Western University
Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research

WS 3322G Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory and Practice
In the Social Sciences (Jan. – April 2014)

Instructor: Erica Lawson 661-2111 ext. 86941 LWH 3234 elawso3@uwo.ca
Office hours: Mondays 11:30am- 12:30pm Wednesdays 10:30-11:30
Class times: Thursdays 1:30 - 4:30pm Location: UCC 54A

Description:
How does a feminist examination of the social sciences facilitate a more informed understanding of social relations? How does feminist praxis seek to transform the material outcomes of unequal relations of power? And what kinds of interventionist strategies have feminist social scientists utilized towards these objectives? These foundational questions frame the focus of this course in its investigation of feminist contributions to, for example, sociology, anthropology, political science and economics. Organized thematically, the course will explore feminist theoretical and methodological approaches to topical issues such as re/productive labour, neoliberalism, nationalism, dis/ability, race, gender, and sexuality. We will accomplish this through lectures, presentations, documentaries, and discussions. We will also read Edwidge Danticat’s novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* for the questions that it raises, from a feminist perspective, about the complexities of agency in relation to state violence.

All readings are available in OWL Sakai. Where readings are available online, please follow the link to download the article(s).

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course students should be able to:
• Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between knowledge production, ideology and structural inequality as addressed in the social sciences.
• Recognize the diversity of feminist approaches within social science research and practices.
• Recognize how feminist research methodology is applied in the social sciences.
• Recognize how feminist research practice and principles are used in everyday life.
• Articulate the politics of knowledge production as outlined by feminist scholars.
• Apply feminist theories and approaches in other disciplines.
• Demonstrate knowledge about how social locations such as race, class, gender, sexuality and dis/abilities inform feminist knowledge production.

In addition, the course will facilitate development of the student’s
• critical and analytical thinking skills
• oral and written communication skills
• independent and collaborative research skills
**Evaluation and Instructions**

Attendance and participation  
10%

Position paper – (5-6 pages); pick your due date according to instructions  
(But note that last day for submission is March 13th)  
10%

Presentation/discussion – (two students responsible for leading one discussion)  
15%

Abstract (optional, but strongly encouraged) – Due: February 27  
0%

Book review (4-5 pages) – Due: March 6th  
10%

Research paper – (10-12 pages) – Due: March 28th  
25%

Final exam  
30%

**All the readings for this course will be organized weekly and posted online in OWL Sakai. Please purchase *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, which is available at Western’s bookstore.**

**Attendance and participation:** In addition to showing up, participation requires that you come prepared to class to engage in discussions.

**Position paper:** I will post instructions for this assignment in OWL Sakai. Please review it carefully and let me know if you have any questions. You cannot write on an article that has already been discussed in class. Your window of opportunity for submitting a position paper is January 16th to March 13th. In other words, you can write on any article of your choice, but March 13th is the final deadline for submitting your paper. Papers must be submitted to me at the beginning of our class.

**Presentation/discussion** (20 minutes): As with the position paper, this is an exercise in critical and close reading. In groups of two, you are required to choose an article for presentation and discussion. Instead of merely reviewing the article or summarizing the main points, choose a concept or theoretical argument presented in the article and use it to analyze an issue that’s of interest to you. For example, what is the author’s theoretical framework or argument? How is this framework or argument applicable to theorizing a contemporary issue? This is an opportunity for you to be both critical and creative with how you approach the assignment. Pose two discussion questions; sign-up for your presentation. See OWL Sakai for marking guidelines.

**Book Review:** (*Breath, Eyes, Memory*). Instructions will be discussed and posted in OWL Sakai.
**Abstract and Research paper:** Start thinking about your topic early. The paper must be based on some aspect of a feminist theoretical and/or methodological argument. For example, you could take a topical issue in the news or one that pertains to a public policy issue, and conduct an analysis using a feminist theoretical and/or methodological approach. The objective of the assignment is to demonstrate your depth of knowledge about feminist theories and methodologies as these are addressed in our readings, lectures, presentations, and discussions.

I’m happy to read a short abstract about your topic (half a page, single-spaced). The purpose of this optional exercise is to provide an opportunity for constructive feedback as you move towards completing the final assignment. In addition to relevant course readings, use at least 4 external sources (two peer-reviewed articles, one book chapter, and another article of your choice: e.g. newspaper or magazine). Please send abstract as an attachment by email.

**Exam review:** We will conduct a student-led in-class review of discussions, presentations, and lectures in preparation for the final exam. You will be given an exam format in advance.

**January 9:** Welcome, overview of expectations/discussion


**Theme 1: The Politics of Knowledge Production**

**January 16**


**January 23**


**January 30**


**Guest speaker:** Miranda Niittynen, PhD Candidate, Women’s Studies and Feminist Research. “Giving Digital Accounts: Feminist Ethnographic Frames and Windows.”

**Theme 2: Political Economy, Marxist Feminism and Re/productive Labour**

**February 6**


**February 13**


**Spring Break – February 17 -21**

*Have a restful and enjoyable break!*
February 27


**Guest Speaker:** Crystal Gaudet, PhD Candidate, Women’s Studies and feminist Research.

**Due:** Abstract (this is optional but strongly recommended).

**Theme 3: State/Violence**

March 6


Danticat, E. (1994). “Breath, Eyes, Memory.” (We will discuss the book in this class).


**Due:** Book Review

March 13


**Due:** Last day to hand in position paper.

March 20


Documentary: Pray the Devil Back to Hell.

**Theme 4: Neoliberalism and Gender**

**March 27**


Documentary (TBA) and if there is time.

**April 3**


**Exam Review:** This is as student led review; you will itemize the major theories discussed in the articles and course; my role is to provide clarification and encourage collective conversation to further explain the meaning(s) of theories that are likely to appear on the exam.

**Course Policies**

**Submitting Assignments:** Please hand in hard copies of all written assignments in WS 3322G; you are also required to submit electronic copies of all written assignments (excluding tests) to Turnitin.com through the course Owl Sakai links. 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)
Deadlines are registered as the date/time these assignments are due to Turnitin, and late penalties are assessed based on the submission time to turnitin site – so please don’t forget to load your paper to Turnitin on time. Again, I need hard copies to mark, so assignments not handed in during class must be deposited into the WS essay drop box, located outside the WSFR Main Office doors, Lawson Hall 3260.

**Essays not submitted to Turnitin will receive grades converted to 0. You cannot submit assignments in WS 3322G prepared for other courses.**

Late & Missed Assignments Regarding the University’s medical policy, UWO Senate requires that students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness see: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg117.html and (https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm). (See also http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf and the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

Please note the attendance policy of the Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research and The University of Western Ontario: Students whose absences from classes are deemed excessive by the instructor can be barred from writing the final exam in the course, according to the procedures established under Examinations/Attendance in the 2009 Western Academic Calendar: (http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/operations/proofing/academiccalendar2011.pdf for UWO Policy, but see http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg117.html for the case of medical Illness).

*** Late assignment will lose 2% per day including weekends. Academic accommodation for missed assignments must be requested within 28 days (4 weeks) from the assignment’s deadline.

Participation: You will be required to read for each class. Plan to read critically rather than just for content. You are expected to have read all assigned materials prior to each class period and to be prepared to participate in class discussion.

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: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf; http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf

Plagiarism: 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

**Electronic devices:** You may use a computer in class to take notes. Do not use class time for anything other than academic purposes. You may not use a cell phone, PDA, or similar electronic device in class at any time. Should you, for any reason, need to receive a phone call during class time, we ask that you keep your phone on vibrate and step out of the classroom to receive the call. No electronic devices are permitted during tests and exams.

**OWL Sakai:** Use of OWL Sakai is necessary for successful completion of this course. This includes accessing readings as required in the course outline, downloading instructions and guidelines for assignments, and submitting assignments to Turnitin.com. All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website.

**Contact Info:** My office hours are posted on page one of this syllabus. Please do not wait until the week before assignments are due to ask for help. Written messages can be left for me in my mailbox in the Department of Women’s Studies main office, LWH 3260. You are welcome to email, but should always put the course number into the subject line, and use your UWO email address; emails not so identified may automatically be screened out as spam. I will respond within forty-eight hours. If you are unable to email, you can leave a message for me at 519-661-2111 ext. 86941.

Please note that this syllabus is subject to revision at the Instructor’s discretion.