Professional Development

WS 9459A

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The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenausaune, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.
People outside the academic world are often astonished to think that someone can spend four, five, or even ten years in graduate school. New students, who may feel overwhelmed with the financial and emotional stresses of coursework, can barely imagine staying in school for so long. It may seem surprising, then, that many professors look back on their time in graduate school with fondness.


Never forget this primary rule: Graduate school is not your job; graduate school is a means to the job you want. Do not settle in to your graduate department like a little hamster burrowing in the wood shavings. Stay alert with your eye always poised for the next opportunity, whatever it is: to present a paper, attend a conference, meet a scholar in your field, forge a connection, gain a professional skill.

--- Dr. Karen Kelsky

It is the academic's job in a free society to serve the public culture by asking questions the public doesn't want to ask, investigating subjects it cannot or will not investigate, and accommodating voices it fails or refuses to accommodate.

--- Louis Menand, The Marketplace of Ideas

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is intended to assist graduate students in Women's Studies and Feminist Research with their professional development. The emphasis will be on developing practical skills for being successful as a graduate student, including developing pedagogical skills as a teaching assistant, scholarship application writing, cv development, abstract writing and submission, conference presentations, and publishing in journals and edited collections. While the majority of the emphasis will be on academic skills, there will be at least one class on non-academic grant writing and alternative career pathways.

Ok, so that’s the website-ready, official version. It does a pretty good job of reflecting what we’re actually going to be doing in this course, but it maybe doesn’t get at some of the things that make this course different from others. For starters, while we will be doing some reading, we will be doing more actual hands-on practice. So, for example, in the course on running seminars, we’ll get people to introduce specific discussion topics and take turns facilitating the discussion of those topics. Then we’ll brainstorm other ways we might have approached that discussion. We’ll talk about what to do in the horrible event of silence – and how to recognize that silence isn’t as deadly as you might think.

You’ll get a workshop on grant writing with various experts coming in to talk about how to do this
well and what’s expected of your application. You’ll get to bring in a first draft and go home with lots of comments about how to improve it. You’ll get to talk about where to look for conferences (always an issue) and what to do when you find one you want to go to: how do you apply? How do you maximize your chances of getting accepted? How do you get there once you’ve been accepted?

You’ll get to talk with your peers (and with me) about what it’s like to be a grad student, how to be a good TA, how to write everything from an abstract to a paper to an IRP to a doctoral dissertation, how to apply for grants and academic and non-academic jobs, and what it means to study and teach in a discipline that many people find confrontational and even negative (they’re wrong, of course, but it’s nice to be able to articulate why).

You’ll get to talk about the challenges you face in the tutorial room – and also about the challenges your students face. You’ll get to talk about reading and how to do it well (or at least better) as well as about writing. And you’ll get to talk about publication and how to go about getting your first journal article or chapter for an edited collection actually into print. And we can talk more generally about ways of disseminating your research and how these might be changing with the onslaught of everything from online journals to social media.

Throughout, we will try to keep this as hands-on as possible while bearing in mind feminist pedagogical perspectives. As you go along, you’ll be developing your portfolio so that, at the end of the term, you’ll have amassed usable grant applications, knock-their-socks off cover letters, a legible and organized CV, and a whole host of other things that are part and parcel of the profession of academia. And, with a bit of luck, we’ll have fun.

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**TEXTBOOKS**

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**Required**


**Recommended**

Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius, *So What Are You Going to Do with That? Finding Careers Outside Academia.*


Gregory Colón Semenza. *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities.*

Helen Sword. *Stylish Academic Writing.*
This course is graded Pass/Fail. To pass the course, you need to:

- (a) attend class; **a minimum of one unexcused absence will be allowed**;
- (b) participate actively in classroom discussion and other activities, including online posts;
- (c) hand in the critical reflection paper at midterm; this will be returned with comments. Due date: **October 30th**;
- (d) attend two departmental visiting speakers’ talks in Fall term and submit brief (1-2 page) reports on each (due one week after the talk date).

**Unsatisfactory performance in or failure to complete any one of these elements will result in a failing grade.**

You are encouraged to complete a portfolio of elements of the course for your own future use; this is not a required element, but will be helpful to those of you interested in applying for a further degree, a postdoctoral fellowship, grants and scholarships, and future teaching and research positions. This portfolio is voluntary and unmarked.

**Participation requirements**

This is a graduate seminar; it is not a lecture course. You will be expected to come to class prepared to take part actively in discussion. From week two onwards, students will be expected to lead discussion of one class or part of a class, based on the weekly schedule that we will develop in week one.

In preparation for each week’s class, you will not only be expected to do the required readings, as indicated on the schedule, but also to participate in the online posting and discussion of resources for that week’s topic. Each week, three students (one or more of whom will also be discussion leaders) will post a sample or samples of work that explains or demonstrates some aspect of the topic. Again, we will develop a posting schedule in week 1.

The purpose of each of these participation requirements is to ensure full student engagement and robust discussion for each week’s topic. Some topics will require more research than others, but that research is part of the learning process and also inherent to the nature of graduate scholarship. Readings and assignments have been kept on the low side in order to ensure that everyone will have a chance to reflect on and respond to the work in question. That does not mean that you should not take the course seriously; completing it properly will assist you in your graduate work and future career, particularly if you are hoping to remain in academia.
Critical reflection paper

Some of you will wonder why we’re reading a novel in a professionalization course, others may question why the novel is not written by a woman or LGBT person or why we’re reading something that’s not feminist (it’s also not anti-feminist). I have three reasons for putting this novel on the course and for placing it where it is: (1) I want us to be able to discuss what it means to do scholarship and to be a scholar and to do so in an intercultural context which recognizes the existence of a variety of perspectives on this question; the novel, while Western, provides an alternative approach to scholarship that will be unfamiliar to many of you. (2) I want us to think about how critical reading practices allow us to examine historical documents, in this case a novel from the 70s that is set in the 40s. (3) I want to replicate, to some extent, the experience many of our first year students (and indeed some of our upper year students) have in our classrooms of being pushed outside of their comfort zones. By reading something that is outside of mainstream Western culture, as well as being almost exclusively about male characters, I want us to tackle the issue of handling work that does not centre us and that asks us to consider the world in a different light than we are used to doing. I will then ask us to take this experience back to our teaching discussions and think about what our students encounter in our classrooms and what we are expecting from them.

For your critical reflection paper, you have three choices: (1) You can write about how and why you would teach this book in a Women’s Studies classroom – our masculinity course would be an obvious choice. (2) You can write about applying contemporary perspectives to historical documents and what it means to – in some ways – ask dead writers to have foreseen contemporary social mores? Are there good and bad ways to critique older documents? How do we respect the past while valuing those aspects of change we see as progress? (3) You can write about the cultural encounter that is staged when you read this novel – how, for example, does it make you think about what it means to be a scholar? How does it make you think about the ways scholarship is gendered in this community? Are there valuable lessons we can take from the novel’s view of scholarship without adopting the assumptions of the communities Potok is writing about (I should note that these are not the author’s own assumptions and that a later novel, Davita’s Harp, is all about a young girl in the Hasidic community attempting to negotiate her own scholarly talents in a society that does not wholly welcome them)? Suggested length: 5-6 pages. Due: October 30th.

Portfolio

Your portfolio is simply the body of work you will amass by doing each of the exercises indicated on the syllabus. For those of you going on in academic work, it will form the basis for job applications, whether for part-time teaching or for tenure-track academic positions. For those of you planning careers outside academia, it will also provide a useful basis for determining (and, in some cases, demonstrating) the skills you can offer to potential employers.

If you are planning on an academic career, you may also find it useful to attend the Centre for Teaching and Learning’s workshop on creating a teaching portfolio. The CTL is able to go beyond the ambit of this course and to discuss additional elements specific to the teaching portfolio, such as developing a teaching philosophy, keeping track of and using course evaluations, and including sample course syllabi (either ones you’ve taught or ones you hope to teach in the future).

You can find more information about this and other topics at https://www.uwo.ca/ctl/.
### Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Portfolio Entries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 1</td>
<td>Life as a Grad Student</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 18</td>
<td>TA Skills 1: Seminars and Student Discussion</td>
<td>Rachael Pack, “WSFR Teaching Assistant Handbook and Resource Guide”</td>
<td>Provide one seminar exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 25</td>
<td>Conferences: Finding Conferences, Writing Abstracts, Presentation Skills</td>
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<td>Abstract (draft and finished); cover letter</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Grant Writing 1: OGS and SSHRC Draft IRP Proposal</td>
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<td>Draft and finished applications/IRPs</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 9</td>
<td>TA Skills 2: Teaching Critical Reading Practices</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>TA Skills 3: Writing Basics</td>
<td>Diana Hacket et al., <em>A Pocket Style Manual</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>Writing an IRP (for MA candidates)</td>
<td>Excerpts from Allen</td>
<td>Final draft of IRP proposal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing a Thesis or Dissertation (for PhD candidates)</td>
<td>Jan Allen, <em>The Professional Graduate Student Writer</em></td>
<td>Thesis abstract and/or thesis proposal</td>
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<td>Nov 6</td>
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<td><strong>READING WEEK – NO CLASSES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Writing for Publication: Journals and Edited Collections</td>
<td>Excerpts from Allen</td>
<td>Cover letter and abstract</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>TA Skills 4: Marking Essays and Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 27</td>
<td>Creating a CV, a teaching portfolio, and other application necessities</td>
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<td>CV, statement of teaching philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Outside the Academy: Grants and Careers Guest lecture: Prof. Bipasha Baruah</td>
<td>*Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius, <em>So What Are You Going to Do with That? Finding Careers Outside Academia</em></td>
<td>Either a non-academic grant application or a skills-based resumé</td>
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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

* Recommended, not required.
Course Policies:

Attendance Requirement: This course requires active participation by everyone involved. Attendance is therefore mandatory and no more than one unexcused absence will be permitted. Circumstances requiring academic accommodation should be addressed with the Graduate Chair.

Attendance at Department Talks: The department puts considerable time, effort and finances into arranging talks by exceptional visiting scholars. Attending departmental talks is a professional requirement, but also a benefit, as it exposes junior scholars to a broad range of work that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of gender and sexuality studies and provides examples of diverse methodologies in practice. It is an opportunity not only to learn something about a specific subject area, but also to observe how experienced scholars deliver their research to broad and diverse audiences. In writing about these talks, you will have the opportunity to consider not only the content, argument, and scholarly examples, but also the techniques of delivering great papers and handling audience questions. Because the department considers attendance at these talks extremely important in the development of graduate students, the Graduate Program Committee has opted to make attendance at a minimum of two talks per semester mandatory. If you wish to substitute a different talk (say at a different department or Faculty that is in some way relevant to your own educational development), you must consult in advance with the course instructor.

Lateness: This is a course in professional development. Lateness is unprofessional, as is leaving early. At times, circumstances may make a late arrival or early departure unavoidable. Please have the courtesy to inform the instructor as far in advance as possible and avoid disrupting the class when entering or leaving. Repeated late arrivals or early departures will be marked as absences after the first time unless the student has accommodation.

Participation: Graduate courses depend on student participation in order to provide a great learning experience. It is important that you do the readings on time and come to class prepared to participate in classroom discussion. This involves not only having something to say about the topic, but also listening carefully and respectfully to others in the class. Good discussion involves acknowledging that there may be other perspectives on the topic and acknowledging that the experiences of others may be different from your own. The classroom should be a space in which students are free to experiment with ideas and even to make mistakes, change their minds, and re-think. Debate should be lively, but also courteous.

Late Policy: Students will be permitted one free extension, of no more than five working days, on any written assignment; the extension request must be made at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline by email to the instructor. Unexcused late work will not be counted toward the course assessment requirements and will result in a failure in the course.
Use of Electronic Resources: Mobile phones are not permitted in class at any time. Laptop computers may be used solely for course purposes; other uses of a laptop will result in the student being banned from laptop use within the classroom.

Email: Email is my preferred method of contact. Please allow 48 hours for response; after that, you may wish to query (politely) whether your email has been received. To ensure reception, please use your UWO email account and include the course number in the subject line. Emails from addresses like sexykitten69@yahoo.com tend to be re-directed by the university’s spam filter. Please note that your emails will likely not be answered on weekends.

Etiquette: When addressing professors you don’t know, it is always most courteous to address that person as “Professor [Last Name].” Once your instructors get to know you, they may invite you to address them by a first name – or they may not. No-one who has put years of effort into obtaining a doctorate wishes to be addressed as “Miss” or “Mr.” This is not high school. “Hey Prof” is also not an advisable mode of address if you wish to be taken seriously.

Turnitin: “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 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 licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com)”
(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf)

Academic Offences:
Scholastic offences are taken very seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, in the online Academic Calendar.

Plagiarism with intent to deceive will result in serious academic penalties, based on interviews with the department chair and the Dean of the student’s Faculty.

Avoid the pain: don’t cheat.

Student Accessibility Services:
“Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction."