



Western Arts&Humanities

Course Information

GSWS 3305F: Gender, Sexuality and Cultural Resistance
Fall 2025

List of Prerequisites

GSWS 2220E or GSWS 2253E or GSWS 2273E, or permission of the Department.

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

While popular culture operates to naturalize and distribute dominant discourses about gender and sexuality, it is also a fertile space through which resistance can be enacted. This course examines “common sense” representations of gender and sexuality within Western popular culture and the ways these representations have been confronted and contested – a process which is increasingly known as “culture jamming.” Precisely because of the public and often commercial nature of popular culture, the course will consider some of the issues raised by the relationships circulating among popular culture, consumption and resistance, including, for example, the increased corporatization of visual, virtual, and physical space.

The course will provide theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding the fraught relationship between cultural production (understood very broadly) and cultural resistance. Topics may include agency and power, digital activism, visual culture and affect, anti-consumerism and anti-capitalism, commons, and critical resilience.

Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives

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

- acquire a complex understanding of the relationship between popular culture, gender and sexuality;
- be able to describe the role of popular culture in reproducing societal norms associated with gender and sexuality;

- become familiar with some of the historical, theoretical and conceptual issues related to the analysis of popular culture as a potential site of resistance in relation to gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability;
- investigate how the different technical, institutional, and aesthetic elements present within popular culture operate to produce affective and intellectual responses, and in many cases open up opportunities for subversion and resistance;
- explore the limitations and possibilities inherent in cultural production as a site of political and social resistance;
- critically explore the relationship between cultural and political resistance;
- and be self-reflexive about their own relationship to popular culture and cultural resistance in relation to gender and sexuality.

In addition, the course will allow students to develop:

- critical and analytical thinking skills
- an ability to analyze non-text based forms of cultural production
- oral and written communication skills
- research skills
- an ability to apply theoretical knowledge to assignments which are creative, self-reflexive and have practical applications

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	10%
Critical Reflection Seminar and Discussion Questions	10%
Sites of Resistance Project	
Individual Mark: your portion of a collaborative research dossier	15%
Team Mark: Culture Jam Poster Presentation	15%
Individual Mark: critical, situated reflection paper	15%
Final Essay	35%

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.

Due: assessed throughout the semester

Critical Reflection Seminar and Discussion Questions

Students will have the opportunity to sign up for one (1) week to prepare a short, 10-minute critical reflection seminar on one reading that has been assigned for that week. The seminar will end with at least two (2) thoughtful discussion questions to pose to the class. Class discussion thereafter will be facilitated by Prof. Burke.

Due: at the beginning of the class that you sign up for (sign up will be discussed in the first class)

Sites of Resistance Project

In teams, you will plan and execute your own culture jam project, presented to the class as a research poster. Your team will first collaborate to produce a research dossier of specific representations within popular cultural production related to gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, ability, and/or nationality, etc., on a topic of your team's choosing. Following this analysis, you will develop potential interventions which begin to address some of the misconceptions produced by these representations. The assignment ends with an individually written reflection paper.

Due:**Research Dossier (your part): October 15th****Poster Presentation: November 12th****Reflection Paper: November 19th***Final Essay*

Construct a 2500-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.

Due: December 10th

Individual assignment rubrics will be posted on Brightspace throughout the semester.

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 team mark element of the Sites of Resistance project.

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: team mark component of the Sites of Resistance project (*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. 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/>.