

## WGS 460Y: HONOURS SEMINAR

Dr. S. Trimble | Sept. 2013 – Apr. 2014 | Tuesdays, 3-5PM | WI 2008

### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: SARAH TRIMBLE

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we transform rough ideas into solid, persuasive, and nuanced arguments? What does a critical analysis look like? How do we navigate the seemingly endless sources of information and cultural products that are available to us in order to develop a helpful archive from which to work? What's the most effective way to present our key ideas? This seminar is for advanced students in Women and Gender Studies who want to design and execute a major research project. In the process, you'll reflect on and develop your research method, think through the ethics and politics of making knowledge, work at the craft of writing clear, persuasive prose, and workshop different stages of your projects. We'll devote the first term to formulating specific, focused topics and questions and developing practical strategies to help you pursue the goals that you'll eventually set out in your project proposals. The second term, during which we will meet every two weeks, will be organized into a series of workshops that will allow you to give and receive feedback on aspects of your papers and to help each other troubleshoot as you run into challenges.

This course is an opportunity to explore, in some detail, questions that matter to you and to further develop the necessary skills to express complex, original thought. By participating in this classroom community of thinkers and writers, you'll also experience firsthand how making knowledge is a relational, rather than isolated, endeavour.

### REQUIRED READINGS:

Available on Blackboard: <https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

### GRADING SCHEME

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Value (%)</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Research Portfolio (6 small assignments)	30	See class schedule
Research Proposal & Ethics Review (if necessary)	10	November 19, 2013
Completion grade (5 homework assignments)	10	See class schedule
Final Paper	35	March 18, 2014
Symposium Presentation	15	April 1, 2014

**ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT**

I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and I'm committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Accessibility Services works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services, including your college's Writing Centre, are available to all students.

Accessibility Services can be reached by phone at 416-978-8060, by email at [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca), or online: <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/Home.htm>.

New College's Writing Centre can be reached by phone at 416-978-8283, by email at [newcollege.writingcentre@utoronto.ca](mailto:newcollege.writingcentre@utoronto.ca), or online: <http://www.newcollege.utoronto.ca/academics/writing-centre/>.

Your success in this class is important to me. Whether you're registered with Accessibility Services, working with a writing tutor, or accessing other kinds of support, I'm happy to work together with you to develop strategies that will allow you to meet both your own learning needs and the requirements of the course.

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**ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

*Research Portfolio – Due: October 8, October 15, January 7, February 4, February 25, and March 11 (see class schedule for details)*

In order to fully participate in many of our in-class workshops throughout the year, you will need to complete short assignments prior to specific classes. Instructions for these assignments are included in the class schedule below. They're designed to encourage you to reflect on your own social location and how it shapes your research; to identify and understand strategies of analysis and argumentation; to practice writing clear, coherent, argument-oriented paragraphs; to help you develop the thesis that will anchor your final paper; to craft an effective, organized outline for that paper; and to write a short abstract highlighting the paper's key moves and contributions to the fields with which you're engaged. I'll grade and provide feedback on each of these assignments, endeavouring wherever possible to return them to you in the class that immediately follows their respective due dates. This is an opportunity, then, to get detailed feedback on your ideas *and* your writing throughout the year and to make adjustments as necessary.

\*\*Because these assignments must be completed on time to facilitate your participation in our workshops, accepting late work (unless accompanied by appropriate medical documentation) is up to my discretion.

*Research Proposal & Ethics Review (if necessary) – Due: November 19, 2013*

Your 5-page proposal will introduce your topic and the research question(s) you've formulated, outline your analytical framework, identify your important thinkers/interlocutors, and situate your project within larger scholarly conversations. Please do not forget to include a working bibliography for this assignment, which should list not only those sources you've cited in your proposal but also any sources you've gathered that you expect will inform your final paper.

If your project requires human participation, you will also need to complete an ethics review (a document that we'll discuss in greater detail in October).

*NB: More detailed instructions for this assignment will be available on Blackboard.*

*Completion grade for homework assignments – Due: September 17, September 24, October 29, November 5, and January 21 (see class schedule for details)*

Some small homework assignments are required for full participation in classes for which there are no research portfolio assignments. Instructions for these assignments are included in the class schedule below. The homework assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis: you'll receive full marks simply for completing the work as per the instructions on the course outline.

\*\*As with the research portfolio assignments, because these assignments must be completed on time to facilitate your participation in our workshops, accepting late work (unless accompanied by appropriate medical documentation) is up to my discretion.

*Final Paper – Due: March 18, 2014*

Your final essay will be a 20-25 page **critical analysis** of your chosen topic. A precise, argument-oriented thesis, a clear analytical framework, careful organization, strong paragraph structure, proper citations, and grammatical correctness are essential to a successful essay.

*Symposium Presentation – Due: April 1, 2014*

This course culminates in a public symposium in which you'll have the opportunity to present a portion of your final essay to your peers, some of the WGS faculty, and others who may be interested in attending. As a class, we'll think through an effective structure for the symposium, deciding together on what might be the most generative organization and ordering of the presentations, how to organize the Q&A/discussion period, and so on. You'll be evaluated on the organization, tone, and style of your presentation.

*NB: You must have submitted a minimum of 80% of your research portfolio and homework assignments ON TIME in order to present at the symposium. If you haven't met this requirement throughout the year, your participation in this final element of the course is not guaranteed.*

## ASSIGNMENT REGULATIONS

### *Submission and Return Procedures*

All written assignments are due **in class at the start of class** on the due date. My policy is that after receiving your graded work, you must **wait at least 24 hours** before contacting me if you have questions or concerns about your grade. This policy is in place to ensure that you have adequate time to carefully review and digest the feedback—both the grade itself and the written comments—that you've received. After this 24-hour period, if you have questions, concerns, or would simply like clarification on any aspect of your marked assignment, please don't hesitate to send me an email outlining your questions so that we can set up a meeting to discuss your work.

*Penalty for Late Work, Late Submission Instructions, and Extensions*

Late assignments will be penalized **3% per day**, and I may choose not to accept work submitted more than 10 days late. If your assignment is late, you must do two things:

1. Please email it to me as soon as it's finished so that I can record an accurate submission date; and
2. please submit a hard copy of your work to the WGS office assistant in WI 2035.

If there are extenuating circumstances, including and especially absence due to illness, I'll be happy to waive the late penalty if you provide appropriate documentation (a medical note or letter from your college registrar). Please approach me if there are other life circumstances that may affect your ability to meet the deadlines or otherwise participate in this class. The sooner I know about these, the more flexibility I'll have when it comes to making possible adjustments or alternate arrangements concerning your assignments and participation.

*Academic Integrity*

The university maintains a strict policy on academic integrity, and this course will abide by that policy. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar with and understand the different forms of academic misconduct. Potential offences include but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism: presenting other people's published or unpublished work, in part or in whole, as your own
- Submitting the same work in more than one course
- Cheating: copying another person's answer on a test; communicating with another person during a test or exam; purchasing assignments and submitting the work as your own
- Improper academic/research practices: making up sources; fabricating or falsifying results; using other people's research findings without permission
- Falsifying institutional documents, including tests, transcripts, and letters of permission

If you have any questions about how to cite sources properly or what constitutes plagiarism, please consult Margaret Proctor's "How Not to Plagiarize": <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

Of course, you can also feel free to bring your questions about plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct to me. I'm happy to help!

*Grade Scale*

Letter Grade	Percentage	Definition
A+	90-100	EXCEPTIONAL. Exceptional knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and exceptional skill and/or great originality in their use in satisfying the requirements of an assignment or course.
A	85-89	EXCELLENT. Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques with a high degree of skill in their use; strong evidence of original thinking.
A-	80-84	
B+	77-79	GOOD – VERY GOOD. High to very high level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with reasonable to considerable skill in using them; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability.
B	73-76	
B-	70-72	
C+	67-69	FAIRLY SATISFACTORY – SATISFACTORY. Acceptable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with some ability in using them.
C	63-66	
C-	60-62	
D+	57-59	PASSING. Minimal knowledge of required concepts and/or techniques; minimal evidence of critical and analytic skills.
D	53-56	
D-	50-52	
F	0-49	FAILING. Does not meet university standards.

**CLASS CANCELLATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In the event of class cancellations, you will be notified on Blackboard:

<https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>.

Please check our course site regularly for announcements, updates, and links.

**CONSULTATION POLICY**

I'm happy to handle brief logistical questions via email. Please remember to include the **course code in the subject line** of your message. However, if you wish to discuss your own work in detail, please drop by during my office hours or email me to make an appointment. In general, I'll make every effort to respond to emails within **48 hours**, but please note that I may not reply to assignment-related emails that are sent less than 24 hours before the assignment deadline.

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### CLASS SCHEDULE—TERM 1

- September 10      Introductions.
- September 17      **Workshop 1: Pitches**  
What to bring: Imagine pitching your project as a documentary. Give it a title, a tagline, and a two-sentence synopsis (and, if you're feeling inspired, a visual of some kind). Please bring three different pitches to our first workshop.  
What we'll do: Working in small groups, you'll pitch each other your project ideas. Then, guided by feedback and questions from your peers, you'll decide which of the three versions of your project is closest to what you want to pursue. In the second part of the class, you'll then bring this pitch to the larger group and take advantage of some collective brainstorming.  
*\*\*Completion grade\*\**
- September 24      **Workshop 2: Mind Maps and Research Questions**  
What to bring: Using the previous week's collective brainstorming session as a starting point, "map" your project on a piece (or pieces) of paper: play with key terms and concepts, exemplary texts, compelling images, provocative quotations, and so on, indicating links between them with lines, arrows, or whatever else makes sense to you. Think of this as an attempt to map out your thought process so that you can see, at a glance, the pieces of your project.  
What we'll do: As a large group, we'll think through the components of a solid research question and how to formulate one. Then, working in pairs, you'll use your maps to generate a cluster of questions that will help to focus your research and reading.  
*\*\*Completion grade\*\**
- October 1          **Ethics and Ethics Reviews (Guest speaker: Judith Taylor)**  
What to read:  
Doucet, "'From her side of the gossamer wall(s)': Reflexivity and Relational Knowing" (*Qualitative Sociology* [January 2008]: 1-19)  
  
What to bring: The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Tri Council Policy Statement (TCPS) includes an online tutorial: the Course on Research Ethics (CORE). You can access it here: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/> CORE takes an average of 3 hours to complete, though it doesn't need to be finished in one sitting (you can log on and off as you like). *\*\*Please print out and bring your certificate of completion to today's class.*  
What we'll do: We'll devote this class to a group discussion of some questions around ethics, reflexivity, and research. Judy Taylor will be on hand both to contribute her expertise to this broader discussion and to answer any specific questions you might have about the University of Toronto's "Undergraduate Ethics Review Protocol Form: Student-Initiated Project."

October 8

**Workshop 3: The Politics of Location**What to read:

Ahmed, “On Arrival.” *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke UP, 2012. 1-17.

Butler, Judith. “The Claim of Non-Violence.” *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2009. 165-84.

What to bring: Write a 2- to 3-page critical reflection on your position as a researcher in relation to your research questions. Consider the subjects, histories, geographies, fields/disciplines, and/or archives that you imagine you’ll be working with. Where are you located in relation to your project? What kinds of power differentials shape your encounters with this area of inquiry? What’s motivating your project? Please ground some of your reflections in the ideas raised in the Doucet, Ahmed, and Butler readings and/or in concepts and insights drawn from additional readings of your choice.

What we’ll do: Working in pairs, you’ll read each other’s critical reflections, identifying their key insights and posing questions for further consideration. As a larger group, we’ll then talk through some of the broader ethical, political, and/or methodological questions and challenges that emerge from your conversations.

**\*\*Research portfolio assignment #1\*\***

October 15

**Workshop 4: Anatomy of an Argument**What to read: TBA (1 of 3 texts)

What to bring: Choose **one** of this week’s readings and prepare a two-page analysis of *how* the author unfolds her or his argument. What’s the argument? What constitutes “evidence” here? What are the sub-arguments and how do they build on or otherwise connect with each other? (Consider: which verb best describes the relationship between parts A and B of the argument?) Are there notable rhetorical devices at work (e.g. rhetorical questions, metaphors, allusions, etc.)? How are they operating? What are the pieces of this analysis and how do they fit together? **Remember:** the emphasis here is on the *how* rather than the *what*: your aim is not to produce a summary of the essay but, rather, a kind of “blueprint” outlining how the argument operates.

What we’ll do: Working in groups with others who have selected the same article, you’ll compare notes and insights, clarify confusions, and develop a “master” breakdown of the strategies at work in your selected texts. Then, as a large group, we’ll discuss your findings and compare our three authors’ respective methods and frameworks.

**\*\*Research portfolio assignment #2\*\***

October 22

**Library Workshop: Jeff Newman** (College Librarian, D.G. Ivey Library)  
Jeff will walk us through techniques and strategies for tracking down secondary material. Following this workshop, Jeff and I will both be available for individual consultation, and Jeff, specifically, will be able to answer

questions you may have about working with primary material if this is applicable to your project.

NB: As preparation for this workshop, please send Jeff an email—ideally at least one week in advance—outlining how you generally find sources for your research papers. He'd like to augment your current research practices rather than go over things that you already know. Jeff can be reached at:

[jeff.newman@utoronto.ca](mailto:jeff.newman@utoronto.ca)

*\*\*Please meet in the computer lab in the basement of D.G. Ivey Library today instead of in our usual room.*

October 29

### **Workshop 5a: Research Proposal drafts**

What to bring: A draft of your 5-page research proposal (see Blackboard for more detailed instructions)

What we'll do: Working in pairs and using a set of questions that I will provide, you'll work through each other's draft proposals to identify what's working very well, which points could use further development, and so on. If there's enough time, we'll go through this process twice so that you have the benefit of two different outside perspectives on your work.

*\*\*Completion grade\*\**

November 5

### **Workshop 5b: Research Proposal drafts, part 2**

What to bring: The revised draft of your 5-page research proposal + one page of notes outlining a) the key points of feedback you received last week and b) how you addressed them in the revision process.

What we'll do: Based on your page of notes, you'll report both the feedback you received and how you addressed it to the class as a whole. This is an opportunity, too, to address aspects of your proposal that you may feel still need further development and to ask your colleagues for their thoughts on how to accomplish this.

*\*\*Completion grade\*\**

November 12

FALL BREAK—NO CLASS

November 19

### **The Art of Reading Closely**

What to bring: **\*\*Your completed Research Proposals\*\***

What we'll do: Working with a selection of theoretical and literary passages as well as visual culture examples, we'll work through practices of close reading. What kinds of details should we notice when we're reading or looking at a text? And how do we build an analysis out of those details?

*There's no preparation required for this class.*

November 26

### **Individual meetings**

This class time will be devoted to one-on-one meetings in which we can discuss how you're doing with your projects, troubleshoot any challenges that have arisen, and strategize about how you want to move forward in January. I'll have you sign up for particular timeslots the week before this class.

## WGS 460Y: HONOURS SEMINAR

**CLASS SCHEDULE—TERM 2**

**An overall note about the class structure each week:** Each of our classes this term will begin with a group check-in and a discussion/update about the symposium that we're collectively putting on at the end of the term. Then, working either in pairs or as a large group, you'll review, develop, and refine the materials that you've drafted for each meeting.

January 7

**Welcome back! Workshop 6: Polished Paragraphs**

What to bring: A unified, well-organized paragraph that's organized around EITHER one of the key terms in your analytical framework OR the relationship between two of your key terms. Remember: for our purposes, a key term is a word that has a fair amount of theoretical "baggage" attached to it; that is, it's a concept that's been defined differently by a number of thinkers, deployed in different fields and frameworks, and so on. Some examples are: abjection, affect, intersectionality, racialization, hybridity, identity, trauma, resistance, hegemony, governmentality, decolonization, etc. It's important to be able to identify which key terms are organizing your thinking about your topic, as they're usually what allow you to move from summary and surface observation to critical analysis.

Your paragraph, then, should make a single, clear point that's grounded by at least one of your key terms. It should be approximately one page in length (double-spaced, 12-point font), and include the following elements: a precise topic sentence that clearly expresses the claim you're making in the paragraph; a few select quotations and/or other forms of evidence that support that claim, along with your analysis of each piece of evidence; and a concluding statement that synthesizes some of the details you've considered. You can either imagine this paragraph as one that will appear in some form in your final paper, OR, if that's too intimidating, write it as an analytical response to a reading that's central to your research (i.e. this is the *one* point I want to zero in on about how a particular concept is working in X article).

*\*\*Research portfolio assignment #3\*\**

January 14

NO CLASS

January 21

**Workshop 7: Tantalizing Titles**

What to bring: A working title for your project. It should include the following elements: [Something snappy, clever, and descriptive] : [a selection of key concepts and/or phrases]. Under your title, briefly outline the rationale behind each of its elements. What makes the "descriptive" part of the title effective and appropriate? If it's a quotation that you've borrowed from another source, where does it come from and why did you choose it? How have the key concepts and/or phrases that you've selected for your subtitle narrowed, oriented, or otherwise qualified your title? Are there additional concepts that are important to your analytical framework that you've left out? If so, why? Are there alternative versions of the title that you're playing with? How are they different? (Altogether, this should constitute no more than a page of writing.)

*\*\*Completion grade\*\**

- January 28 NO CLASS
- February 4 **Workshop 8: Thorough Theses**  
What to bring: A working thesis for your project. It should answer the following questions: *Who/what/when/where? How? Why?* The first questions pertain to context and focus: What people/phenomena/historical moments/places are most relevant to the argument you're making? The *how* often draws on the key concepts you've included in your title: How does the phenomenon you're investigating unfold? How does it take shape? Finally, the *why* answers the "so what?" question: Why is what you're noticing important? What are the broader implications? Why does it matter? Beneath your working thesis, write a short paragraph outlining precisely how/where it answers each of the questions I've listed above. If you feel that the "answer" to one of the questions is missing from your thesis—and the "why?" is often the most difficult—note that it's missing and speculate as to how you might address the omission. What line of inquiry do you need to further develop in order to clarify your argument? (Altogether, this should constitute no more than a page of writing.)  
*\*\*Research portfolio assignment #4\*\**
- February 11 NO CLASS (NB: Judith Butler is giving the Alexander Lecture today)
- February 18 READING WEEK—NO CLASSES
- February 25 **Workshop 9: Omniscient Outlines**  
What to bring: A draft outline of the components and organization of your final project. Place your title and working thesis at the top of the page, then list the sub-sections and briefly address how each part of the paper will flow into or otherwise prepare the way for the next. Remember: you're not only organizing your ideas, but also tracing the logic of your argument. *Why* is the presentation of ideas that you've settled on effective? Why does section B have to appear before section C, and not vice versa?  
*\*\*Research portfolio assignment #5\*\**
- March 4 NO CLASS
- March 11 **Workshop 10: Arresting Abstracts**  
What to bring: A 250-word abstract for your project. What is your argument and how does it contribute to and/or intervene in the relevant field(s)? Who/what are the important people, historical moments, texts, case studies, etc. that you address? What key analytical moves do you make? And, if applicable, what are your conclusions and why are they important?  
*\*\*Research portfolio assignment #6\*\**
- March 18 NO CLASS
- March 25 **Pre-symposium meeting**  
*\*Final projects due\**
- April 1 **\*Public Symposium\***