



Western Arts&Humanities

Course Information

GSWS 2225F: Introduction to Girlhood Studies
Fall 2025

List of Prerequisites

GSWS 1020E, or 1.0 course from GSWS 1021F/G, GSWS 1022F/G, GSWS 1023F/G, GSWS 1024F/G, or GSWS 1030F/G.

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.

Instructor Information

Prof. Andrea Burke

aburke46@uwo.ca

Lawson Hall rm 3251

Office Hours: TBD (in person or virtual), or by appointment

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors.

Email is the best way to communicate with me. It may take up to 24 hours for me to respond to you during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. If I do not respond within a reasonable time frame, please feel free to re-email as I might have missed your initial email.

Course Description

In this course, we will consider what it means to be a girl and how the concepts of girl and girlhood have been constructed across a variety of geographic and historical contexts, as well as how the intersections of race, class, gender, and ability have influenced these concepts. Drawing on a variety of disciplines, including literature, history, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, and international development, we specifically consider girlhood through a feminist lens and examine how definitions of girl and girlhood shape individual experience, historical narratives, cultural representations, possibilities for girls and girlhood, and futures.

Topics may include the commercialization of girlhood, popular culture and girls, negotiating identities, violence, queerness, agency and activism in a globalizing world, global and transnational experiences of girlhood, and categories of difference. In class, we will discuss how girlhood is explored and depicted on media platforms such as TikTok, popular shows, music, historical accounts, young adult fiction, advertising, child welfare, and around the world. We will also consider the fields of Women's Studies and Gender Studies have contributed to and shaped Girlhood Studies.

Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives

Throughout the semester, in addition to gaining and sharing knowledge through the assigned readings, assignments, and discussions, you will:

- develop a perspective on the growing field of Girlhood Studies paying particular attention to the issues facing women today, both locally and globally;
- understand broadly how girls are represented in disciplines such as philosophy, literature, science, as well as in popular culture and media;
- consider how gender operates as a site of social and political control for girls and children;
- connect Girlhood Studies to Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies;
- consider girlhood from an intersectional perspective;
- and understand how gender and girlhood are socially constructed.

In addition, this course will help students to:

- apply rigorous critical thinking and analysis by engaging productively with new ideas;
- apply theory to the field of girlhood studies;
- research, assess, and synthesize information;
- and locate, evaluate, and critique sources using appropriate disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary research skills and tools.

Texts and Materials

Required and recommended readings for this course will all be available on Brightspace in the Course Readings section.

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.

Technical Requirements

This course requires you to have access to a word processor for writing assignments and reliable internet connection for timely forum posting.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices will not be permitted for the midterm written exam or final written exam. Electronic use during class time should be relevant to the course and not distracting to those around you.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. It is essential that students critically evaluate obtained information from AI sources, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives, *in their own words*. The use of AI in submitted assignments is, however, prohibited. **Assignments should reflect students' own thoughts and independent written work.** AI tools do not count as suitable references for students to cite in final written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking and independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions. Students who are found to be in violation of these guidelines may be asked to orally explain their assignment in a meeting with the professor and produce any materials used in preparing assignments to demonstrate the research process.

Methods of Evaluation

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

Classroom Community Participation	5%	
Film Review	20%	Due: October 6 th
Reading Response	15%	Due: October 27 th
Midterm Test	25%	Date: November 10 th
Final Essay	35%	Due: December 8 th

Classroom Community Participation:

Participation will be based on engagement in our classroom community, which includes during class, my office hours, emailing, etc. This mode of assessment is meant to encourage students to strengthen critical thinking and oral communication skills. It will also encourage students to develop their own perspectives on course material and learn from their peers.

Film Review:

Watch a film that showcases girlhood and critically review the film's themes and what it has to say about girls and girlhood. More details on this assignment to follow but have fun with it! Some examples are below:

Shiva Baby (2020); Girl, Interrupted (1999); The Half of It (2020); Fish Tank (2009); The Fireflies are Gone (2018); Lady Bird (2017); Thirteen (2003); Are You There God, It's Me Margaret (2023); Selah and the Spades (2019); Girlhood (2014); Fat Girl (2001); Mustang (2015); Persepolis (2007); etc. (there are so many!)

Audio Cine Films (available through UWO library access): The Edge of Seventeen; Brave; Queen of Katwe; Divergent; Moana; Little Women; Akeelah and the Bee; Matilda

Reading Response:

Students have the opportunity to create a collage, magazine cover, zine, poster, or reflection paper (2 pages) that *critically engages* with one assigned reading from the course.

Midterm Test:

Written test concerning class material up to October 27th.

Final Essay:

Construct a 2000-word argumentative essay. Your essay should include: an introduction and clear thesis, evidence supporting your argument (the body) that includes properly cited sources, a conclusion, and a bibliography.

Flexible Deadlines:

Assignments have some built-in flexibility in terms of deadlines to promote student agency and recognize that all students have unique academic, personal, and professional circumstances. Students are afforded a **three (3) day, no questions asked grace period** to submit these assignments via Brightspace. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be applied. This does not apply to the 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: Midterm Exam (when designated by the instructor as the one assessment that always requires documentation when requesting Academic Consideration).

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/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

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>).

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

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/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation%20Disabilities.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/accessible_education/index.html

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/faculty_academic_counselling.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/student_support/survivor_support/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/>.