

Women's Studies 2205F
Making Men: Critical Studies in Masculinity
Mondays 130-430PM | Middlesex College 105B

Instructor: Christian Ylagan | Email: cylagan2@uwo.ca
Office Hours: Mondays 10AM-12PM or by appointment (Venue TBA)



*"We must be swift as the coursing river, with all the force of a great typhoon
With all the strength of a raging fire, mysterious as the dark side of the moon."
-- Captain Shang, Mulan*

Who is a man? What *makes* a man?

These questions lie at the heart of the convergence of feminist, ethnic, and sexuality studies into the field of "critical masculinity studies", which aims at its core to interrogate how certain discourses created hegemonic gender assumptions and binary categories that in turn foreground the institutionalization of certain power relations across all aspects of social and political life. By drawing from a wide range of theoretical tools, critical masculinity studies provides us with a number of frameworks with which to analyze the asymmetries and hierarchies that have helped construct men, manhood, and masculinity.

In emphasizing the social construction of men, manhood, and masculinity as constitutive of the enormous capital they command, this course aims to advance a more critical view whereby such concepts are seen not as impenetrable bastions of historically oppressive power, but as privileged nodes that have been instrumentalized within discursive ideological networks. Through an examination of diverse media sources (literature, film, art, critical journalism, news articles, music, etc.) and their treatment of issues like "guy" culture, male body image, homosociality, aggression, family, success, and male sexuality, this course encourages the centrality of critical reflection in understanding the oftentimes violent negotiation of masculinity across various intersectional sites, and the refraction of those dynamics in men's relationships with themselves, other men, women, and institutions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. synthesize concepts from masculinity studies in order to read and think critically about the construction of masculinity across various historical and intersectional contexts;
2. analyze literary, artistic, social, and cultural artifacts that are informed by or demonstrate the tensions, anxieties, and aspirations embedded in manhood and masculinity;
3. reflect on their experiences in dealing with men, manhood, and masculinity, with the view of identifying points of potential intervention;
4. enhance their ability to express themselves both orally (through in-class participation) and in writing (through quizzes, essays, and examinations).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Class Participation / Attendance: | 20% (10%/10%) |
| Weekly Blitzes (short answer): | 15% |
| Poster Project / Presentation: | 15% (groupwork; rubrics to be provided) |
| Critical Essay / Response Paper: | 25% (500-750 words) |
| <u>Final Exam:</u> | <u>25%</u> |
| TOTAL | 100% |

A. Class Participation

All students are expected to (1) complete all reading assignments and (2) participate in class discussions. Being a critical reader, manifested in an ability to dialogue with assigned texts and formulate questions, is a skill that this class will try to foster.

As this is a **THREE-HOUR, ONCE-A-WEEK CLASS**, regular attendance is critical in getting the most out of the course. As such, attendance will be checked every class. University policy on absences and accommodations for legitimate reasons will be observed.

B. Weekly Blitzes

Weekly Blitzes are short-answer response quizzes given for ten minutes at the beginning of class. The questions will either be on the day's assigned readings, or relating those readings with other material taken up in previous classes. The Blitz questions can be used as prompts for the discussion for the day. No Blitz will be given until the previous week's quiz has been returned.

C. Poster Project / Presentation

A poster presentation is 'as an experiential learning activity that stimulates curiosity and interest, encourages exploration and integration of concepts and provides students with a novel way of demonstrating understanding' (Handron, 1994, in Bracher, Cantrell & Wilkie 1998). Working in small groups, students will collaborate to create a positive, life-affirming poster campaign with the goal of applying lessons learned in class to advocate for issues affecting men, their behaviours, and relationships.

D. Critical Essay / Response Paper

Each student is expected to pick a text (literary, cinematic, artistic, etc.) OR an issue/topic related to the ongoing class discussion and engage with it in a well-argued essay that utilizes a chosen theoretical framework. The paper will be no less than 500 words but no more than 750 words. The expected content is NOT a summary of the chosen text/issue, but an analysis that paves the way for a critical discourse. Students may thus be asked to facilitate a discussion after their presentation.

E. Final Exams

The final exam comprises identification-, short answer-, and essay-type questions.

REQUIRED READINGS

- 1) Reeser, Todd. *Masculinities in Theory*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010
- 2) Fu, Kim. *For Today I Am A Boy* (novel). HarperCollins, 2014
- 3) Chariandy, David. *Brother* (novel). McClelland & Stewart, 2018
- 4) Additional readings to be posted on OWL (in PDF form or links to online articles)

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar will be posted on OWL, alongside weekly readings, by the first day of class.

GENERAL COURSE GUIDELINES

Students are expected to be both physically and mentally present in class; participation is integral to the learning experience. Use of electronic devices in-class should be for academic purposes only.

A. Email

Email correspondences will be sent often and the OWL site will be updated regularly. Please use your UWO email account for official inquiries and correspondences, and please allow up to 24 hours for a response (up to 48 hours over the weekend). Standard email etiquette is expected.

NO ESSAYS SUBMITTED BY EMAIL WILL BE ACCEPTED.

B. Plagiarism

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

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 licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com.

C. Absenteeism

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Please find UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness here:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

D. 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, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

E. Recognition of First Nations Territory

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.



** Image copyright owned by Walt Disney