

University of Western Ontario
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research

Women's Studies 2260: Women, Law, and Social Change

*The Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research
recognizes that we are located on the traditional land of the
Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.*

Tuesdays 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Fall/Winter 2018-2019

Social Science Centre 2020

Instructor: Prof. Tyler Totten

Office: Lawson Hall 3249

Office Hours: TBD

Contact: ttotten@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistants

TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to feminist engagement with the law, both in terms of scholarly perspectives and concepts and in terms of real-world legal cases and contemporary social issues. We will examine feminist scholarship of the law as it relates to major legal cases, legal concepts, and social issues on a range of topics, such as equality, sexual and racial difference, reproductive justice, consent and sexual assault, domestic violence, pornography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and women in the legal profession.

MATERIALS

Course readings are all freely available online, via OWL, CanLII, or hyperlinks in syllabus.

COURSE WEBSITE

TBD

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- *Identify* and *explain* important facts and concepts in the feminist study of law
- *Understand* and *summarize* key aspects of case law and legislation
- *Analyze* contemporary social issues and real-world legal cases by *applying* scholarly perspectives
- Use course content to *justify* your own position on the major legal and social issues that affect women and other marginalized groups today

METHODS OF EVALUATION

20% - Engagement / Participation

This grade is determined through a series of weekly online activities, centred around in-class discussions. Each online activity is worth 1% of your grade. 23 activities will be available throughout the year (i.e. one each week except the dates of the in-class midterm and final exam review); therefore, you have the option of not doing two of the online activities because only your highest 20 activities will count toward your grade.

10% - Case Comprehension Report

The purpose of the case comprehension report is to prepare you to do case analysis reports later in year. This assignment requires you to do two things: (1) identify key points about a specified legal case and (2) summarize the decision in that case. By successfully completing this assignment, you will demonstrate your ability to read and make sense of a court report.

Detailed assignment requirements and grading criteria will be available on OWL.

30% - Case Analysis Reports

2 assignments (worth 15% each)

The case analysis reports require you to do three things: (1) identify key points about a specified legal case, (2) summarize the decision in that case, and (3) rewrite the decision from a new point of view (based on how you think a judge, theorist, or author we have read in this class would have likely approached it). This last point requires you to be imaginative and creative while still substantiating your unique position using specific and clear references to the readings.

Detailed assignment requirements and grading criteria will be available on OWL.

20% - Midterm

You will be tested on your knowledge of both the readings and topics covered in class from the first semester. The midterm will be part multiple choice and part short answer / case analysis. The learning objective is to identify specific pieces of information and apply class material to explain given scenarios.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

20% - Final Exam

The final exam will focus on content from the second semester; however, you will also be tested on some content from the first semester, as well. Format, function, and objective will be similar to midterm.

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is not required; however, regular attendance and good note-taking are *strongly advised* because midterms and exams will evaluate your knowledge of lecture material not found in the readings.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

Assignments must be submitted through the course's OWL webpage. Emailed submissions will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. Hardcopies are not required.

To ensure your reports are entirely your original work, these assignments will be assessed through TurnItIn.

Western University's official policy regarding TurnItIn is that:

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.

For late assignments, the course instructor will deduct 2% per day (i.e. - if your assignment is 5 days late, then you will be penalized 10% on that assignment). Because submission takes place online, this rule applies equally to weekdays and weekends. Should you require an extension, please contact either the course instructor a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the due date. Extensions are granted only by the course instructor and are done so in writing (usually by email). Assignments will not be accepted after the date of the final exam, except in exceptional circumstances.

A missed midterm or exam will result in a grade of 0 on that midterm or exam, unless you have medical or compassionate grounds for accommodation. This accommodation is granted by the Academic Counsellor in your home faculty. Academic accommodation must be requested within 28 days of the missed assignment.

ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

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

Please contact ws-ugrad@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

PLAGIARISM & OTHER SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Western treats plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism is the copying or stealing of another's work, in part or in full, without proper attribution. Suspected plagiarism can result in: a grade of 0 on the assignment, a grade of 0 in the course, and/or a permanent entry on your record of conduct.

Other scholastic offences include (but are not limited to): re-submitting work you have previously submitted for another class (in part or in full) as “original” work in this class, cheating on a midterm or exam, submitting false records or documentation, and aiding or abetting another student doing these things.

Western University’s official policy on academic offences is:

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: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GRADE

| Needing Improvement | Meeting Requirements | Exceeding Expectations |
|---|--|--|
| 50-59%: Fair work, minimally acceptable | 60-69%: <i>Competent work, meeting requirements</i> | 80-89%: Superior work which is clearly <i>above average</i> |
| Below 50%: Failing grade, assignment submitted does not apply to course OR basic requirements of the assignment are not met | 70-79%: Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory Note: A grade in the range of 75-79 indicates an assignment or test that borders on a grade in the 80 range but has some significant flaw that prevents giving out the higher grade | 90-100%: One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level |

GRADE NEGOTIATION

Students must wait 24 hours before appealing any grades they receive on assignments or tests. Emails received before this point will be disregarded.

If you believe your work has been marked unfairly, you must submit a 1-paragraph explanation of exactly how you believe this to be the case. An example of an acceptable grade appeal is available on the course’s OWL webpage. If your work has been marked by a TA, you must

attempt to discuss your grade and submit your explanation for appeal to them before contacting the course instructor.

The official policy of the Women's Studies Department is *never* to increase a student's grade purely to improve that student's average. "Grade grubbing" simply in order to maintain minimum averages to enter medical school, law school, or business school will not result in a grade increase.

SUPPORT SERVICES

All Western students have the following services available to them through the Student Development Centre: Psychological Counselling, Career Services, Learning Skills, Effective Writing Program, Employment Services, International Student Services, Services for Students with Disabilities, and First Nations Services. Visit <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca> for details.

If you are in emotional/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 are unsure about where to go, the Wellness Education Centre (room 76 in the lower level of the University Community Centre) has a "no wrong door" policy, meaning that they will direct you to the appropriate service or person for any and all questions or concerns about your overall wellbeing (whether academic, psychological, physical, financial, or otherwise).

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Messages sent to the course instructor or to a TA through OWL or by email will receive replies within 48 hours. Please observe professional email etiquette when communicating online. Electronic communication which is overtly disrespectful or is deemed by the recipient to be harassment will result in disciplinary action.

When sending emails to your instructor or TA, please use your Western email account to ensure your message is not mistakenly labelled as spam.

Check your Western email regularly for updates about the course. Failure to check your email regularly is not a valid reason for not completing an assignment or not completing it according to specified directions.

CLASS CONTENT

Students should be respectful of each other's opinions and positions. While free speech and discussion are always encouraged, comments deemed hateful towards a specific person or group

will not be tolerated in the classroom. Moreover, disruptive conduct can result in removal from the classroom.

While you are expected to strive toward make the learning environment as comfortable as possible for everyone involved, a “safe space” *cannot be guaranteed*. If you choose to share personal or sensitive information, please keep in mind that the privacy of the classroom cannot always be ensured.

Should the nature of any class content make you feel distressed or uncomfortable to the point you cannot attend or remain in the classroom, please feel free to excuse yourself from the room for part or all of the lecture period. Contact the instructor as soon as possible to ensure you receive appropriate accommodation for any missed class time.