

The University of Western Ontario  
London Canada

Department of Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies

GSWS 2440F: Reproductive Justice

FALL TERM

**DRAFT**

Thursdays 10:30 am-1:30pm
Location: The class location is posted on OWL Brightspace

Instructors	Office Hours	Office Locations
Jessica Polzer, PhD, Associate Professor, GSWS <a href="mailto:jpolzer@uwo.ca">jpolzer@uwo.ca</a>	Thursdays, 9:30-10:30am, 1:30-2:00pm	Lawson Hall, 3270L
Teaching Assistants	Office Hours	Location
TBA	TBA	Office hours and location will be posted on OWL Brightspace

**Course Perspective & Organization**

This course examines reproductive justice (RJ) using an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach. Through this approach, we will critically examine the politics of human reproduction with an emphasis on the ways in which state/institutional policies and practices regulate and shape fertility, bodily autonomy, access to reproductive health care, and individuals' reproductive decisions and capacities, and in ways that reproduce eugenic and socially stratified ideas about class, race, gender, and ability. Focusing on various topics and using a variety of methods and course materials (readings, films, class and on-line discussion), we will also explore how individuals and communities respond to these regulatory policies through enactments of resistance, resilience, and care.

We begin the course by reviewing the foundations, practices, and frameworks of RJ and exploring the ways in which feminist efforts aimed at improving women's lives through reproductive "choice" and autonomy intersect with eugenic programs and ideologies. Building on this, we examine contemporary topics and struggles for reproductive justice through an intersectional, anti-racist, and decolonial lens, noting the particular historical and sociopolitical contexts and perspectives that inform these efforts to achieve gender and sexual equity, and tracing how these efforts connect with other forms of activism. Topics include eugenics, abortion, contraception, access to reproductive and sexual health care, forced and voluntary sterilization, reproductive technologies, adoption, family and kinship, environmental justice and racism, obstetric violence, birthing justice, and menstrual justice.

Students will be encouraged to thoughtfully reflect on the complexity of these topics from multiple vantage points (including their own!) and will have the opportunity to explore a topic of their choice for their final projects.

## Course Objectives

Through engagement with course materials and in-class discussions, students will:

- Gain an understanding of the origins of reproductive justice (RJ) and of its sociopolitical commitments and dimensions as theory and practice;
- Engage with historical and contemporary examples of struggles for RJ and their central importance in recognition of bodily autonomy and human rights;
- Consider the complexity of reproductive technologies, including their liberatory and oppressive dimensions;
- Gain an understanding of the intersectional and interdisciplinary features of RJ as an analytic lens and form of activism;
- Understand the links between RJ and other social justice movements (e.g., disability justice, menstrual justice, decolonizing);
- Understand how RJ can be applied to critique social structures and policies and imagine anti-ableist, anti-colonial, anti-racist approaches to sexual freedom and inclusive reproductive futures.

Through class discussion and completion of written assignments and papers students will also gain a number of practical skills. Specifically, students will:

- (i) develop their ability to read and analyze scholarly and popular texts closely and rigorously;
- (ii) gain experience critically analyzing and reviewing required course materials related to reproductive justice;
- (iii) participate in informed discussions and critical dialogues about issues relevant to reproductive justice in an interdisciplinary group setting;
- (iv) develop greater reflexivity (self-awareness) of their own understandings of and commitments to reproductive justice and its determinants; and
- (v) conduct independent research and prepare a presentation designed to engage a public audience on a topic of their choice.

## Required Texts and Course Packages

There is no required text book for this course. All readings will be put on Brightspace.

## Prerequisites

Prerequisite(s): GSWS 1020E, or 1.0 course from GSWS 1021F/G, GSWS 1022F/G, GSWS 1023F/G, GSWS 1024F/G, GSWS 1030F/G, or permission from the department.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all prerequisites. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as the basis for appeal. 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.

## Course Philosophy: Engaged Pedagogy

“Engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher. As leaders and facilitators, teachers must discover what the students know and what they need to know. This discovery happens only if teachers are willing to engage students beyond a surface level. [...] When we see the classroom as a place where teacher and students can share their ‘inner light’ then we have a way to glimpse who we are and how we might learn together” (hooks, 2010, pp. 19-20)

In keeping with this teaching philosophy, the Instructor will strive to cultivate an inclusive learning environment so that every student has an opportunity to bring something to the class discussion.

The success of this class is dependent on the Instructor *and* the students coming to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. The Instructor will come to each class prepared to give a lecture and an overview of the key themes and background that are relevant to the week’s topic and to facilitate group discussions. Students are expected to have completed the readings prior to class each week, to bring notes they have made on the readings to class, and to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. Making notes on readings will assist the student in their written assignments and in preparing for exams.

Learning is a *co-responsibility* that requires the active attention and participation of all those involved – teachers, teaching assistants and students.

- It is the responsibility of the professor to come to class prepared to lecture on course material, to facilitate student discussion and their engagement with course material, and to address and respond to students’ questions about course material in class and during specified office hours.
- It is the responsibility of the teaching assistants to attend class, assist the professor in the preparation and grading of exams and papers, and to address students’ questions about course material during the year and before exams.
- It is the responsibility of students to prepare for class by completing required course readings before class, to attend class regularly and listen to the lectures, take notes in class, to engage with course readings in class and/or in online discussions, and to ask questions as necessary about course material in class and on Brightspace.

## Creating and maintaining a respectful learning environment

### Etiquette in the Classroom

In order to maintain a respectful and productive learning environment, it is essential that students arrive at class ready to listen and attend to lectures and films. Disrespectful and disruptive behaviour during class will not be tolerated and will affect one’s participation grade. Disrespectful and disruptive behaviour includes the following: texting or talking on mobile phones, chatting on or browsing Facebook or other social media sites, persistent talking during lectures or films, wearing headphones, emailing, and/or surfing the Internet for non-class purposes. Students observed to be engaging in this behaviour during class will be asked to stop. If disruptive behaviour persists, the professor will use her discretion and judgment in deciding how best to deal with the situation. On the first day of class, all students in the class will be invited to share their views on this policy. Student viewpoints will be considered in deciding upon appropriate consequences for disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

### Etiquette for Online Communication with Course Instructors and TAs

Students are welcome to direct questions concerning the course to the course instructor or TA by email.

**Students must email the TA/Instructor from the UWO email accounts and put GSWS 2244 in the subject line.** Emails should address the TA/instructor appropriately – (e.g., “Hi Professor Polzer” or “Hi Florence” not “Heh prof”). We will do our best to respond as promptly as possible. If a student does not receive a response within 48 hours, a second email is acceptable as a polite reminder of the student’s question or concern. Please try to make sure that your question is not already addressed in the syllabus.

### 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](mailto:support@uwo.ca)

### Policy on Use of AI

In this course, the use of AI (ChatGPT) is prohibited to generate written assignments. Spellcheckers and grammar checkers may be used. If AI use is suspected, the instructor may ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used to prepare assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. If proof cannot be provided of these materials, this will result in deduction of marks from assignments.

### Support Services

Registrar’s Office: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

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

Academic Support and Engagement: <https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/index.html>

Student Health -- <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>

Accessible Education - [http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html) - AE works with students with disabilities to set up appropriate academic accommodations that are then communicated to the course instructor

Ombudsperson Office -- <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/> - This office provides safe, comfortable environment where can discuss a university-related concern confidentially. The concern can relate to any part of university life.

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

***For immediate help in the event of a crisis, phone 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.***

## University Policies

### COVID-Related Policies

It is our collective responsibility to manage COVID-related risks and other public health risks in the classroom. Please consider masking if you are attending class while feeling unwell and symptomatic.

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or other public health crisis that requires online course delivery, the course will proceed either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable), asynchronously (e.g., posted on Brightspace for students to view at their convenience), or using a combination of the two. The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

### Use of Electronic Devices

During Exams: Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations.

During Lectures and Tutorials: Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only. **Engaging in activities on your computer and mobile phones in ways that distract you (and, potentially, your peers) from learning and being present during class is prohibited.** From time to time, your professor may ask the class to turn off all computers to facilitate learning or discussion of the material presented in a particular class. You may not make audio or video recordings of lectures – nor may you edit, re-use, distribute, or re-broadcast any of the material posted to the course website – without the permission of the course instructor. The professor will clarify what is acceptable use of electronic devices and will allow time for a discussion.

### Academic Consideration and Accommodation Supports and Policies

#### Students with Disabilities

Accessible Education provides supports to Western students with disabilities who require accommodation in all programs and faculties. It is important to register as soon as possible, preferably before classes begin.

[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

#### Academic Consideration and Accommodations for Late/Missed Assignments and Exams

It is the expectation that students will submit assignments by, and write tests and/or examinations on, the assigned dates. The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury. Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) that renders them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes.

For assignments worth less than 10% of the final grade, students may proactively request permission from the instructor (via email) to submit assignments up to two days past the assigned date so that they can manage times of intense workload. Requests for extensions must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the deadline. Students who submit assignments late without obtaining academic consideration

or making a prior agreement with the Instructor will be penalized 3% for every 24-hour period past the assignment deadline.

For assignments worth more than 10% of the final grade, students must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide necessary documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor. As soon as possible, students are expected to email appropriate documentation to the Academic Counselling office at their faculty. An Academic Counsellor will discuss what accommodation is required and the accommodation request will be emailed by the AC office to the course instructor. **It is the student's responsibility to follow up with professors and make the appropriate arrangements after the accommodation is approved (including revised deadlines for assignments and makeup exam dates/times).**

For medical absences, students must submit a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration. The Certificate can be found here:

<https://www.uwo.ca/arts/counselling/procedures/Student%20Medical%20Certificate%202024-WEB.pdf>

For non-medical absences, students must consult with an Academic Counsellor in their Faculty to determine appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) in order to be eligible for academic consideration.

For more information, please see Western's Policy for Academic Consideration here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

### Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is provided here: <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

### **Attendance**

Attendance will be recorded. Students can miss up to one class per term without penalty. Persistent absenteeism (3 weeks or more/term) may be rendered grounds for failure in the course in accordance with the policies of the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. Persistent absenteeism may result in being contacted by the instructor who may request a meeting. Continued absence after this point will be reported to the Undergraduate Chair.

### **Use of Plagiarism Checking Software: Turnitin**

All required papers will 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>.

## Student Code of Conduct and Scholastic Offences

The Code of Student Conduct defines the standard of conduct expected of students registered at The University of Western Ontario, provides examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this conduct, provides examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and sets out the disciplinary procedures that the University follows. 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 site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Health and Wellness

As part of a successful undergraduate experience at Western, we encourage you to make your health and wellness a priority. To support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre as part of their registration fees. Further information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

If you are in emotional or mental distress, refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. If you don't want to reach out to formal services, you may want to have a wellness safety plan in place with a few trusted individuals.

Getting involved in community events can be beneficial to your health. There are numerous cultural events offered at Western throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page (<http://www.music.uwo.ca/>) and the McIntosh Gallery (<http://mcintoshgallery.ca/>). As well, the local London community offers many cultural events that may be of interest.

## Grade Descriptions

The university-wide descriptor of the meaning of letter grades, as approved by Senate, is as follows:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work that is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable.
F	below 50	Fail

A student requesting an appeal to a specific course with respect to a grade for an assignment or examination must first contact their instructor to discuss. A guide for how to submit a grade appeal can be found here: <https://uwo.ca/fhs//policies/appeals.html>

## Evaluation

### Engagement (15%)

Engagement includes consistent attendance and thoughtful contributions during class and online. Guidance for what constitutes thoughtful contribution will be provided in class. The following will be considered in evaluating engagement:

- Attendance: Up to 5 points for consistent attendance. Attendance will be recorded each week. If a student misses classes persistently, the instructor may request an in-person meeting.
  - o 0-1 classes missed = 5/5
  - o 2 classes missed = 4/5
  - o 3 classes missed = 3/5
  - o 4 classes missed = 2/5
  - o 5 classes missed = 1/5
  - o 6+ classes missed = 0/5
  
- Contributions: Up to 10 points will be awarded for the quality of a student's contributions to the class. This will be graded primarily on the basis of participation in in-class and on-line discussions. Other opportunities for participation may also be provided (e.g., responses to prompts or questions posed during lecture; brief summaries of seminars outside of class related to course themes).

### Personal Reflection Paper: (15% total)

Students will be asked to critically reflect on what reproductive justice means to them. This paper is due in class on week 3. Guiding questions will be provided on OWL.

### Critical Reflection Papers: (2 X 15% = 30%)

Students will write two critical reflection papers on required readings/films. The first review is due in class on week 2 and will be based on the film, *The Vessel*, which is available through Kanopy. The second critical review paper is due in class anytime by week 12. Guiding questions will be provided on OWL.

### Final Project: 40%

Final projects will be due the last day of class. Students will compile materials for a presentation that they could use for the purpose of engaging the public about a topic of their choice that relates to reproductive justice. Students will submit a portfolio that includes the following components: (i) a revised personal reflection statement (why is this topic important to you?); (ii) a statement of the social significance of the chosen topic (why is this an important social issue?); (iii) a written summary of 5 sources that have informed their thinking about this topic; (iv) an outline of the presentation, including any audiovisual materials that will be prepared to deliver the presentation (e.g., powerpoint); and (v) a description of an activity to enhance public engagement with the issue. Instructions will be provided on OWL.



## Class Schedule

Week #	Date	Topic
1	Sept 4	Introduction
2	Sept 11	Foundations and Frameworks <i>Critical Reflection (CR) #1 due</i>
3	Sept 18	Abortion: Past and present <i>Personal Reflection due</i>
4	Sept 25	Eugenics
5	Oct 2	Contraception
6	Oct 9	Reproductive Chronicity and Care
7	Oct 16	Reproductive Technologies and Futurisms
8	Oct 23	Queering RJ: Making Family and Stratified Reproduction
9	Oct 30	Decolonization and Reproductive Justice
<b>fall reading week (nov 3-9)</b>		
10	Nov 13	Adoption as/and Reproductive Justice
11	Nov 20	Obstetric Violence and Birthing Justice
12	Nov 27	Menstrual Justice and Surveillance <i>CR #2 due on/before</i>
13	Dec 4	Exam Review <i>Final Project due</i>
<b>Study Day: Dec 10    Exam Period: Dec 11-22</b>		

