How do feminist interventions in trauma studies trouble conventional understandings of history, experience, violence/rupture, and the “everyday” – and with what effect? How are acts of witnessing sometimes made to serve hegemonic interests – and how can this co-optation be contested by in(ter)ventive feminist actions?

“Reading” various practices across feminist theory, literature, art, film (and, to a much lesser extent, clinical therapy), this course explores feminist understandings of trauma, the uses of testimony, and feminist resistance through political, clinical, and aesthetic actions. Specifically, topics include: feminist understandings of trauma, particularly vis-a-vis relationships between the “personal” (that is, private or individual experience, memory, testimony) and the “public” (collective and cultural trauma and its witnessing); conflicts between culturo-historical perspectives on/of trauma and experience; “mislit” and the fetishism of the trauma spectacle; and, most centrally, feminist responses through often experimental forms of witnessing.

TEXTS:

You will need to purchase Joan Crate’s Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson (available in the Uni bookstore). Please note that the majority of readings for the course are available by EZ - Proxy link via Owl.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:

Work in WS 9463B should enable students to:

- become familiar with some of the major themes, issues, and frameworks in the fields of trauma and testimony studies;

- recognize and critically engage some of the major feminist approaches and debates within trauma studies, including critical feminist interventions in understanding the cumulative effects of [gender] trauma, and both the recuperative and appropriative “uses” of testimony;

- understand how trauma theory and the “practice” of testimony are shaped by the intersecting axes of race, class, sexuality, gender, and (dis)ability, among others;

- develop facility in “reading” feminist acts of witnessing across a variety of in(ter)ventive acts in art, literature, film, political activism, and (to a much lesser degree) clinical practice;
• improve oral skills through critical interaction in class discussions, asking questions, and leading a seminar;

• augment proficiency in written communication – and in critical thinking, research, and analytical skills, broadly.

ASSIGNMENTS:

CLASS PARTICIPATION 20%

Good participation entails active listening, coming to class prepared to discuss the readings, asking salient questions, and engaging the ideas of other participants in the course – and can include suggesting/preparing de-briefing material for the last minutes of class 😊.

LEADING A SEMINAR – WITH WRITEUP 20%

You will lead a sustained exploration (approx. 40 minutes, plus discussion. Total time: 1 hour) of the assigned text or texts (your choice) for that week, with a combination of close and critical reading, and a framing of the text(s) in relation to trauma theory/trauma and/or testimony studies more broadly. Please do not simply summarize the readings. Hand in a written detailed summary or outline of your seminar prior to presentation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY & THESIS PROPOSAL 20%

Annotate with critical evaluation 5 outside sources you will be using for your research paper; include your tentative thesis embedded in a preliminary introduction. Identify potential obstacles in your process as applicable. Approx. 350-400 words per annotation (~2200 words total for assignment). Due March 5.

Note proposal sharing workshop March 19.

MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER 40%

On a topic of interest to you, emerging out of course concepts, write a major paper. I can also propose suggested topics if you’re stuck. Use at least two course readings (recommended readings can count, if you like) as well as outside sources. Paper is due beginning April 22. 17-22 pages.

RECOGNITION OF FIRST NATIONS TERRITORY

The Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research recognizes the First Nations territory on which the University stands. As the University acknowledges, UWO is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenaunaue, 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” (http://indigenous.uwo.ca/universitywide/Indigenous%20Strat%20Plan%20-%20Draft%20V9.pdf)
ENJOY THE COURSE!

SYLLABUS
Our specific schedule of readings and dates is posted on Owl.

I. Introduction, and Issues in “The Field”: An Overview

Welcome & course introduction
Development of trauma & testimony studies: Some key texts & ideas
Feminist interventions in trauma theory
De-colonizing trauma studies
Mislit, the (mis)uses of testimony, and the spectacle of display: mourning sickness, grief porn, misery
literature, compassion fatigue
Private loss, public mourning
Photo-journalism, precarious lives, image-viewer as witness
Responsibility of listening & ethical engagement: Pedagogy and accountability
Politics of reconciliation and appropriation of testimony

II. The Im/Possibilities of Trauma Fiction; Literature and/as Testimony

Movement and trauma in time: The short/extended story
Appropriation as responsibility?
Poetry and/as decolonization
The truth of fiction
Ir/Resolution & the unstable place of empathy

III. “Documenting” Trauma & the Im/Possibilities of the Record: Trauma in Film and Law

Trauma and the Screen
Testimonio and the testimonial subject
Law and “representation”
Speech acts, grievability, and communities in protest

IV. “Not Painting a Pretty Picture”: Trauma in/and the Visual Arts

Documentary, installation, and performance art
Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and gender and reparation
Art, memorialization, and collective memory
Returns: Intersubjectivity and (therapeutic) art practice
Crafting Testimony & Urgent Intersections

V. Wrap-Up: Feminist Interventions in Practice
COURSE POLICIES

Support Services:
“Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western
http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help”
(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf). Remember that there is a lot of help/support here at Western; I can help you find/access it if you need.

Please also consider the Post-Secondary Student Helpline as a resource: 1-866-925-5454, or, if in immediate crisis, 911 or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

I have also created a “Trigger Support” tab with resource info on our Owl home page. Graduate students should also know that, if they are employed at Western as GTAs, they are entitled to access services associated with Western’s Employee Assistance Program (Morneau Shapell provider).

Submitting Assignments: Please hand in hard copies of all written assignments; assignments not handed in during class can be left for me in my WSFR mailbox. Please upload the Annotated Bibliography and Major Paper via the link on Owl.

The Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research also requires that you submit electronic copies of all written assignments to Turnitin.com through the Owl “Assignments” tab. Here’s the statement on use of Turnitin from the University:

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under licence 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)

Note: You cannot submit assignments in WS 9463B prepared for other courses.

Late & Missed Assignments:
It is really important to meet the assigned deadlines. But in the event of circumstances warranting accommodation for a written assignment, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible. Do reach out if you’re struggling.

Please note that without medical/compassionate accommodation or an otherwise approved extension, late penalties of 3% per day for work submitted late may apply.

Attendance in classes:
In graduate courses especially, students are expected to attend all classes, read assigned texts thoughtfully and critically, participate in discussions and demonstrate their learning, present materials, ask questions, and be good listeners.

Please come see me or contact me as soon as possible if you miss more than one class.

Scholastic Offences:
“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 Web site:

And re: Plagiarism, especially:
“Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper
referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see the ‘Scholastic Offense Policy’ in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.”

--- U.W.O. Senate statement on plagiarism
(See http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2015/pg113.html)

**Owl Sakai:**
Use of Owl is required for this course. All course information, including schedule of readings and assignments, is available there; please go to owl.uwo.ca.

**Note for Students with Disabilities:** Please be in touch with Accessibility Services at Western, and let me know if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space more accessible for you.

**Contact Info:**
My office hours are posted on page 1 of this syllabus. You are welcome to email, but please use the Messages function on Owl. I’ll try to respond promptly, but if you haven’t heard back from me within 48 hours, kindly please re-send your message. Substantive inquiries should be reserved for office hours rather than via email. You may leave brief phone messages for me at 519-661-2111 ext. 84684.

**Prerequisites:**
For graduate students in home units outside WSFR: you will need to have permission from the Instructor and your home unit (usually via the Grad Chair) to register in this course. Special permission cannot be grounds for appeal.