

GSWS 3440G – Gendered Blood: Critical Menstrual Studies

**The University of Western Ontario (Western University)
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

Instructor: Professor Cayen

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Class: Wednesday 10:30-1:30

Room: UC 1110

Office Hours: Tues 12:30-1:30, Weds 1:30-2:30, and by appointment. Check the syllabus in OWL for any changes weekly.

Office Location: Lawson Hall 3253

Zoom link for Office Hours: <https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/98628288743>

Password: GSWS

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

Course Description

This course takes an interdisciplinary, intersectional, and cross-cultural approach to menstruation and menstrual equity movements, foregrounding the work of academics, artists, and activists in their efforts to challenge the stigma and silence concerning periods. Throughout, students will deconstruct essentialist narratives and include gender non-binary menstruators in their theorizing of menstruation as a physiological bodily function. Topics may include menstrual leave debates, the environmental impact of disposable products, privacy concerns about period-tracking apps and other menstrual management technologies, and the reduction in period poverty through the provision of free or tax-free menstrual hygiene products.

Learning Objectives

- Deconstruct essentialist discourses around menstruation and gender identity
- Analyze global and cross-cultural narratives about menstruation
- Assess the political and technological regulation of “private” bodily functions
- Evaluate a range of disciplinary issues and theoretical approaches to menstruation, including through critical health studies, sexuality studies, queer theory, and more.
- Gain experience in qualitative research methods

Evaluations and Assignments

In-class engagement	15%
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Short Essay: Pop Periods	20%
Menstrual Moaning – Conversation and Journal	20%
The Menstrual Moment	45%
5% In-class coding exercise	
10% Paper proposal meeting with the prof & class discussion	
30% Final essay	

In-class engagement: Students are expected to arrive to class with materials read and notes taken, ready to contribute to discussion and active learning activities. Ask questions about anything you are unsure of! You can also contribute to this grade via written reflections, reading quizzes, mini presentations on your written assignments, informal in-class debates, etc.

Academic Consideration: No single absence will impact this grade if you are otherwise present and engaged across the course. Take advantage of the multiple modes of contributing to the class learning goals and pay attention to participation activities outlined in OWL to know your options. Since flexibility is already provided further requests for accommodation will be denied.

Short Essay: Pop Periods (4-5 pages, due Week 4/Jan 28): Assess a representation of menstruation in popular culture. Apply themes and concepts from course texts. Prepare a short presentation (<5 mins plus clips!) for delivery in small groups as part of your participation grade.

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with a no-questions-asked extension of 2.5 days. Submit by Saturday, Jan 31 @ 10:00am without late marks. Late papers will be accepted after this date with late penalties at 2%/day. You can carry out your presentation on Jan 28 without having the paper completed. Make-up presentation date for illness: Week 5/Feb 4. Because flexibility is already provided further requests for accommodation will be denied.

Menstrual Moaning (Journal reflection due Weeks 6-7/Feb. 11-25 and Weeks 7-8/Feb 25-Mar 4): In week 4/Jan. 28, collaborate with the class to generate a list of questions that you can use to have an engaged conversation with someone in your life about menstruation, broadly understood. You should select a conversation partner from outside of the class; they should be willing but someone you need to be a bit brave with (e.g., no roommates or BFFs!). Journal your reflections following your conversation with prompts provided by the instructor and come to class on Week 7/Feb. 25 ready to compare notes with your peers. Additional reflection questions will be provided during this class.

Academic Consideration: This assignment comes with built-in flexibility to accommodate your schedule with your conversation partner. Conduct conversations between Weeks 4-7. Complete the initial reflection journal immediately following your conversation in this same window. Complete the second reflection journal following in-class discussion and submit during weeks 7-8. Make-up in-class discussion period for illness: Week 8/Mar. 4. Because flexibility is already provided further requests for accommodation will be denied.

The Menstrual Moment (in-class coding on Mar 4; proposal due Mar 18 or 25; final essay due Apr. 8): Is menstruation having a moment? Has the shame around menstruation been lifted, or

are we still stuck on the ‘story’ that it’s shameful to talk about periods? In this assignment, students will analyze the forward/introductory chapters of a range of recently published popular press books on menstruation, perimenopause, menopause, and women’s hormonal health. We will collaborate to identify the narratives used to frame these texts and code these as themes. Students will identify one theme to discuss in-depth in a final paper (10-11 pages), supported by a short proposal (one-on-one meeting with the prof in Weeks 10-11 and in-class discussion). More detail will be posted to OWL.

Key dates:

Week 8/Mar. 4 – 5% - collaborative in-class coding (make-up by Week 9/Mar. 11)

Week 9/Mar. 11 – collaborative discussion of themes (make-up by Week 10/Mar. 18)

Week 10-11/Mar. 16-Mar. 27 – 10% - theme proposal meetings with the prof and in-class discussion

Week 13/Apr. 8 – 30% - final paper due

Academic Consideration: Flexibility is outlined above; further requests will be denied. The final paper due date can be extended to Apr. 9 without consultation with your Academic Counsellor.

Readings

There is no textbook to purchase. All readings will be available via the Course Readings portal or by PDF on OWL. Many will be selected from the following ebook which is free to download:

- Bobel, C., Winkler, I.T., Fahs, B., Hasson, K.A., Kissling, E.A., & Roberts, T.A. (2020). The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies. Springer Singapore.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-0614-7>

*Trigger warning: a note that some of our readings engage in gender/sex essentialism or cisnormativity in claims, explicit or implicit, that frame menstruation as exclusive to women. We will read these texts critically and discuss in our first class how to balance the social and political association of menstruation with femininity with the reality that not only and not all women menstruate.

Policies and Procedures

Please keep abreast of all relevant policies and announcements from Western's Administration. Not all your rights and responsibilities are detailed below. And please: ask questions about anything at all that you want clarification on or don't fully understand.

Recognition of First Nations Territory

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.

What does this look like and mean to me in the context of this course?

I'm still learning and working to decolonize my thinking, learning, and pedagogical approach. For me, this means adding perspectives from Indigenous authors early enough in the course that they can serve as a foundation for discussion; see, for example, the clip and recommended text by Baldy in Week 1. Alternate assignments, like the Menstrual Moaning conversation and reflection journal, also make room for Indigenous students to engage with Indigenous knowledges; this project is animated by storytelling and engages the body, mind, and spirit of students. And, it means being humble: being open to student requests and suggestions and committing to revising and expanding the syllabus offerings every year.

To learn more about the resources I use to support Indigenous students in the classroom, visit: <https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/indigenous-tl-resources.html>

Support Services

Western's Senate recently approved a new policy on Academic Consideration. Please read it here: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

These policies have already been integrated into the assignment structure of this course. If you have questions about how to navigate this policy, please contact me or your Academic Advising Office/Academic Counsellor: 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/faculty_academic_counselling.html

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

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

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help

Note for students with disabilities: 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. You may also contact http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html to find out the full range of services available to you.

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/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Statement on Academic Offences and the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Submit electronic copies of all written assignments to Turnitin.com through links in OWL.

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.
(<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>)

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

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes an academic offense; not knowing is not an adequate defense. Some advice to be aware of includes, but is not limited to, the following: write assignments yourself and in your own words; **do not use AI or other paraphrasing or**

essay-writing services; do not submit an assignment to this class that has previously been submitted elsewhere; cite both direct quotes as well as the paraphrased ideas of others.

*If you use a Generative AI tool to help with your assignment, you **must** identify every part of your assignment that you did not write yourself. Anything else is a violation of academic integrity and subject to all the same penalties as more traditional types of plagiarism.*

You may be asked to explain your essays orally and to answer questions about both the actual essay and your research process (e.g., you may be asked to show the steps you took to write the essay, answer questions about your sources or argument, and have adequate knowledge of your topic).

It is better to submit nothing than to submit something that has any amount of plagiarism in it. Save your academic record: consult with me for more time if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Attendance Policy and/or Participation policy for final exams

Please note the attendance policy of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies and The University of Western Ontario: In classes without final examinations, persistent absenteeism (defined by the Department as three [3] weeks in half courses, and six [6] weeks in full courses) may be rendered grounds for failure in the course (after due warning is given).

You might consider these tips when assessing your role as a participant in this course:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” or “playing devil’s advocate” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all written and verbal communications. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

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

Prerequisites

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.

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

Contact Info

Office hours are designated for you! I'll be in my office and on Zoom during the hours posted to page 1 of the syllabus: drop-in for a one-on-one meeting to ask questions about the material and get clarification on assignments, no appointment necessary. Please do not wait until the week before assignments to ask for help as my time may become limited (and your need for an answer more urgent). I'm also very happy to chat as I'm setting up for class, during break, or just after class lets out.

Have a question? Proceed thusly:

1. Double check the syllabus, assignment outlines, OWL announcements, lessons pages and lecture slides to make sure the answer isn't already provided.
2. Can the answer wait until you see me in class? Ask me then; sometimes it's a good reminder for me about something I might need to fill the class in on, and it helps cut down on my e-mail.
3. No luck? Feel free to e-mail me!

How to E-mail Effectively:

I am teaching many classes this year and anticipate a high volume of e-mails – please help me keep it manageable by asking questions in class or using my drop-in office hours whenever possible.

Also: please do not use AI to help you write emails! They end up being SO long and make it hard for me to find out what you're asking of me. Short emails are more likely to get quick replies!

When e-mailing:

Use a subject line: our course code and a flag to the e-mail's content is great. EG: "GSWS 3440 – reading missing" or "GSWS 3440 – meeting request"

Please use a salutation ("Hi Professor Cayen,"), clearly identify yourself ("I am in your Gendered Blood Course"), and then proceed with your question. Please be sure to indicate what you have tried already so that my response can be more efficient (eg: instead of saying "I don't know what I'm supposed to read this week", you might say: "I know the syllabus says to read

bell hooks this week, but when I go to the Course Readings link from OWL there are two articles by bell hooks listed. Do I read both of them?”) Then, sign off with a thanks and your name!

We will endeavor to reply promptly, but if you have not received a reply within 3 days (excluding weekends) please re-send your e-mail. Use your UWO email address, as emails not so identified may automatically be screened out as spam. Be sure to check your own UWO e-mail address at least once a day.

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Grading Scheme

Essays, exams, and other assignments will be assessed according to the following criteria. Ask questions prior to submitting assignments if you would like more guidance on how to meet the learning outcomes of this course.

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Grading Criteria

A+ (90 to 100)

One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A (80 and up)

Superior work which is clearly above average

- Challenging and specific thesis that is clearly developed
- Correct and interesting sentence structure
- Sophisticated writing style
- Appropriate documentation
- Quotations well integrated into the text, with proper documentation
- Evidence of originality or independence of thought
- Provision of strong analysis
- Complexity, and subtlety in approach to subject
- Well-organized with a logical development of the argument

B (70 to 79)

Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

- Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs
- Correct sentence structure
- Adequate documentation
- Allowance for some (minor) problems such as:
 - errors in factual content or interpretation
 - some minor errors in terminology or general writing skills
 - occasional lapses in clarity, including vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure
- Provision of some analysis

Note: A grade in the range of 75-79 indicates an essay that borders on an A but has some significant flaw that prevents giving out the higher grade.

C (60 to 69)

Competent work, meeting requirements

- Generally correct but tends to provide more description than analysis
- Tends to be too general or superficial in the handling of material
- Weaknesses in argument including a descriptive thesis, a mechanical approach, lack of adequate evidence, documentation, or support
- Problems with grammar or matters of style
- Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression

D (50 to 59)

Fair work, minimally acceptable

- Does not provide an argument or a line of thought
- Major difficulties with logical structure, and expression of ideas
- Topic has not been thought through
- Errors of grammar and diction interfere with understanding
- Over-generalization with inadequate support, evidence, or documentation

F (49 and down)

Fail

- Assignment submitted does not apply to course
- Basic requirements of the assignment are not met

Plagiarism with intent to deceive (to be handled by the department)