



# Western University

## Department of Philosophy

### Course Outline 2020-21

*This course outline is tentative and subject to change.*

**Grad Course Number: 9703A**  
**Cross-listed with Undergrad Course Number: 4311F**

## Problems in the Philosophy of Science: Women and Science

### Fall Term

**Mondays 2:30-5:30**

*Supported by Asynchronous Material  
and Online Group Discussion*

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**Zoom: <https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/my/fvidotto>**



Although this academic year might be different, Western University is committed to a **thriving campus**. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

### Description

The narrative of the human pursuit of knowledge has traditionally excluded the voices that were not in power. In this course, we will focus on scientific and technical knowledge and on women. This is a rich case that gives us instruments to recognize the importance of diversity in science. The course is organized in two parts: the first historical and sociological, the second philosophical.

First, we will consider the historical and sociological contexts that have prevented women from accessing and producing scientific knowledge. The students will be introduced to a selection of remarkable women of science, from antiquity to our days. We will discuss the ground-breaking aspects of their work and the specificities of their experience as scientists. We will highlight how gender identity, race and economical background contribute to create different experiences.

We will then discuss questions at the center of the feminist reflection on science: How biases manifest in scientific production? Does the gender of the knower make a difference? At the light of these questions, what does objectivity mean? We will discuss some of the answers these questions have been given in the field of feminist epistemology, the perspectives these answers opens for general epistemology, and the relation between these issues and current scientific research.

## Learning Outcomes

No special background is required for the enrolment in this course. This course satisfies the requirements for a course in Philosophy of Science as well as Feminist Philosophy.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:



- Frame the question of women in science in a historical and sociological context
- Critically examine the role of women as subjects and producers of scientific knowledge
- Consider the interplay between bias and the conceptualization of scientific objectivity as value-free and not situated
- Understand the different feminist perspectives on the spectrum of science domains and practices
- Reflect on the possible contributions of a feminist reflection to contemporary scientific production and practices
- Analyze questions in a multidisciplinary framework
- Develop in autonomy in-depth knowledge on a specific question concerning women and science and articulate it in an essay and a presentation

## Resources

Readings and other course materials will be made available through the OWL course website and the library system. Authors whose texts will be discussed include Karen Barad, Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Helen Longino, and Londa Scheibinger. Beyond texts, in the course we will possibly discuss additional multimedia material.

## Requirements

1. Weekly reading responses  
Each week the students will engage with reading and post on the OWL website a reaction, in the form of 2-3 questions (indicatively of 100 – 150 words) based on the readings and addressing topics that they would like to be discussed in the class.
2. Participation in group discussions  
A goal of this course is to give the opportunity to actively engage with the reading material and to learn from listening to classmates' contributions. This is possible only if students take time to complete the readings course and to reflect on them prior to the class, by the Monday of each week.
3. Online forum discussions  
The online forum will be used to continue the discussions started in the class, and to make possible to address new topics or questions. Students are encourage to post questions, and contribute with their own answers.
4. Final project, to be presented online with a poster  
After the first part of the course, the students will be asked to outline an ideal project concerning women and science, and to present their idea in an online poster presentation at the end of the course. Students have the possibility to work in teams.
5. Final essay  
Students will demonstrate their acquired ability to reflect on the themes of the course in a final dissertation. The topic and the form of the essay will be chosen to fit the interests and the academic stage of each student. Students should demonstrate to be able to develop their chosen topic engaging with the questions posed by scholars in feminist epistemology and with their main contributions. The suggested length of the final essay is 3,000 – 4,000 words.

## Course Schedule



Week	Dates	Topic
	Sept 9	No class
1	Sept 14	
2	Sept 21	
3	Sept 28	
4	Oct 5	Presence/Absence of Women in Science
5	Oct 12	
6	Oct 19	
7	Oct 26	
	Nov 2	Reading Week
8	Nov 9	
9	Nov 16	Feminist Epistemologies
10	Nov 23	
11	Nov 30	
12	Dec 7	Student Presentations

## Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment Format	Weighting	Due Date
Weekly reading responses	20%	Sunday before a class
Online forum discussions	20%	Each week
Final project	30%	Dec 7
Final essay	40%	Dec 18

Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)

After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

## Online participation and engagements

Students are expected to participate and engage with content as much as possible. The course is online, with in-person discussion as well as asynchronous material and participation.

- Online asynchronous short lectures
- Online synchronous discussion sessions
- Recording of discussions may be available to the class after students' consent
- Participation in the forums with peers and instructors

## Course website

This course is online and can be accessed through the OWL platform. It's the student's responsibility to regularly check the OWL website for course material and the discussion forum.

The main functions we will use on OWL site are:

- Course Readings: where you will be redirected to all course readings
- Dropbox: to share material with the instructor and with other students
- Forums: where weekly online discussions will take place throughout the course
- Messages: use the OWL email system to contact the instructor and your classmates
- Resources: for most of the supplemental materials
- Wiki: to work with the other students on collaborative projects

## Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam

Attendance at synchronous sessions is required.

A recording will be provided for synchronous sessions.

All course material will be posted to OWL: <https://owl.uwo.ca/x/anxKFW>

Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.



If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; up you're your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).

## Communication

- Students should check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- A weekly update will be provided on the OWL announcements
- Emails will be monitored daily; students should expect a response in 48 hours
- This course will use the OWL forum for discussions
- Students should post all course-related content on the discussion forum so that everyone can access answers to questions
- The discussion forums will be monitored daily by the instructor or the teaching assistants

## Office Hours

- Office hours will be held remotely using Zoom
- Students will be able to sign up for an appointment using Sign Up on OWL
- Eventual group office hours will be held, recorded, and posted for everyone to view

## Professionalism & Privacy

Western students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:



- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- All course materials created by the instructor are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- Students are expected to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

## Reccomandations

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

- Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
- Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
- Follow weekly checklists created on OWL or create your own to help you stay on track.
- Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching the videos.
- Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
- Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

## Western Academic Policies and Statements

### Absence from Course Commitments

#### [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences](#)

In the interest of the health and safety of students and health care providers, you are no longer required to seek a medical note for absences this term. If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness you should use the [Illness Reporting Tool](#). This tool takes the place of the need to submit a medical note and the Self-Reported Absence System formally used by undergraduate students.

You are required to self-report every day that you are ill and unable to complete course commitments. Students should communicate promptly with their instructor and use this tool with integrity.

### Accommodation for Religious Holidays

The policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be viewed [here](#).

### Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

## Academic Offences

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed [here](#) to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

## Accessibility Statement

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

## Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered **e-mail account** provided to students will be considered the individual’s official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

## Plagiarism Checking

All assignments will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. Students will be able to view their results before the final submission. 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 Western University and [Turnitin.com](#).

## Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

## Rounding of Marks Statement

Across the Basic Medical Sciences Undergraduate Education programs, we strive to maintain high standards that reflect the effort that both students and faculty put into the teaching and learning experience during this course. All students will be treated equally and evaluated based only on their actual achievement. **Final grades** on this course, irrespective of the number of decimal places used in marking individual assignments and tests, will be calculated to one decimal place and rounded to the nearest integer, e.g., 74.4 becomes 74, and 74.5 becomes 75. Marks WILL NOT be bumped to the next grade or GPA, e.g. a 79 will NOT be bumped up to an 80, an 84 WILL NOT be bumped up to an 85, etc. The mark attained is the mark you achieved, and the mark assigned; requests for mark “bumping” will be denied.

## 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. 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.

The following links provide information about support services at Western University.

[Academic Counselling \(Science and Basic Medical Sciences\)](#)

[Appeal Procedures](#)

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Development Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)