



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY 1026F  
Controversies in Sociology  
Course Outline: Summer 2018

Online

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**Course Description:**

This course aims to provide students an introduction to sociological thinking by way of a series of current controversies in society. Throughout the term we will examine both the substantive aspects of these controversies, as well as consider the nature of social controversy itself. Through an exploration of sociological readings and active collegial discussions about these controversies, students will obtain knowledge about a range of contentious social issues and about the ways social scientists have sought to understand them. Students will also be challenged to develop their abilities to formulate and adjudicate various kinds of rhetorical claims, evidentiary support, and theoretical reasons.

**COURSE TEXTS**

Course readings will consist of scholarly articles, book chapters, and other relevant works. These will consist of either PDF copies of the reading or web links providing access to the particular source of the piece.

**GRADE BREAKDOWNS**

Quiz 5%

Midterm Test 20%

Course Paper 30%

Participation 20%

Final Exam 25%

### Quiz: Scholarly Scavenger Hunt

5% of course mark

The quiz will consist of a very simple set of tasks relating to use of the library website and related scholarly search engines. These skills will come in handy when it comes time to conduct research for your essay.

The quiz will be conducted in the form of a scavenger hunt, in which you will be asked to search for and identify a particular list of items/information in the academic literature.

### Midterm Test: 20% of course mark

The midterm test will be treated like a “take-home” assignment, in which you will be asked to answer a series of short answer/essay questions relating to the course materials covered so far. These questions will examine your grasp of key ideas, broad themes, and main points of the course materials.

A document containing questions and instructions will be released by June 6 and you will have until June 18 to write and submit your responses via OWL.

### Final Exam:

25% of course mark

The Final exam may consist of multiple choice and written-answer questions testing your grasp of the full breadth of the course. Further details about the exam will be determined later into the term in order to ensure a strong coherence between the examination questions and the main themes that emerge throughout our course. However, students can reasonably expect an examination that focuses mainly upon significant facts, key arguments, and theoretical ideas covered throughout the term.

### Course Paper: 30% of course mark

You will be asked to conduct research and write an essay regarding one of the topics addressed in our course (or a topic which you and I have negotiated separately). It is expected that your research will consist primarily of scholarly texts, and that your argument will consist of reasons that are logical and supported by the academic literature. In addition to a well developed sociological analysis of the topic, your paper should contain an introduction (including a clear *thesis statement*), a conclusion, embedded citations throughout, and a correctly formatted References section (details will be provided for all of this).

Because this is an “essay course,” you must complete the Course Paper Assignment in order to pass the course.

### Participation: 20% of course mark

The majority of the participation grade will consist of online discussion using the OWL Forum for our course. Each week, I will pose a handful of discussion questions to get the conversation started, and then students will proceed throughout the week in exploring various aspects of the week’s “controversy.” While consistent and active engagement in these discussions is important for receiving a good Participation grade, marks will ultimately be assigned based on the overall *quality* of students’ contribution, rather than the *quantity*.

## GRADING POLICIES

### Deadlines and Late Penalties:

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. If, due to medical reasons, you cannot submit an assignment by the due date, it is your responsibility to follow the University’s “Policy on

Accommodation for Medical Illness,” accessible at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). This policy also applies to accommodations sought for compassionate circumstances.

#### Grade Disputes:

You deserve to have your work evaluated in a competent, fair, and impartial manner. If you have questions or concerns about a grade, please come to see me and hopefully we can resolve any misunderstanding. For issues concerning written work, please submit a 1-page statement explaining why you feel your work was wrongly evaluated *no sooner than 24 hours after I have returned the work to you*. We can then meet to discuss these points and consider a re-evaluation. Please note that I reserve the right to elevate your mark, maintain the mark as applied, or lower the mark depending on that re-evaluation.

For further details concerning my expectations and grading standards refer to our “Course FAQ’s” on OWL.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Below is the preliminary schedule of readings for the course. Generally speaking, we will endeavour to hold to this schedule, so you should plan your time accordingly. In the case that a change is made to our reading schedule, I will post an announcement of the changes, as well as links or PDF’s of the new readings, to OWL.

### SECTION I: FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS—CRITICAL ANALYSIS, AND STRUCTURAL VS. INDIVIDUALISTIC EXPLANATIONS

Week 1: May 9-May 13

Introduction to the Course

Nonomura, “Course *FAQ’s*” (OWL) (See also, Resources>Course Documents)

Beamish, selections from *the Promise of Sociology* (OWL)

Week 2: May 14-May 20

Civil Discourse in Today’s Society: Skills and tasks for meaningful discourse

Faigley et al., selections from *The Brief Penguin Handbook, Canadian Edition*

D’Arcy, “On Crisis Learning”

Week 3: May 21-May 27

Social Inequality—Individual and Structural Explanations

Allahar and Côté, selections from *Richer and Poorer* (OWL)

Fleras, selections from *Social Problems in Canada* (OWL)

Week 4: May 28-June 3

Privilege and Structural Inequality

McIntosh, “The Invisible Backpack” (OWL)

Kimmel, selections from *Privilege* (OWL)

D’Arcy, “The Rise of the Post-New Left Political Vocabulary”

QUIZ —To be completed during Week 4

## SECTION II: CONTROVERSIES IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Week 5: June 4-June 10

Gender, Sex, and Sexuality: 21st Century Controversies

Holmes, selections from *What is Gender? Sociological Approaches* (OWL)

Kimmel, selections from *The Gendered Society* (OWL)

Kimmel, "Trump's Angry White Men" (OWL)

*American Scientist*, "Beyond XX and XY: The Extraordinary Complexity of Sex Determination" (OWL)

MIDTERM QUESTIONS RELEASED

Week 6: June 11-June 17

**MIDTERM TEST WEEK**

MIDTERM DUE: JUNE 17, 11:59PM

Week 7: June 18-June 24

Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Digital Age

Ansari, selections from *Modern Romance* (OWL)

Kimmel, selections from *Guyland* (OWL)

Fromm, selections from *The Art of Loving* (OWL)

Week 8: June 25-July 1

"Political Correctness" and Free Speech

Watch the Munk Debate on "[Political Correctness and Progress](#)"

American Sociological Association: [Sociologists discuss freedom of speech on college campuses](#)

[Other works, TBD]

## SECTION III: CONTROVERSIES IN ACTIVISM, RESISTANCE, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Week 9: July 2-July 8

Social Engagement and Political Consumerism

Micheletti and Stolle, "The Concept of Political Consumerism"(OWL)

Nonomura, "Political Consumerism and the Participation Gap" (OWL)

Twenge, "Generational Differences in Young Adults' Life Goals, Concern for Others, and Civic Orientation, 1966-2009" (OWL)

PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE JULY 8, 11:59PM

Week 10: July 9-July 15

Social Dissent, Grassroots Activism, and Direct Action

King, selections from *Why We Can't Wait* (OWL)

Zinn, on Civil Disobedience (OWL)

Gelderloos, selections from *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (OWL)

Week 11: July 16-July 21

Public Sociology

Mills, selections from *The Politics of Truth* (OWL)

Furedi, "Recapturing the Sociological Imagination" (OWL)

Nonomura, “Committing Sociology as a Value-Commitment” (OWL)

Week 12: July 22-July 27

Course Wrap-Up & Topic Decided Collectively

EXAM PERIOD July 30-August 2

## COURSE POLICIES

It is crucial that you read, understand, and agree to these policies. Your continued enrolment in the course constitutes acceptance of these policies and expectations of you during the term.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** UWO promotes the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect for other students, and help maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Violations of academic integrity will be treated very seriously.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see the Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar), and I take it very seriously.

All required papers 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. 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 UWO and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students who submit work found to be substantially plagiarized (i.e., work in which plagiarism can be demonstrated in substance) will be subject to the procedures outlined in the Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students section of the Western Academic Calendar. This referral will be done without exception.

**Accessibility:** Please contact me 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 519/661.2111 x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

**Communications:** When contacting me via email, please do so using your UWO email address (other email accounts tend to get caught in my Spam filter) and ensure that your message is expressed in a respectful, professional (i.e., spell-checked) manner. Also, kindly preface all subject headings with our course code, SOC1026F.

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional or 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 for how to obtain help.

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)