



**The University of Western Ontario**  
**SOCIOLOGY 3317a UW 001**  
**Problems of Mass Higher Education Fall 2016**  
**Tuesdays 2:30-5:30 SSC**  
**3010**

**Instructor: Prof. James Côté**

Office Hours: by appointment (SSC 5208) or Skype  
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### **Course Description**

This course examines the problems that emerge when post-secondary education is provided on a mass scale. These problems include mission drifts to corporate and consumer models, and the competing interests of stakeholders that produce dysfunctional systems normalizing academic disengagement and grade inflation, both of which put undue stress on students and professors. Alternatives to these degraded mass systems are examined and solutions to problems facing Canada's university system are discussed. This course will be of special interest to those planning careers in, or associated with, education. **This course is reading intensive and designed for serious, committed students who are willing to prepare for, attend, and participate in, all classes. There is no term paper, which students usually cram into the last few days before the deadline; instead, I expect students to invest significant amounts of time each week to the readings in preparation for discussions of them in class.**

### ***Prerequisite(s):***

Third or fourth year standing in any module in the Department of Sociology.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### ***Antirequisite(s)***

None

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- \* distinguish between forms of education that constitute liberal arts as opposed to pseudo-vocational substitutes for a liberal education
- \* understand the history of higher education and the mission drifts that are taking place toward pseudo-vocationalism

- \* identify the interests and conflicts among the various stakeholders pulling and pushing the mass-educational system
- \* appreciate the differences among elite, mass, and universal educational systems
- \* have an in-depth comprehension of the origins and consequences of academic disengagement, at the individual and institutional levels
- \* identify the stresses experienced by students and faculty and how these are related to the mission drifts and pressures on the system by various stakeholders
- \* know the pedagogical uses of new technologies, and the reasons for the hype about them
- \* understand international variations in higher education as well as how students are prepared at the secondary level and offered alternatives to academic tracks
- \* generate potential solutions to the problems faced by mass systems in various societies, especially those governed by neoliberal ideologies

### **Required Text(s)**

Côté, J. E. & Allahar, A. *Lowering Higher Education: The Rise of Corporate Universities and the Fall of Liberal Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. (LHE)

Selected chapters from Côté, J. E. & Furlong, A. (editors). *Routledge Handbook of the Sociology of Higher Education*. Routledge, 2016. (these chapters will be made available for free use on the course OWL site—it is not necessary to purchase this text)

Various PDFs of readings available on the course OWL site.

### **Method of Evaluation**

Attendance is required and constitutes 10% of the grade. Two non-cumulative in-class midterm exams and a final take-home exam will determine 90% of the course grade. The exams will be based on lecture material, class discussions, and assigned readings. The questions will be drawn roughly 50% from classes and 50% from readings, with some overlap.

The in-class midterm exams will combine multiple-choice and short-answer formats. The take-home essay exam covers material from the entire course and will require answering two of three questions in approximately 500 words each.

**The take home exam will be released online at 8:00 AM on Dec. 6 and is due online Dec. 8 by 5:00 PM as an inline submission to Turnitin via the assignments tool in OWL.**

## ***Evaluation Breakdown***

**Tests/Exam:** 90%

The first midterm test is worth 30% and the second test is worth 40%. A take-home essay exam is worth 20%.

**Attendance:** 10%

Engagement is defined in terms of **motivation and active learning**: preparing for class by doing—and thinking about—the assigned readings in advance of class each week, and making insightful contributions to class based on the readings. To be fully engaged, students should expect to spend six hours per week preparing for classes in these ways, plus the additional three hours in weekly class attendance. Those who feel shy about speaking up in class can email me their questions/comments before or after classes, and I will read them to the class if they are appropriate and there is time, or I will respond to them by email and circulate the emails to the entire class if I think others will benefit.

**“80 percent of life is showing up.”** (Woody Allen): Engagement also means attending all classes on time and giving them your full attention. Everyone will be given a “tent card” with his or her name on it. This card will be picked up by each student at the front of the room at the beginning of each class and returned at the end of class. This will allow me to get to know everyone’s name and to take attendance in an unobtrusive manner. **Full attendance earns 10%.**

**“Civility costs nothing, and buys everything.”** (Mary Wortley Montagu): Classroom civility is expected and incidents of incivility will result in penalties in this component of the grade (e.g., 1% per incident). Texting in class and using laptops inappropriately (checking social media or playing games) are the two most common forms of incivility in contemporary classrooms. They are very distracting to professors who are trying to reach/teach everyone in the class, but also to neighbouring students who are trying to concentrate on what is being said/done in class.

## **How To Contact Me**

E-mail: [cote@uwo.ca](mailto:cote@uwo.ca)

## **How to get important information**

Course OWL website

## **Important Policies**

### ***Policies on Examinations***

Make-up exams are not routine in this course. Moreover, I will not agree to provide make-ups so students can go on family holidays, attend weddings or birthday parties, go to other people’s graduations, or otherwise pursue various personal/hedonistic activities.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

### ***A Note on Plagiarism:***

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

### ***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 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 ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

### ***Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:***

Laptop use: Schools at all levels that once embraced laptops—even supplied them to students—have been **dropping them** over the past few years. At the university level, professors have been **banning them** from their classrooms because they are distractions to other students, to teachers, and to the students using them, who can't resist checking their e-mail and Facebook. Research shows that students who use laptops tend to get lower grades (by 5%, or one half of a letter grade)

In the past, I have tried to accommodate laptops in my classes, but have always had some students abuse the privilege, so **NO LAPTOPS ARE ALLOWED IN CLASS UNLESS YOU HAVE PERMISSION FROM ME** or SSD. If you want permission from me, we will arrange an interview to discuss it.

My lectures assume that students have **completed the readings** listed below for each week **in advance of class**. To help in preparation and note taking, by 4:00 PM on the day before each weekly class, the PowerPoint slides for that class will be posted on the course OWL site, both in PPT and PDF. **You should print out a copy of one of these and bring it to class**. The PDF version will have three slides per page with lined spaces on which to make crib notes. I will pace the lectures assuming that everyone has hardcopies of the slides in front of him or her.

Because these slides are provided in advance, you do not have to attempt to write down everything I say during lectures. In fact, it is a better strategy to take sparse notes and to register information into your long-term memory as you hear it. Reading the assigned material in advance of each class will aid in this learning process. The format also leaves ample time and opportunity for questions and discussions. If you do not understand something in the readings after giving it serious, independent thought, the best time to bring it up is during classes, or beforehand by sending me an email. **Do not wait until the end of the course to bring up matters like this with me.**

### ***Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness***

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

***Accessibility Options:***

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 Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

***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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

***Mental Health:***

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

**Course Schedule and Readings: TBA in September to students enrolled in the course**