

The University of Western Ontario
London, Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
GSWS4473: Queer Ecology: past, present, future

Term: Winter 2026

Instructor: Kat Newman-Seymour

Email: knewma26@uwo.ca

Time: Fridays, 11:30 am - 2:30 pm

Office Hours: TBD

Prerequisites: GSWS 3173G or department permission

Course Description

This course will employ feminist and queer theory to question and destabilize binary categories such as natural/unnatural, nature/culture, normal/abnormal, human/animal, and heterosexual/homosexual as they relate to our understandings of “nature” and the “environment.” Further, the course will explore how racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, transphobia, colonialism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression have shaped and continue to shape environmental discourses. This course will provide an overview of queer ecology in its past and present forms and invite students to envision a trans-inclusive queer ecology in the future. It will draw upon the relationships between queer theory, queerness, queer-ing, and ecological systems and the environment. The course will motivate students to question preconceived notions about family, nature, culture, and queerness to engage with new paradigms of environmental and gender justice. The course will engage with what it means to queer one’s relationship to the environment. It will also discuss ways to expand our understanding of nature, environment, and queerness. A broader understanding and engagement with community/ecological-world-building, community gardens, and alternative food systems will also be a part of this course curriculum.

Learning Objectives

Throughout the course, students will:

- Construct an understanding of the development of queer ecology “through time”
- Question colonial systems of power, including sexuality, gender, racism, and constructions of what is considered nature, human, and non-human
- Employ a queered perspective to “nature”
- Deconstruct binary (il)logics pervasive in settler societies like human/non-human, nature/not-nature, natural/unnatural, queer/straight, and more
- Demonstrate an understanding of how colonial “man-made” hierarchies affect humans and more-than-humans alike

- Imagine possibilities for queer, transgender, and Global South perspectives on ecology and environmental justice
- Understand the health impacts of poor environmental conditions and climate change on communities like queer and transgender people, BIPOC communities, and more-than-human communities
- Optimize learning through academic and non-academic course readings, lectures, films, case studies, guest speakers, debates, and written and verbal participation
- Have the opportunity to relate course content to their daily lives, future studies, and careers

Course texts

All texts will be made accessible on Brightspace. Students can also access the texts using Western's Online Libraries. Students are not expected to purchase any materials/texts for this course.

Student Evaluation/ Methods of Assessment

- Participation – 20%
- Student-Led Group Discussion – 15%
- Self-reflection – 15%
- Annotated bibliography – 15%
- Final Essay (8-10 pages) – 35%

Participation - 20%

This course is seminar/discussion-based. Students must arrive at class each week having completed the readings for that week before attending. Attending and participating in class discussions are vital to students' success in a seminar course. Students are encouraged to come to class with 1-2 questions and/or talking points about the readings that spark critical engagement with the texts and their peers. Participation marks will be based on students' attendance and active engagement in group discussions.

Student-led group discussion - 15%

Beginning in week 3, students will be assigned one week in which they will lead group discussions in relation to the readings, concepts, and themes of the week. Students are expected to prepare roughly 1 hour of discussion (Must be longer than 45 minutes and no longer than 1 hour and 15 minutes). This can happen in a few ways — students can prepare activities, small group discussions, share outside readings/art/videos related to the topic, and more. Students are

required to provide a brief overview of the readings, including discussing key concepts/terms, and to ask critically engaging questions that must take up at least half of their allotted time. For example, a student can ask questions about the readings for 30 minutes and have 30 minutes of small group discussion. **PowerPoint presentations are not permitted for student-led discussions. Questions for the class are allowed in PowerPoint format as an accessibility aid.** The purpose of this assignment is to spark critical discussion/engagement with the texts, not to lecture your peers. Students will be marked on their knowledge of the course readings and concepts from that week, their ability to engage with questions/comments from their peers, their ability to make connections to previous weeks' concepts, and the academic and critical value of their prepared questions/discussion/activities for the week. Students will need to review the syllabus and come prepared in week 2 to sign up for a week that sparks their interest in leading the discussion.

Self-reflection - 15%

Due February 13, at 11:59 pm on OWL

Throughout the semester, students will be asked to reflect on their relationship to nature. Students are expected to spend time in nature on three dates of their choosing and structure their assignment similarly to a personal journal. Spending time in nature is being kept purposefully vague here. Students must begin their assignment by establishing their chosen site — is it looking out their window onto a city street with birds, plants, and people around? Is it a walk in London's many nature trails? Is it a park? Is it an aquarium? Is it a friend gathering? Each journal entry must begin by setting the scene and providing a definition for how the student is defining nature in that context and why. Drawing on course concepts, students can reflect on questions like, what does nature mean to me? What is my *relationship* with nature like? How can I incorporate meaningful engagement with nature into my life more regularly? This list is not prescriptive nor exhaustive, but it could be a helpful starting point. Each journal entry should be 1-1.5 pages. Photos of your “site” of nature are encouraged but not required. Photos do not contribute to the page-length requirement.

Annotated Bibliography - 15%

Due March 6, at 11:59 pm on OWL

Students must submit 5-8 external (not from the course) sources to be included in their final essay. Each annotation should be structured as a proper citation in accordance with APA or MLA guidelines, followed by a paragraph of 300-400 words that briefly summarizes the reading. You may also address key concepts/terms from the reading here. The bulk of your annotation should be explaining how the source is relevant to your research topic, how you will critically engage

with the text, etc. Do NOT simply summarize the source. Sources are not limited to academic sources; students can use op-eds, blog posts, open-access websites, documentaries, YouTube videos, etc., but are encouraged to use critical analysis and vetting of non-academic sources to be sure they uphold valuable research merit and must be cited properly. You must include your topic/question/thesis at the top of the assignment. Students will be marked on their citations, how clearly they establish the use/function of each annotation and why they're using it, and their critical engagement with each source.

Final Essay - 35%

Due April 10, at 11:59 pm on OWL

Students must write a research paper (8-10 pages, not including a bibliography) that relates to an environmental justice movement in recent years. Students are encouraged to explore communities that are frequently overlooked in popular environmental discourses, like a specific Indigenous community, people from the Global South, people of color, and queer and/ or gender-diverse people. Students must engage with at least 2 texts from the course meaningfully and provide at least 5 external sources. Students will be evaluated based on their ability to explain their topic and how it relates to course concepts, critical engagement with the texts, and their ability to draw on sources non-superficially.

Assignment submission expectations

All assignments must be submitted as a Word Document or a PDF in Brightspace. Failure to do so will result in point deductions. All assignments must be submitted in accordance with APA or MLA guidelines. Each assignment will need to be written in 12-point font, Times New Roman, and be double-spaced. Assignments must be submitted using the following format for the title of the submission: Last Name, First Name. GSWS4473.

All assignments are due at 11:59 pm on Brightspace on the due date unless otherwise specified.

Weekly Course Readings

Week 1: January 9

Introduction to Queer Ecology

Queer: a Graphic History

By: Meg-John Barker and Jules Scheele

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=4782608>

Queer Ecology and Intersectional Environmentalism

<https://www.sustained.kitchen/latest/2021/6/17/queer-ecology-and-intersectional-environmentalism>

Queer Ecology, Explained.

By Ingrid Bååth

<https://www.climateculture.earth/5-minute-reads/what-is-queer-ecology>

Why we need intersectional environmentalism

<https://www.sustained.kitchen/latest/2020/6/9/intersectional-environmentalism>

Listen to Episode 1.9: Ecofeminism and Queer Ecology from The Ecopolitics Podcast
(Can be accessed using Spotify and/or here):

<https://www.ecopoliticspodcast.ca/episode-9-ecofeminism-and-queer-ecology-2/>

Week 2: January 16

Ecofeminism

Warren, K. J. (2001). Nature is a feminist issue. In *The Philosophers' Magazine* (Number 14, pp. 19–20). <https://doi.org/10.5840/tpm200114126>

Can be accessed here (read pages 19-20): <https://reader-exacteditions-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/issues/7330/page/19>

Plumwood, V. (1986) ECOFEMINISM: AN OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF POSITIONS AND ARGUMENTS, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 64:sup1, 120-138, DOI: 10.1080/00048402.1986.9755430

Can be accessed: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00048402.1986.9755430?casa_token=BcZ6S0neOd0AAAAA:Y2vjbRJDnrLs7zjD6wJqNZQWf06NWwd6CExqntwuYP6bZn2xdx6WxV540EHYVtbog2p7OiiDl8g

Gaard, G. (2015). Ecofeminism and climate change. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 49, 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.004>

Week 3: January 23

Separating Queer Ecology from Ecofeminism

Gaard, G. (1997). Towards a queer ecofeminism. *Hypatia*, Winter, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), pp. 114-137. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3810254>

Sandilands & Erickson. (2015). Queer Ecology. Keywords for Environmental Studies. Can be accessed: https://www.academia.edu/49663406/Queer_Ecology

Amor, B. (2018). *Queering the environmental movement*. Earth Island Journal. <https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/queering-the-environmental-movement/#>

Vakoch, D.A. (Ed.). (2020). *Transecology: Transgender Perspectives on Environment and Nature* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.4324/9780429023811>

*Read Introduction, pages 1-14

Week 4: January 30

Race, animals, and colonial hierarchies

Gosine, A. (2021). Introduction. In *Nature's Wild: love, sex, and law in the Caribbean* (pp. 1–12). essay, Duke University Press.

Alaimo, S (2016). Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals.” *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, University of Minnesota Press. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?docID=4525972>

Leonhardt, B. (2023). Ancestral Lands and Genders: A Queer Indigenous Critique of Settler Climate Change and Post-Apocalyptic Narratives. *Radical Philosophy Review*, 26(1), 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev202359134>

Wynter, S. (2003). Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(3), 257–337. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949874>

Week 5: February 6

The Landscape, “wilderness”, Indigeneity

Baldwin, A., Cameron, L., & Kobayashi, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Rethinking the great white north: Race, nature, and the historical geographies of whiteness in Canada*. UBC Press.

*Read the Introduction: *Where Is the Great White North? Spatializing History, Historicizing Whiteness*

Elston, M. M. (2012). Subverting Visual Discourses of Gender and Geography: Kent Monkman's Revised Iconography of the American West. *Journal of American Culture*, 35(2).

Jaffee, L., & John, K. (2018). Disabling bodies of/and land: Reframing disability justice in conversation with indigenous theory and activism. *Disability and the Global South*, 5(2), 1407-1429.

**Additional reading, TBD

Week 6: February 13

Species, diversity, monocultures

****Self-reflection due by 11:59 pm**

McWhorter, L. (2010). Enemy of the Species. In C. Mortimer-Sandilands & B. Erickson (Eds.), *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (pp. 73–101). Indiana University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzhnz.6>

Coleman, V. R. (2017). *Beyond the Anthropocene: Multispecies Encounters in Contemporary Latin American Literature, Art, and Film* (Order No. 10273007). Available from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/beyond-anthropocene-multispecies-encounters/docview/1897548333/se-2>

*Read pages 111-128

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). “In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place.” *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants* (First edition.). Milkweed Editions.

*Read pages 205-215

Can be accessed:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/reader.action?docID=1212658&ppg=218&pq-origsite=primo>

Beyond Gender Monocultures, Toward Trans Horizons
by Ganda/Max T. López Toledano & Topaz Zega
<https://edgeeffects.net/gender-monocultures/>

Week 7: February 20
Reading Week, no class this week

Week 8: February 27

Transecologies

Cram, E. (2024). Queer and trans ecologies as care practice of indispensability. *Environmental Communication*, 18(1–2), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2023.2296839>

Simha, A., & Subramaniam, B. (2024). Transient worlds: Toward trans ecological futures. *TSQ*, 11(4), 624–644. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-11421126>

Hayward, E., & Weinstein, J. (2015). Introduction: Tranimalities in the age of trans* life. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 2(2), 195-208.

Freyne, G. G. (2020). Transgender: An expanded view of the ecological self. In *Transecology* (pp. 174-189). Routledge.

Week 9: March 6
Queer health + climate change

****Annotated bibliography due by 11:59 pm**

Kilpatrick, C., Higgins, K., Atkin, S., & Dahl, S. (2023). A Rapid Review of the Impacts of Climate Change on the Queer Community. *Environmental Justice*.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2023.0010>

Goldsmith, L., M.E.M., & Bell, M. L., PhD. (2022). Queering environmental justice: Unequal environmental health burden on the LGBTQ+ community. *American Journal of Public Health*, 112(1), 79-87. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306406>

Collins, T. W., Grineski, S. E., & Morales, D. X. (2016). Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Environmental Injustice: Unequal Carcinogenic Air Pollution Risks in Greater Houston. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 107(1), 72–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2016.1218270>

Week 10: March 13
Queer health + climate change (cont).

Collins, T. W., Grineski, S. E., & Morales, D. X. (2017). Environmental injustice and sexual minority health disparities: A national study of inequitable health risks from air pollution among same-sex partners. *Social Science & Medicine*, 191, 38-47.

Ramnarine, Jordan. (2023). Who Speaks for the River?: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to the One Health Impacts of Climate Colonialism on Two-Spirit People in Deshkan Ziibi. 10.13140/RG.2.2.15365.73448.

*Read pages 6-11 & 31-39

Hunt, S. (2016). An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People: Historical, contemporary and emergent issues. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

Can be accessed: <https://www.ccnsa-nccah.ca/docs/emerging/RPT-HealthTwoSpirit-Hunt-EN.pdf>

Week 10: March 20

Environmental reproductive justice

Sturgeon, N. (2010). Penguin Family Values. *Climate Change: Who's Carrying the Burden?: the Chilly Climates of the Global Environment Dilemma*, 3, 131.

Hoover et al. (2012). *Indigenous peoples of North America: Environmental exposures and reproductive justice*. Environmental health perspectives. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3548285/>

Watch in class: *Children of Men*

*No student-led discussions this week

Week 11: March 27

Environmental justice

Feng J. (2024). Framing Queer Climate Justice. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 57(4):529-539. doi:10.1017/S1049096524000350

Can be accessed: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/framing-queer-climate-justice/2A2C5CF7D62ADAA77A0316CD42B2A4FC>

Baska, M. (2022). *Two-spirit activists explain why LGBT+ folk must unite against climate disaster*. PinkNews. <https://www.thepinknews.com/2022/01/15/indigenous-environmental-activist-two-spirit-lgbt/>

Goldberg, S. (2023). *Remembering tortuguita, Indigenous Queer and non-binary environmental...* HRC. <https://www.hrc.org/news/remembering-tortuguita-indigenous-queer-and-non-binary-environmental-activist-and-forest-defender>

Tandon, A. (2023). *Transgender activists highlight the impacts of climate change and environmental issues on the community*. Mongabay. <https://india.mongabay.com/>

2023/03/transgender-activists-highlight-the-impacts-of-climate-change-and-environmental-issues-on-the-community/

Week 12: April 3

Queer farmers + queer food systems

Sbicca, J. (2012). Eco-queer movement(s): Challenging heteronormative space through (re)imagining nature and food.

Pessereau, E. *Young, Queer Farmers Are Here to Change U.S. Agriculture.*

<https://edgeeffects.net/queer-farmers/>

Pakin-Albayrakoğlu, E. (2022). Out and Proud in the Field: Eco-Queers for Climate Adaptation. *Peace Review*, 34(1), 51–63.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2022.2023429>

****Final Essay due April 10 at 11:59 pm**

Course Policies

Email Policy

Please allow 48 hours for the Instructor to respond to emails. The Instructor will respond to emails between Monday and Friday, 9 am - 5 pm. Students must wait 48 hours after receiving marks to inquire with the Instructor. The Instructor will not respond to questions regarding an assignment within 72 hours of the deadline. This is, of course, within reason. If you're having an issue with submission or have a quick question that is acceptable, but do not email the instructor to review a topic or thesis statement (for example) within this timeframe. Proper planning should be taken into account for the student to do well on assignments.

Late Policy

Students must reach out no later than 1 week before an assignment is due to request an extension. **If a student is unable to present their week of the Student-Led Group Discussion, they must let the instructor know as soon as possible. The student must indicate an alternative week to lead the discussion in this communication.**

Students are automatically given a 3-day grace period in which assignments may be submitted. For example, an assignment that is due on January 1 will be accepted until January 3, without penalty. Assignments submitted after the final flexible due date will be penalized. Generally, late submissions will not be accepted unless the student has consulted with the Instructor for extenuating circumstances. Flexible deadlines are intended to minimize students' need for extensions.

Generated Artificial Intelligence Policy

This course requires students to demonstrate critical thinking about queer ecology, environmental racism, queerness, and more. Any use of AI is considered inappropriate for this course. As such, students are not permitted to use AI programs to write, in whole or in part, any assignments. Students are permitted to use AI as a writing aid (such as asking AI how to format an annotated bibliography). If students use AI to write any part of their assignment, they must cite this use accordingly using APA or MLA guidelines. If a student fails to do so, they have committed academic dishonesty. Please see Western's official policy on AI for more information: <https://ai.uwo.ca/Guidance/Policy.html>

Students should also be aware of the environmental costs of using AI: <https://oecd.ai/en/wonk/understand-environmental-costs>

Academic Accommodations

Students are not required to provide the instructor with formal documentation of disability, extenuating circumstances, etc., to receive accommodations. **Accommodations that can be provided to students within the scope and ability of the course will be provided.** Students should reach out to the instructor to discuss any accommodations that would help them succeed in the course. Students may also seek formal disability accommodations through Accessible Education: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf