

SOC354H1S – LEC5101 – GENDER, VIOLENCE, AND THE STATE:  
Feminist Activism Against Violence

Sociology Department, St. George Campus  
Summer 2024, July – August (Online)  
Mondays & Wednesdays, 5:10 pm - 8 pm

**Instructor:** Roberta S. Pamplona (she/her) - [roberta.pamplona@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:roberta.pamplona@mail.utoronto.ca)  
**Office Hours:** On Fridays 10am-11am (zoom link on Quercus), and by appointment.

*Land Acknowledgment – On where we are:*

For the past four years, I have lived here as a settler immigrant from Brazil. I am still learning about the history of this land. One link that I found helpful was the Native Land Digital page, which discusses territory acknowledgement (<https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>). They recognize that land acknowledgement is a tool to raise awareness by highlighting “*Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life.*” Still, they reckon with the limits of land acknowledgments —see the essays and resources suggested in the link—. We are meeting in the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. In this course, I hope we can engage with the colonial past and present. I have also added a space on Quercus where you can post any information you would like to share with your classmates; it might include resources on Indigenous struggles.

*Course Description – On our curiosity:*

*There are cuts and deep cuts  
In your skin and in your hair  
And furrows on your face  
That are the ways of the world  
That are unreadable maps  
In ancient cartography  
You need a pirate  
Good at piracy  
Who'll bust you out of savagery  
And put you, once again,  
In front of the world  
Woman.*

- Beatriz Nascimento, “Dream” (1989)<sup>1</sup>

When does violence inspire feminist mobilizations? How do states respond to feminist claims against violence? And why do states incorporate specific feminist ideas over others? These are some of the questions that motivate this course. We will investigate how feminism shapes politics against violence and how, in turn, these politics shape feminism. Feminists have brought attention to acts of violence that were previously not considered public concerns. In doing so, they have engaged with the state and its ideological disputes. We will discuss feminist

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<sup>1</sup> Beatriz Nascimento was an anti-racist and feminist intellectual-activist. She was Black Brazilian killed by her friend's ex-partner after she tried to help her friend. To know more about her work, see the translation of her work: *The Dialectic Is in the Sea: The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento* (2023) edited and translated by Christen A. Smith, Bethânia N. F. Gomes, and Archie Davies.

materials drawing on diverse traditions from different contexts to grapple with the challenges of feminist activism against violence.

Prerequisites: The prerequisites to take this course is SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1, plus two of SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students without these requirements will be removed at any time discovered without notice.

### *Teaching Philosophy – On the spirit of the course:*

We all come to this course with different expectations and experiences. Some of us have participated in feminist movements and would like to work in the field; some of us have worked on the topic of violence before; some of us might be taking this course because we need the credits to graduate; and, finally, some of us might be interested in learning about activism against violence. I tried to assemble this course with these things in mind. Nonetheless, considering our work together, I am happy to adjust it along the way. Please feel free to reach out to me with any concerns or suggestions. I hope this course will be a collective space for imagination and curiosity.

**A note on the course content:** We are engaging with materials that describe and discuss violence. Students who wish to skip specific parts of the readings or visual materials will not be penalized. However, you need to inform me about the readings or pages you want to skip so we can find a way to make up for the content.

### Course Structure:

Each class is organized as a “Module” on Quercus. These modules will include readings and lectures. Lectures will be pre-recorded and available 48 hours before our synchronous meetings. The lecture accounts for one hour of our three-hour class.

During our synchronous sessions, we will have two moments:

- a) One-hour discussion on the module’s materials;
- b) An activity linked to one of our assignments or learning goals (reading, writing, analyzing...).

### *Course Policies:*

1. **Weekly Calendar:** I will send an email every Friday morning with updates for the next week and a calendar.
2. **Emails:** I will try my best to reply to all emails within 48 hours (business days). If I do not answer, please feel free to remind me. I very often write an email but forget to press ‘send.’ All online communication must include the course code (i.e., SOC354) in the subject line. All online communication should be signed with the student’s full name and student number. All online course communication must maintain a respectful and professional tone.
3. **Accessibility:** If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services. We will work together to ensure you fully enjoy this course.
4. **Recording and sharing course materials:** You can download lectures and materials for your academic use, but you should not copy, share, or use them for any other purpose. **You may not share or live stream any materials or recordings from this course in the public domain or social media, in its entirety, or in small excerpts.**

This policy is essential to ensure the safety and privacy of both the teaching team and your colleagues.

5. **Participation:** Curiosity, kindness, and respect are expected for our collective learning. Please notify me if you have absences due to medical or personal problems. Missing classes can negatively affect your grade as we will work on assignments and our learning goals during our synchronous sessions.

### *Learning Goals:*

Throughout this course, we will examine how gender as a social structure of domination outlines violent dynamics and the state's responses to these dynamics by looking at feminist theory and activism. After this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify political and historical processes that shape violence against women and its responses;
2. Trace how violence against women has become a public issue and the role of feminist activism in these dynamics;
3. Analyze how feminist activism and knowledge have impacted public policies and responses to violence;
4. Comprehend how social inequalities -class, race, and territory- impact gendered violence and state responses;
5. Hold to the contradictions and ambivalences that feminist discussions offer on the topic.

To achieve these learning goals, we will exercise the following skills:

1. Analytical reading and writing skills, including how to evaluate arguments and the pieces of evidence that support them to craft your own ideas;
2. Critically respond to institutional responses and reports on violence by analyzing their methods and implications;
3. Historicize current social problems related to violence against women by analyzing diverse materials (documentary, institutional report);
4. Engage with multiple forms of thinking and reflecting on violence (from essays, letters, presentations, and more).

### *Course Grade Breakdown*

<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>DATES</b>
Participation (10%)	Ongoing Collective Discussion Board. Submit anytime, the final date is <b>August 7</b> (Wed)
Essay Documentary Analysis (25%) - 1500 words response essay	<b>July 18</b> (Thursday)
Re-telling Feminist Ideas on Violence I: (25%) – Descriptive part of a report on violence	<b>July 29</b> (Monday) *can be a group project
Letter/Public Comment on a State Response to Violence (15%)	<b>August 5</b> (Monday)
Re-telling Feminist Ideas on Violence II: (25%) – Creative part	<b>August 12</b> (Monday) *can be a group project

Participation (10%) – Collective Discussion Board – (2% each post, totaling 5 in the term)

The collective discussion board assignment provides the students with the collective opportunity to articulate their reflections on the course material and highlight what caught their attention. Students must either post a short reflection on the week's reading or reply to someone's short reflection. Students should do it for at least five weeks during the term (you cannot post and respond to the same week's materials twice). The short reflections should be 300-400 words long and focus on a text passage. In this sense, you should provide a close reading of a passage that caught your attention and briefly explain why it intrigues you. The purpose of the assignment is to create a space for us to think about the texts and to articulate our uncertainties and critiques.

### Documentary Analysis (25%) – 1000-1500 words response essay

This assignment asks students to analyze the documentary Finding Dawn and write an essay trying to answer one of the questions posed throughout the documentary. For your essay, you will draw on the materials from the first three modules and the documentary's scenes and examples. You can use any of the materials to shed light on how to answer the question you selected from the documentary. More instructions and a rubric are available on Quercus.

### Report on Violence (25%) – Descriptive part

Students will be tasked with writing summary notes and preliminary analytical statements on an institutional report on violence. Institutions create key documents to measure and evaluate violence against women as a social problem. For the assignment, you will describe:

- a) how does the report define and measure violence against women?
- b) how do they analyze/think about violence as a social dynamic?
- c) how can we see -or not- feminist discussions and concepts in the document?

\*It can be a group project (up to 4 students). The reports will be available on Quercus for selection.

### Letter/Public Comment on a State Response to Violence (15%)

This assignment asks students to evaluate a state's response to violence against women, as we will discuss. Drawing from modules 4, 5, and 6, you will write either a letter (you can decide to whom) or a public commentary about the state response, as in news media. On Quercus, you will have four cases of legal reforms that we will discuss in class linked to the class's readings. You will comment on the state response based on the feminist critiques we discussed together. More instructions and rubric are available on Quercus.

### Re-telling Feminist Ideas on Violence (25%) – Creative project

Students are expected to integrate a feminist analytical perspective into their analysis and propose how to rewrite the report. Students will re-analyze the report's goal and think about how international reports capture or not women's experiences with violence. When proposing how to re-tell feminist ideas on violence, students must address questions such as:

- a) what forms of violence or experiences are ignored in the institutional report?
- b) what feminist discussions can help illuminate violent dynamics?
- c) which political goals are connected to the report? which ones are not?

\*It can be a group project (up to 4 students). You will rely on the #1 part of the report analysis.

More instructions and a rubric are available on Quercus. We will also discuss each assignment during class.

## Schedule and Readings

This course outline provides guiding questions for the readings, films, and lectures.

Modules	Materials	Assignments & Extra
<p><b>July 3</b> <b>Introductions</b></p>	<p>In our first lecture, we will share our expectations for the course, review the syllabus, and adjust the content if necessary. Please read the Syllabus in advance so we can do a Q&amp;A.</p>	<p>Introduce yourself in our <i>welcome</i> discussion board.</p>
<p><b>July 8</b> <b>Module I:</b> <b>Feminist Lens and Violence</b></p> <p>In our first module, we will discuss the meaning-making of violent acts as i) gendered acts and ii) from a feminist perspective. In other words, How does violence become a feminist issue?</p>	<p>Jakobsen, Hilde. 2014. "What's gendered about gender-based violence?" <i>Gender and Society</i>, 28 (4): 537–561.</p> <p>Frazer, Elizabeth, and Kimberly Hutchings. 2020. "The Feminist Politics of Naming Violence." <i>Feminist Theory</i> 21 (2): 199–216.</p>	
<p><b>July 10</b> <b>Module II:</b> <b>Gender, Colonialism, and Violence</b></p> <p>We will start by asking how the historical processes of settler colonialism and the development of capitalism shape gender relations and violence against women until today.</p>	<p>Federici, Silvia. 2004. "Introduction" in <i>Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation</i>. New York: Autonomedia.</p> <p>Razack, Sherene H. 2000. "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder Pamela George." <i>Canadian journal of law and society</i> 15, no. 2: 91–130.</p>	
<p><b>July 15</b> <b>Module III:</b> <b>Feminist Activism and Colonialism</b></p> <p>In this module, we</p>	<p>Dean, Amber. 2015. Chapter 5. <i>Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance</i>. UofT Press.</p>	

<p>will consider how activists bring history back to understand and resist violence against women.</p>	<p>The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls website:  <a href="https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/">https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/</a></p>	
<p><b>July 17</b>  <b>Module IV:</b>  <b>Feminist Activism and the State: Co-optations and Alignments</b>  For our fourth module, we will analyze feminists’ engagements with the state and feminists’ claims to impulse legal changes and public policies.</p>	<p>Bumiller, Kristin. 2008. “Chapter 2: Gender War,” In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Co-opted the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence.</p> <p>Santos, Cecilia. (2005). Introduction. <i>Women's Police Stations: Gender, Violence, and Justice in São Paulo, Brazil</i>. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.</p>	
<p><b>July 18 (Thursday)</b></p>		<p><u>Documentary “Finding Dawn” Analysis due before midnight EST</u></p>
<p><b>July 22</b>  <b>Module V:</b>  <b>Victimhood, Activism, and State Responses</b>  This module will orient us to reflect on the state category of victim and how gender, racial, and class relations shape this category.</p>	<p>Sweet, Paige L. The Paradox of Legibility: Domestic Violence and Institutional Survivorhood, <i>Social Problems</i>, Volume 66, Issue 3, August 2019, Pages 411–427.</p> <p>Roychowdhury, Poulami. (2015). Victims to Saviors: Governmentality and the Regendering of Citizenship in India. <i>Gender &amp; Society</i>, 29(6), 792-816.</p>	
<p><b>July 24</b>  <b>Module VI:</b>  <b>Anti-Racist Critiques on Feminist Activism</b>  For the sixth module, we will draw on Black</p>	<p>Combahee River Collective. 1977. “A Black Feminist Statement”. (short piece)</p> <p>Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” <i>Stanford Law Review</i> 43(6): 1241-1299</p>	

<p>feminist theory and activism to discuss the limits of feminist activism.</p>	<p>Interview with Tarana Burkert:  <a href="https://www.npr.org/2021/09/29/1041362145/me-too-founder-tarana-burke-says-black-girls-trauma-shouldnt-be-ignored">https://www.npr.org/2021/09/29/1041362145/me-too-founder-tarana-burke-says-black-girls-trauma-shouldnt-be-ignored</a></p>	
<p><b>July 29</b>  <b>Module VII:</b>  <b>Overlapping Forms of Gendered Violence</b>          We will consider how multiple forms of violence are connected and overlap in women's lives, challenging state responses.</p>	<p>Richie, Beth. 2012. Conclusion. <i>Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation</i>. NYU Press.</p> <p>Menjívar, Cecilia, and Shannon Drysdale Walsh. "The Architecture of Femicide: The State, Inequalities, and Everyday Gender Violence in Honduras." <i>Latin American Research Review</i> 52, no. 2 (2017): 221–40.</p>	<p><u>Descriptive part of a report on violence due before midnight EST</u></p> <p><i>*Last day to drop the course</i></p>
<p><b>July 31</b>  <b>Module VIII:</b>  <b>Imperialism and Discourses of Gendered Violence</b>          This module will examine how feminist discourses travel globally and can coupled with imperialist purposes.</p>	<p>Lila Abu-Lughod. 2006. "The Muslim Woman: The power of images and the danger of pity." <i>Eurozine</i>.</p> <p>Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2012. "Carceral Politics as Gender Justice? The 'Traffic in Women' and Neoliberal Circuits of Crime, Sex, and Rights." <i>Theory and Society</i> 41 (3): 233–59.</p>	
<p><b>August 5</b>  <b>No Class</b>  <b>Civil Holiday</b></p>	<p>Assignment due</p>	<p><u>Letter/Public Comment on a Legal Reform due before midnight EST</u></p>
<p><b>August 7</b>  <b>Module IX:</b>  <b>Human Rights and Activism Against Violence</b>          This module will focus on how gender-based violence became a human rights issue and its local impacts on feminist activism.</p>	<p>Merry, Sally Engle. "Human Rights and Transnational Culture: Regulating Gender Violence through Global Law." <i>Osgoode Hall Law Journal</i> 44.1 (2006) : 53-75.</p> <p>García-Del Moral, Paulina. (2016). Transforming feminicidio: Framing, institutionalization and social change. <i>Current Sociology</i>, 64(7), 1017-1035.</p>	
<p><b>August 12</b></p>	<p>INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence &amp;</p>	<p><u>Creative part of</u></p>

<p><b>Module X: Holding to the Tensions within Feminist Activism Against Violence</b> The final module proposes questions on how to hold the tensions, contradictions, and challenges within feminist activism against violence that we have discussed during the course.</p>	<p>Critical Resistance. “The Critical Resistance INCITE! Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex.” Abolition Now!: Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex. Ed. The CR10 Publications Collective. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008. 15–29.</p> <p>Interview with Veronica Gago, activist leader of the movement #NiUnaMenos in Argentina: <a href="https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/redefining-our-terms/violence-feminist-struggles-against-victimization-to-set-fear-on-fire">https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/redefining-our-terms/violence-feminist-struggles-against-victimization-to-set-fear-on-fire</a></p>	<p><u>a report on violence due before midnight EST</u></p> <p><i>*Last day of class</i></p>
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## LATE POLICY

• **Life is Complicated Voucher:** Each student has a 72-hour extension, no questions asked. When you upload your late assignment to Quercus, leave a comment saying: “Life is Complicated”. **You cannot use it for the documentary assignment** (University policy that you need 10% of your grade before July 24th) **or the final creative assignment** (University policy to receive the final grades).

**Missed deadlines and tests:** students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three days of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

Absence declaration via ACORN  
U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form  
College Registrar’s letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)  
Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Assignments will not be accepted via email. See on Quercus for how to submit them.

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments without a legitimate reason will incur a penalty of 2% per day, including weekends and holidays. Please note that work over a week late and discussion posts late will not be accepted.

## REGRADE POLICY

We will do our best to grade fairly. If you notice any problems with your grade and you would like to request a regrade, please follow this procedure:

First, the student must submit i) the original piece of work and ii) a written explanation detailing why they believe the work was unfairly/incorrectly marked using the rubric from Quercus as a justification. This is due up to a week after receiving the original grade.

If the student is not satisfied with this re-evaluation, they may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course if the work was not marked by the instructor (e.g., was marked by a TA). This is due up to a week after receiving the TA regrade. The student must submit to the instructor i) the original piece of work, ii) written explanation, and iii) communications from the original marker as to why no change in the mark was made. If the instructor grants a remarking, the student must accept the resulting mark as the new mark, whether it goes up or down or remains the same.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

During this course, we will discuss how citation can be a type of feminist praxis. On Quercus, I uploaded some feminist readings that discuss citation and present them as ways of supporting the text and “*representing the shoulders on which I stand and the relations I want to build*”<sup>2</sup>.

The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. You can find advice on “How Not to Plagiarize” and other advice on documentation format and methods of integrating sources at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources>.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about properly citing sources.

Students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

## USING AI (Generative Artificial Intelligence):

In this course, students may use AI tools for i) refining/checking language or grammar and ii) conducting background research and checking general understanding (for example, you would like to check information on an event mentioned in a class reading). In these cases, students should submit a brief explanation of how they used AI tools to generate the content.

We will discuss how AI tools can help us organize readings/notes and find sources. Nevertheless, we will discuss how they can fail us and limit our creativity by reproducing certain mainstream ideas/discourses.

It's important to note that in this course, **the use of AI tools is not permitted for generating drafts or final versions**. This rule is in place to ensure that students rely on their own skills and understanding when producing their work.

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<sup>2</sup> This comes from the book *Pollution Is Colonialism* (2021) by Max Liboironp in the Introduction, page 1.