



The University of Western Ontario

**SOCIOLOGY 2261A-001**  
**Contemporary Social Problems**  
**Fall 2023**

**Delivery Method - In-person**

**Instructor:** Lauren Barr

**Office Hours:** TBD, or by appointment

**Email:** [lbarr2@uwo.ca](mailto:lbarr2@uwo.ca) & OWL messages

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*This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.*

**Course Description:**

Today's society is beset by many contentious social problems (e.g. racial/ethnic discrimination, sexual assault, poverty & inequality & the decline of the middle class). In this course, students will use a sociological perspective to examine the causes, consequences, and solutions to some of society's most troubling contemporary social problems.

***Prerequisite(s)*** None

***Anti-requisite(s):*** Sociology 2140

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

*At the end of this course, the student will be able to*

**At the end of the course, students will:**

1. Recognize the complex 'wicked' nature of social problems.
2. Apply sociological theory and research to the discussion of social problems.
3. Communicate clear, focused, and informed ideas about social problems.
4. Listen actively, with an open mind to a variety of perspectives, issues, and challenges.
5. Construct viable, informed suggestions using course material to improve social problems.

**Course Design and Material:**

**Our Flipped Classroom:**

Our classroom is ‘flipped’. What does that mean?

It is expected that you will use the LMS (OWL) to prepare for each lecture *before you arrive* and that you will attend class consistently.

**Using our online OWL Classroom:**

<b>Course Content</b>	will include this course syllabus, the weekly schedule, and any assessment outlines with expectations plus each week will display here with a page with specific information for that week.
<b>Messages</b>	use this as email to communicate with members of our class.
<b>Announcements</b>	all communication about the course including any updates and changes
<b>Assignments</b>	assignments are submitted here (pdf format only)
<b>Forums</b>	Online discussions (forum/discussion posts)
<b>Calendar</b>	Upcoming due dates

**In Lecture: our in-person time together**

While we will review some of the assigned material, I will not teach to the textbook, so if you have specific questions or information that you are unsure of, you are encouraged to ask before, during or after class, or find any of our teaching team to discuss content.

We will use our time together to “play” with ideas and figure out how to think and act like sociologists. We will be applying, analyzing, and creating with the information covered in the assigned material.

**Required Resources:**

- Textbook: TBD – *coming soon*
- Additional resources (articles, podcasts, videos) required will be posted on OWL.

**Technology Needed for Learning:**

- **Students will need regular access to OWL.** This means you will need access to a device (smart phone, tablet, computer) with internet capability. This can be done on campus, or through your own personal device.
- **We will use some digital tools in class to encourage learning engagement.** A smartphone, tablet, or laptop with wi-fi connection will work perfectly. If you do not have a portable device, that is okay, come speak with me (Prof Barr) and we will work out alternative solutions.

### **Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

### **To Communicate with the Teaching Team:**

\*How to reach Prof Barr and our TA will be found on the course OWL homepage

- Prof Barr: Email: please contact me through **OWL Messages** - *do not copy to email.*
- TA – *to come.*

### **Course Schedule and Readings:**

Will be found on OWL in the Course Content section of our online learning environment.

### **Method of Evaluation:**

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

**In this course you will be given the option of choosing your evaluation process.**

#### ***Evaluation Breakdown: Option 1: with Assignment***

Learning Engagement	15 %	Ongoing
Midterm Exam	30 %	Oct 17
Group Project	25 %	Dec 5
Final Exam	30%	Dec - TBD

Total	100	
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***Evaluation Breakdown: Option 2: Mainly Exams***

Learning Engagement	20 %	Ongoing
Midterm Exam	40 %	Oct 17
Final Exam	40 %	Dec - TBD
Total	100	

**Learning Engagement:**

**You are expected to be an active learner** both in person and online throughout the semester.

Every week there will be an online lesson page. It will include a brief blog from me, with links to all learning materials and activities. This may include lecture slides, videos, reading materials or podcasts, plus opportunities to reflect, share information and ideas, practice apply and create.

**In OUR class, engagement is all-encompassing and learning behaviour is important.**

**It means:**

- being there (physically and mentally)
- making eye contact, using your body language to show that you are there
- preparing before you arrive
- speaking up when you have something to contribute (in person or online)
- working in groups / partners when asked
- coming to ask the Teaching Team questions or chat with us when you have something on your mind.

You want to constantly challenge yourself and others to think about the material and the world around us. Your learning will be so much deeper, and you will enjoy the experience so much more.

***Group Project; Social Action Plan (this is optional)***

The final product must be complex, creative and allow you to explore and share your passion.

*I promise that we will provide ongoing support and tools to make this work as easy and positive as possible.*

Group Size: 2-4 people

Students will be asked to choose a social problem that they are interested in learning more about and ultimately helping to improve. Students will conduct a research review and create a final project that analyzes a social problem and ultimately offers an informed action proposal, using sociological material from our course to inform and design it.

There will be room for personal creativity, but also guidelines provided on OWL.

**Midterm:** October 17: in class - 9:30am – 11:30am

**Final Examination:** Dec Exam period – date and location TBD

- Both examinations will be written in person, closed book and will be two hours.
- They will include multiple choice questions with the option of a written question. Students will receive all sections and can choose which options will allow them the most success.
  - Generally, between 70-75 marks total
- These exams are not cumulative. However, you are expected to be able to bring major concepts throughout the course.
- Both exams will be created using any/all resources and learning opportunities included as part of the course. *This includes lectures, guest speakers, any required material on OWL and the textbook.*
- No devices or learning aids will be permitted in the exams.
  - *with the exception of students with approved accommodations that have spoken with the instructor and pre-made arrangements with SSD*
- Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns

### Teaching the "Whole Student"

I am **always** available to discuss life with you. I do my best to create and maintain an inclusive and supportive learning environment. If you ever want to see me, drop into my office hours, find me after class or schedule an appointment and let me know if there are external factors that are influencing your success in our course or just things on your mind that you would like to talk about.

### Professionalism in the Classroom:

You expect me, your professor, to be professional. You expect that I will be there, be prepared and be ready to expand on the material and that I will communicate and get work back to you in a timely manner, with constructive feedback. If for some reason we (the Teaching Team) are unable to do so, you would expect that we have a valid reason and that we let you know as soon as possible, with a plan on how the work will be completed.

**As your instructor, I expect the same from you.**

- I expect that you will be in class. You will arrive on time and stay for the duration of our class.

- You will be ready to engage and connect with your classmates.
- You will plan for the due dates and schedule trips and other personal business around our assignments and exams (not during them).
- If something is going sideways, I would ask that you come and talk with me as soon as possible. Be honest, be open and we will figure out solutions together.

*In any job, you are expected to be there, act professional, be respectful, to go 'beyond' to contribute to your team. Post-secondary education is part of your professional career, so I encourage you to treat it as such.*

### **Student Absences and Late Policies:**

Students are expected to attend at least 80% of lectures (fully). Issues with attendance will impact your ability to be successful in the course.

- *If you have challenges attending class for personal reasons, please see Prof Barr as early as possible.*

### **Absences from Midterm and Final Examinations:**

Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Academic Counselling will determine eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Exam).

Students with a formally approved absence (through Academic Counselling) will be required to write a makeup exam on the date provided by the instructor following the original exam.

- Students provided with a make-up exam date must attend.
- If they are unable for valid institution approved reasons, they must go through the same appeal process as above for this make up exam.
- Not attending will result in a 0 for that examination.
- Students should also be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

**Note:** missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above.

**If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.**

***Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:***

For the engagement work in this course, every student will have flexibility in how you engage actively throughout the course. Any activities will be open for extended periods of time and reminders will be provided regularly in class and online. So, if you miss one, it will not negatively impact your mark, no explanation required. Please reach out to the Teaching Team (Prof or TA) if you have concerns about missed work or your progress.

***Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:***

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible.

**Academic Policies:**

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](#)” document [https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic\\_Policies.pdf](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health

**Welcome to this course!**