

IMPORTANT: Our first class will be on the first day of Winter classes, Jan 05, 2026

Week	Theme	Dates
1	Introduction: Humor Regimes of Feminist Stand-up Comedy	Jan 05
2	Fumerism, Feminist Rage, and “Famous Penises”	Jan 12
3	Corporeal Excesses: ‘Vulgarity’, Pregnancy, and Performance	Jan 19
4	Fat Feminisms and the Politics of Self-Deprecation	Feb 26
5	Queer Temporalities: Queer Performance and/as Activism	Feb 2
6	Disability and Disruptive “Comedy-Making”	Feb 9
7	Reading Week	Feb 14-22
8	White Feminism and its Problems	Feb 23
9	Foreign Women and Un/Belonging	Mar 2
10	Muslim Women, <i>Hijab</i> , and Self-Representation	Mar 9
11	Emotional Women: Narrativizing the Personal	Mar 16
12	<i>Landing</i> Jokes: Indigenous Feminisms and Decolonial Futures	Mar 23
13	Feminist Futures	Mar 30