

Western University
Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
GSWS 2160A Intimate Relations, Sex, Gender, and Love
Course Outline Fall 2025

Course Time: Wednesdays 4:30pm-7:30 pm

Prerequisites: No Prerequisites

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Auger

Email: lauger3@uwo.ca

Office Hours: TBD

GSWS Department Phone Number: 519-661-3759

Land Statement

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.”

Department Course Description

Intimate Relations focuses on how expectations of intimacy and relationships rely on particular understandings of love, sex, sexuality and bodies to shape how we experience ourselves as gendered and sexual beings. The course considers how intimacy (sexual, maternal, familial, affectionate) is understood in relation to history, philosophy, health, society and popular culture.

Detailed Course Description

Intimate relations are fundamental to how we understand ourselves. This course will explore intimate relations in history, culture, society, and personal experiences. We will examine how historical and cultural understandings of gender and sexuality impact people's lived experiences as well as their subjectivities. Intimate Relations; Sex, Gender, and Love will challenge you to unpack the ways in which dominant understandings regarding sex, gender, and love impact your own intimate relations and experiences.

Key Course Questions:

- What is intimacy?
- How do dominant discourses regarding gender, sexualities, and love impact people's intimate relations?
- How do dominant discourses regarding love impact people's expectations for love in their own lives?
- How do dominant discourses regarding gender, sexualities, and love impact people's sense of self?
- How do discriminatory discourses regarding race, sexualities, disability, and gender impact people's lived experiences and identities?
- How have dominant discourses regarding gender, sexualities, and love changed over time?
- How can experiences be resistant to dominant perspectives and ways of being?

Course Objectives

1. Students will develop their understanding of intimate relations through an interdisciplinary approach.
2. Students will learn that there are many kinds of intimate relations including sexual, familial, parental, and affectionate.
3. In course assessments, students will demonstrate their ability to make connections between, and critically engage with, interdisciplinary scholarship on intimate relations, gender, sexualities, and love.
4. Students will learn through participating in this course that dominant discourses regarding gender, sex, and love impact people's lived experiences, sexualities, and subjectivities.
5. Students will grow to understand that despite the power of dominant discourses, experiences and subjectivities can be resilient to dominant perspectives and ways of being.
6. Through this course, students will learn that dominant discourses can be harmful to people, communities, and understandings of self.
7. Students are encouraged to connect course content with their personal experiences.
8. Through course work, students will develop their critical thinking abilities making connections between multiple themes, discourses, and experiences.
9. The course will help develop students' written communication skills particularly focusing on organizing essays and arguments, developing a clear writing style, and writing mechanics.

Evaluation Breakdown

Mid-Term Exam	40%
In-class Responses (2x10%)	20%
Final Exam	40%

Assignment Description

Mid-Term Exam (2 hours) (40% of final grade). The exam will cover weeks 1-5.

In-Class Responses (2x10% of final grade) (Wednesday, September 17 and Wednesday, November 19)

Students will write two-in class responses over the course of the term. These responses will be written on paper during our class time. You will be asked to respond to the following question: What is the importance of this week's topic and how does this topic resonate with you? Students will be evaluated based on their ability to adequately and thoughtfully answer the above questions, based on the extent to which they draw on course content, themes, and terms, and based on their level of analysis. **This is an open-book in-class activity. Students will have one hour to complete the response. Please contact the Professor if you have academic accommodations for course assessments.**

Final Exam (2 hours) (40% of the final grade) The exam will cover week 1 as well as weeks 7-12. It will be scheduled during the exam period.

Course Delivery Mode

This course is an in-person course. Weekly readings will be posted online.

Course Materials

All course material will be posted to OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>
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.

Course Content and Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Intimate Relations; Gender, History, and Sexuality- Wednesday, September 10

Fox, Bonnie and Meg Luxton. Analyzing the Familiar: Definitions, Approaches and Issues at the Heart of Studying Families. *Family Patterns, Gender Relations 4th Edition*. edited by Bonnie Fox. Oxford University Press, 2014. 2-30.

Blank, Hanne. Chapter One The Love That Could Not Speak Its Name. *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality*. Beacon Press, 2012. 1-22.

Week 2: Queer Histories and Sexualities- Wednesday, September 17, In-Class Response

Mimi Marinucci, Feminism Is Queer the Intimate Connection Between Queer and Feminist Theory (New York: Zed Books, 2010) 20-35.

Week 3: Freud, Purity, and Weddings- Wednesday, September 24

Ingraham, Chrys. Lifting the Veil. *White Weddings : Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* . Routledge, 1999, doi:10.4324/9780203011645 1-19.

Kennedy, Melanie. “Spectacular Virgins; Purity Porn and the Making Uncanny of the White Wedding.” *The Wedding Spectacle Across Contemporary Media and Culture [electronic Resource] : Something Old, Something New*. edited by Jilly Boyce Kay, Melanie S. Kennedy, and Helen Wood. Routledge, 2019. 155-169.

Week 4: The Legacy of Residential Schools and Indigenous Family Life – Wednesday, October 1

The Legacy. Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016. 103-139.

Week 5: Love and War – Wednesday, October 8

Jarratt, Melynda. Maritimes and Newfoundland. *War Brides The Stories of Women who Left Everything Behind to Follow the Men they Love*. Tempus Publishing, 2009. 33-63.

Allport, A. (2009). Chapter Three My Faithless English Rose. *Demobbed Coming Home After the Second World War*. Yale University Press. 80-106.

Week 6: Mid-Term Wednesday, October 15 4:30-6:30 in-class

Week 7: Happily Ever After? Break Ups and Divorce- Wednesday, October 22

Garlen, Julie C., and Jennifer A. Sandlin. "Happily (n)ever after: The Cruel Optimism of Disney's Romantic Ideal." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 17, no. 6, Routledge, 2017, pp. 957–71, doi:10.1080/14680777.2017.1338305.

Walsh, Katie. "'My Two Homes' Children's Picture Books and Non/Normative Imaginaries of Home in Post-Divorce/Separation Families." *Home Cultures*, vol. 14, no. 3, Routledge, 2017, pp. 237–56, doi:10.1080/17406315.2018.1507777.

Week 8: Pets and Kinships- Wednesday, October 29

McKeithen, Will. "Queer Ecologies of Home: Heteronormativity, Speciesism, and the Strange Intimacies of Crazy Cat Ladies." *Gender, Place and Culture : a Journal of Feminist Geography*, vol. 24, no. 1, Routledge, 2017, pp. 122–34, doi:10.1080/0966369X.2016.1276888.

Charles, Nickie. "'Animals Just Love You as You Are': Experiencing Kinship Across the Species Barrier." *Sociology (Oxford)*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2014, pp. 715–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513515353>.

Week 9: Teaching Safe Intimate Relations? Sex Ed and Contraceptives in History and Contemporary Society- Wednesday, November 12

Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren. "Women's Struggle to Limit Their Fertility: Contraceptive Practices in Canada." in *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception in Canada, 1880-1997*. 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997) 15-31.

Dent, Lauren, and Patricia Maloney. "Evangelical Christian Parents' Attitudes Towards Abstinence-Based Sex Education: 'I Want My Kids to Have Great Sex!'" *Sex Education*, vol. 17, no. 2, Routledge, 2017, pp. 149–64, doi:10.1080/14681811.2016.1256281.

Allen, Louisa. "Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Constituting a Discourse of Erotics in Sexuality Education." *Gender and Education*, vol. 16, no. 2, Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2004, pp. 151–67, doi:10.1080/09540250310001690555.

Week 10 - Disability and Intimate Relations Wednesday, November 19 In-Class Response

Siebers, Tobin. (2012). "A Sexual Culture for Disabled People." *Sex and Disability*. edited by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow. Durham, Duke University Press. 37-54.

Witton, Hannah. "Disability, Sex, Relationships and Dating Roundtable." YouTube, October 3, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvGNiwR57iI>

Week 11: Online Dating/ Love and Intimacy During the Pandemic- Wednesday, November 26

Nayar, Burna, and Surabhi Koul. "From Likes to Love: Trust Catalysing the Digital Romantic Journey." *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, vol. 70, no. 1/2, 2020, pp. 173–86, doi:10.1108/GKMC-01-2020-0002.

Collado, Zaldy C., et al. "Touch Me Please—when This Enhanced Community Quarantine Is over: Sexual Intimacies Among Pre-Marital Partners During Pandemic-Induced Lockdown." *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 2021, pp. 1–14, doi:10.1080/14681994.2021.1881055.

Arafat, S. M. Yasir, and Sujita Kumar Kar. "Sex During Pandemic: Panic Buying of Sex Toys During COVID-19 Lockdown." *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, vol. 3, no. 2, SAGE Publications, 2021, pp. 175–77, doi:10.1177/26318318211013347.

Week 12: Love, Family Life, and Belonging-Wednesday, December 3

hooks, bell. Introduction Grace: Touched by Love. *All about Love: New Visions*, by bell hooks. William Morrow Publishing, 1999, pp. 13-29

Hays, Alexie H., et al. "She Chose Us to Be Your Parents: Exploring the Content and Process of Adoption Entrance Narratives Told in Families Formed through Open Adoption." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 33, no. 7, 2016, pp. 917–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515611494>.

Learning Environments and Email Policies

Participants enrolled in this class are expected to complete the required course readings, attend all class sessions, respectfully contribute to classroom activities and discussions, and complete course assessments. Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructor. I will try to reply to emails within twenty-four hours during the work week. Please do not expect an immediate response. Put the course code in the subject line of the email. Be as specific as possible with your questions. Specific questions receive specific answers. I may not respond to emails on weekends or during the evenings. If your question is more appropriately handled in-person, please feel free to make an appointment during my office hours or see me after class.

Technical Requirements

This course requires you to have a reliable high-speed internet connection and a computer that meets the technical requirements for writing online timed assessments.

Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for the midterm nor the final exam. Electronic devices of any kind including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted. Electronics such as computers and smartphones are permitted in-lecture. However, please be respectful and refrain from using your electronics for outside activity during class. Please have your telephones set to silent. Our learning environments (including online) will be respectful spaces.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, 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.

Formal Documentation Designation Statement for the Mid-term Exam

Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: **via a make-up midterm exam**.

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

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/>

All 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. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- **Mid-term exam**
- **Final exam**

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Students are expected to **submit each of the responses by the end of class on the day of the response**. Should students miss an in-class response due to extenuating circumstances students must request a makeup response or receive a grade of zero for the assessment. Make-up responses will not be scheduled after **October 7, 2025 for response 1 and November 26 for response two**.

Additional Statements

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, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

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.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation 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.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabil>

[ities.pdf](#). 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”

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

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Support Services

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. Contact info 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 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/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving

time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

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

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:
 - o errors in factual content or interpretation
 - o some minor errors in terminology or general writing skills
 - o 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)

