

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21

Phil 2062G
Power, Oppression, and Privilege

Winter Term
Synchronous Day and Time: Tues. 2:30-3:30

Instructor: Prof. Carolyn McLeod Office: Stevenson Hall 2150G Office Hours: TBA Email: cmcleod2@uwo.ca	Co-instructor and TA: Heather Stewart, PhD Candidate, Philosophy Office Hours: TBA Email: hstewa27@uwo.ca
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*Note: for this course, there will no longer be an optional in-person meeting on Thursdays.

DESCRIPTION

To say our society is racist, sexist, or the like is to say it is marked by systems and relationships of power that are oppressive to certain groups of people. This course examines these systems and relationships and considers what philosophers, in particular, have said about them. We will ask the following sorts of questions: What does it mean to be oppressed, or be the target of something like racism or sexism? How should we understand power as it occurs in relationships of both oppression and privilege? How do different systems of oppression intersect and inform one another? How can people be empowered to resist their oppression or the oppression of others? How can they act in solidarity with one another to achieve this goal?

The above questions fit under categories that correspond to different ways that power can manifest itself: as domination (*power over* others), empowerment (*power to* act or resist), and solidarity (*power with* others). The course will be divided up according to these three topics. We will also apply the theories we learn under each topic to case studies, where samples include studies of police violence against Black people, reproductive injustice toward Indigenous people, the misgendering of trans people, and actions taken to combat COVID-19 that are discriminatory toward people with disabilities.

TEXTS

All readings will be available on our OWL site under Course Content and also Resources. There are no books that you need to purchase for this course.

OBJECTIVES

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

- Appreciate better what it means to have power in society and to be oppressed and/or privileged

- Understand philosophical theories about power, oppression, privilege, and related concepts such as microaggressions, stereotyping, and moral deference
- Learn how to apply these theories to case studies and how to think critically about both the theories and the cases
- Imagine how you could translate what you learn in the course into political action

In addition, through your assignments (see below under Requirements), you will develop or hone skills like the following:

- Interpreting and applying philosophical theories or concepts
- Critical analysis and writing
- Thoughtful engagement with others on controversial political or moral issues

REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Scaffolding Writing Assignment:
 - a) Summary of a case study chosen by the student that concerns power, oppression, or privilege: 10%
 - b) Critical summary of a philosophical theory relevant to the case study chosen in a): 10%
 - c) Essay that analyzes the case study in a) or the theory in b): 25%
- 2) Participation in online synchronous classes: 10%
- 3) Short quizzes: 10%
- 4) Mid-term test: 15%
- 5) Take-home final: 20%

Details about assignments will appear in an expanded version of this syllabus and under Assignments in OWL.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

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. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of

registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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 for such checking 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 of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.