



The University of Western Ontario

SOCIOLOGY 1027A-200

Life Is Not Always Fair

Fall 2023

Delivery Method: In-person & online (Blended)

Instructor: David Calnitsky

Office Hours: by appointment

Class Email: TBD XXXXXX@gmail.com

TAs: XXXXX

TA office hours by appointment

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

Technical Requirements:



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam

The hybrid mode:

This is a 200, hybrid designated class – this means that most of the classes will be in-person, but four pre-schedule classes will be done over Zoom. Attendance at synchronous Zoom sessions is required, and webcams should be on, it makes communication much easier.

There are four scheduled Zoom classes:

- (1) TBD
- (2) TBD
- (3) TBD

(4) TBD

Otherwise, class is in person.

Zoom invite:

Zoom link is available on OWL to registered students.

Course Description: In this introductory sociology course, we will evaluate notions of fairness and equality. Students will be introduced to important sociological debates about the nature of inequality, and how different social institutions and processes are implicated in the creation and maintenance of this inequality.

Prerequisite(s): None

Anti-requisite(s): Sociology 1020, Sociology 1020W/X, Sociology 1021E.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

What kind of society do we live in? In what ways can we say our society is fair? In what ways is it unfair? In this introductory sociology course, we will explore the various social processes and institutions that shape the social world in which we live. We will challenge many commonly held assumptions, such as the idea that the success of individuals is always the outcome of talent and hard work, and that those who do not succeed in conventional terms must be lazy, deficient, and thus responsible for their own problems. In contrast, students will be introduced to important debates about the nature of inequality, and how different social institutions and processes are implicated in the creation and maintenance of this inequality.

This course provides extended answers to the above questions about fairness. And it asks and answers adjacent questions about related values, especially democracy, freedom, and well-being. It also explores the implications of those answer for understanding, and making progress in solving, some of today's most pressing social problems. A central theme throughout the course will be: To what degree does contemporary social life realize its ideal about fairness, and how might it do a better job?

Course Material:

Wright, E.O. and Rogers, J. 2015. *Contemporary American Society: How it Really Works*. Second edition. W.W. Norton.

Yes, our textbook refers to the U.S. in the title. But it's also a highly general text on inequality and fairness, and we will largely be reading from those sections and ignoring the sections that are specific the US.

It will be supplemented with a few non-textbook readings, available on OWL.

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 You can contact our TAs and me at the class email address:

XXXX@gmail.com

Method of Evaluation:

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

Midterm Exam — Date: October 25, 2023 (in class) — **40%**

(Make-up exam date: TBD)

Final Exam — December Exam Period — **60%**

(Make-up exam date: TBD)

Evaluation Breakdown

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exam will test all material (lectures, readings, textbook) covered up so far. The exam will take place in person during class time in our regular classroom. It will start at the beginning of class and be 90 minutes long.

Final Exam: The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exam is NOT cumulative and will only test material (lectures, readings, textbook) covered since the midterm exam. The exam will be two hours long and take place in person during the December exam period.

Both exams are closed-book exams. Students with an approved absence from an exam will be required to write a makeup exam. The make-up exam dates are TBD for the midterm exam and TBD for the final exam. This date is set by the department and not open to negotiation. The course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should 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.

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.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely 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 remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Student Absences:

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

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.

Absence from the Midterm Exam: If they cannot write or miss the midterm exam, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Students with an approved absence from the midterm exam will be required to write a makeup exam. The make-up exam date for the midterm exam TBD. This date is not negotiable. If you cannot write the midterm make-up exam, the same rules that guide the regular midterm exam apply.

Absences from 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. 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). The make-up exam date for the final exam TBD. This date is not negotiable. If you cannot write the final make-up exam, the same rules that guide the regular final exam apply.

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are recommended).

Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all of us in this class to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **Respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others’ expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- **Active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **Personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1: Introduction (Sept. 13)

Reading: None

Week 2: What is fairness all about? (Sept. 20)

Reading: Wright and Rogers: “Thinking about Fairness”, pp. 245-256.

Week 3: The market (Sept. 27)

Reading: Wright and Rogers: “The capitalist market: how it is supposed to work”, pp. 37-48 and “The capitalist market: how it actually works”, 49-70.

Week 4: Inequality and poverty (Oct. 4)

Reading: Wright and Rogers: “Class”, pp. 257-266 and “Persistent poverty”, pp. 281-286; 294-296.

Week 5: Democracy and the state (Oct. 11)

Reading: Wright and Rogers: “Democracy, how it works”, pp. 405-420, “Taxation”, pp. 446-453, and “Labor Unions”, pp. 505-510.

Week 6: Gender (Oct. 18)

Reading: Wright and Rogers: “Gender inequality”, 364-369; 388-402.

Week 7: MID-TERM (Oct. 25)

Week 8: READING WEEK (Nov. 1)

Week 9: Race and ethnicity (Nov. 8)

Reading: TBD

Week 10: The origins of fairness and equality (Nov. 15)

Reading: TBD

Week 11: Global inequalities (Nov. 22)

Reading: TBD

Week 12: Social movements and social change (Nov. 29)

Reading: Chibber: “Capitalism and Class Struggle”, 2-31”

Week 13: TBD (Dec. 6)

Readings: None

Academic Policies:

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

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

