



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 4469G**  
**Select Topics in the Sociology of Work**  
**Winter 2022**  
**Thursday, 2:30-5:30pm, SSC5325**

**Instructor:** Awish Aslam  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5438  
Email: [aaslam5@uwo.ca](mailto:aaslam5@uwo.ca)

---

**Course Description:**

This is a seminar course that explores key issues and trends in the sociology of work. Particular focus will be on the relevance of work to social inequality and social relations in a variety of social and historical contexts.

This course will examine how the social organization of work is fundamental to the (re)production of inequality and the stratification of social groups, with a focus on Canada. We begin by exploring important historical transformations to the nature of work. Next, we address the social processes and mechanisms that sustain inequalities as well as their personal and social ramifications. In the final part of the course, we cover how workers attempt to resist their exploitation and improve the conditions and overall experience of work.

**Prerequisite(s):**

Enrolment in fourth year of one of the Honours Specializations or Honours Double Majors in Sociology or Criminology, or in third or fourth year of the Media, Information and Technoculture Program/Module.

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:**

1. Demonstrate a sociological understanding of the relationship between work and social inequality.
2. Synthesize, analyze, and critically evaluate theoretical arguments and evidence presented in published research.
3. Develop clear arguments and articulate ideas through written and oral communication.
4. Lead and participate in scholarly discussions and debates, while engaging with course materials.

**Required Text(s):**

All required texts and course materials will be made available on OWL.

### **Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

When deemed necessary, tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at:

<https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

### **Class Format:**

Class will be run in an interactive manner. I will begin each week with a lecture to provide an overview on the topics covered in the readings. Following the lecture, we will engage in an in-depth discussion on the assigned readings, drawing on questions submitted by students in advance of each class. Your job is to attend, listen, and ask and answer questions. I will end class with a summary of the day's discussion. I have provided an overview of the methods of evaluation below, but more details will be provided during the first class.

### **Methods of Evaluation:**

Your course grade will be determined by the following:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Weekly Written Commentaries	30%	Every Tuesday
Class Discussion	20%	Weekly
Short Written Assignment	20%	TBD on the first day of class
Final Analytical Essay	30%	April 14, 2022

### ***Evaluation Breakdown:***

*Weekly Written Commentaries (30%):*

It is crucial that you complete the readings listed in the syllabus before each class. To help with this task, you are required to submit a one-page (double spaced) written response with your thoughts on the assigned readings every week. Your response should not summarize the readings. Instead, as you read, identify one theme, issue, concept, or argument that you would like to discuss. You do not have to address all the readings, but you can draw on similarities or differences between them if you would like. Your commentary

should conclude with a clear and focused question that engages with the idea you discuss throughout your response. The questions you pose in your commentaries will guide our weekly seminar discussions. As such, you should be ready to elaborate on the points raised in your written response during class discussions. Commentaries are due on OWL every Tuesday at 11:55pm (except for the first and last week of class).

*Class Discussion (20%):*

Active participation in class discussion makes up a substantial part of your final grade. Class discussions are a fruitful and rewarding intellectual exercise when everyone does their part to facilitate a stimulating learning environment. You are expected to share your perspectives, ask questions, and build and challenge one another's ideas while engaging with the course material. Respect is crucial in creating an atmosphere of collegiality. You can be respectful by giving your undivided attention to your peers, refraining from interrupting or dominating the conversation, and approaching unfamiliar ideas with an open mind.

*Short Written Assignment (20%):*

Students are required to submit a short written assignment based on one set of weekly readings. You may choose between three options: (1) write a (brief) summary and critical review of one of the scholarly articles assigned for your week; (2) analyze a contemporary case using the theories and/or concepts discussed in the weekly readings; (3) write an op-ed summarizing one of the scholarly articles assigned for that week in an interesting and accessible way that would appeal to a non-academic audience. All assignments must be 4 to 6 pages (double spaced) in length. Students will select topics on the first day of class. Your assignment will be due the week after the readings are discussed in class.

*Final Analytical Essay (30%):*

Students will write a final analytical essay on a topic of their choice, related to the content of this course. It should be 8 to 10 pages (double spaced) in length. You will need to let me know about the topic of your paper by February 17, 2022. During the last week of class, students will provide an informal presentation about their paper for feedback from their peers. The paper is due the following week: April 14, 2022.

**How to Contact Me:**

You can reach me by email at [aaslam5@uwo.ca](mailto:aaslam5@uwo.ca). Please include the course code in the subject line. We can also set up a time to meet during office hours via Zoom.

**How to get important information:**

Information about the course will be available on OWL. Please check the site regularly.

**Important Policies**

***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:***

Laptops are permitted in class, but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

### ***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: [counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic\\_consideration.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html).

### ***Academic Consideration for Missed Work***

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a *Self-Reported Absence (SRA)* form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the [Senate policy](#) are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will NOT be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course. Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a [Student Medical Certificate](#) (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)

### ***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 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

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

[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 ([www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Seminar Topic and Assigned Readings</b>
1	Jan 13	<b>Welcome, Introductions, Course Overview</b>
<b>Part I: The Changing Nature of Work</b>		
2	Jan 20	<b>Pre-industrial Work and Early Industrial Capitalism</b>
3	Jan 27	<b>Work Under Capitalism</b>
4	Feb 03	<b>Recent Changes to Work</b>
<b>Part II: Social Inequalities in the Experience of Work</b>		
5	Feb 10	<b>The Meaning of Work: Identity or Alienation?</b>
6	Feb 17	<b>Occupational Segregation</b>
	Feb 24	<b>READING WEEK – NO CLASS</b>
7	March 03	<b>Organizations and the (Re)Production of Inequality</b>
8	March 10	<b>Discrimination, Division, and Exclusion</b>
<b>Part III: Working Conditions and Worker Power and the Labour Movement</b>		
9	March 17	<b>Worker Power: Unions, Collective Solidarity, and Individual Resistance</b>
10	March 24	<b>The Erosion of the Labour Movement and the Consequences for Workers</b>
11	March 31	<b>Organizing and Mobilizing Labour and the Future of Work</b>

12	April 7	<b>Course Wrap Up and Informal Paper Presentations/Feedback Session</b>
	April 14	<b>Final Paper Due on OWL</b>