



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 4420F**  
**The Social Context of Racial Inequality**  
**Fall 2023**

**Delivery Method - In-person**

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

**Course Description:** What are the sociological origins of racial inequality? We begin by investigating how sociologists understand racial and ethnic distinctions. We then shift our attention to patterns of racial inequality in the context of major social institutions: housing, the labor market, schools, and prisons.

**Prerequisite(s):** Registration in third year or above in any Department of Sociology module, or fourth year in any module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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.

**Anti-requisite(s):** Sociology 4485F/G

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

1. Demonstrate a sociological understanding of the key theoretical perspectives, concepts, methodologies, trends, and advances in relation to the social context of racial inequality.
2. Work independently and collaboratively to synthesize, analyze, evaluate, and reliably interpret published research and communicate information in oral and written formats.
3. Accurately apply concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis within the discipline while communicating information and arguments.
4. Apply course knowledge to analyze how social structures, systems, institutions, and processes shape real world experiences and outcomes of racial inequality.
5. Understand the limits to their own knowledge and abilities, and develop an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity, and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analyses and interpretations.

**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 group activities and structured

discussions. In the last 30 minutes of class, a team of students will deliver a presentation on material related to the topic of the week and lead a brief discussion. Your job is to attend, listen, participate, and ask and answer questions. I will end class with a summary of the day's discussion and key takeaways from the readings. I have provided an overview of the methods of evaluation below, but more information will be provided during the first class and detailed instructions and grading rubrics will be posted online.

### **Course Material:**

All required readings, assignment prompts, and other course materials will be made available through our OWL course site.

### **Communication:**

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

Email is the best way to contact me. Allow for 48 hours or two business days for a response.

### **Method of Evaluation:**

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course. Detailed instructions, templates, and grading rubrics are available on OWL.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Written commentaries	10%	Every Monday at 12:00pm on OWL (except for week 1)
Reading-based class activities/discussion	20%	Weekly (evaluated in class)
Presentation	15%	TBA (on the first day of class)
Essay Proposal	15%	Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, at 12:00pm on OWL
Final Essay	40%	Sunday, Nov. 26, 2023, 12:00pm on OWL

***This course does not have a final exam.***

### **Written Commentaries (10%), due weekly on OWL**

It is crucial that you complete the readings listed in the syllabus before each class. To help with this task, you will submit a half- to full-page (double spaced) written response with your thoughts on the assigned readings every week. Your response should **not** include a summary of the readings. Instead, as you read, identify one theme, issue, concept, or argument you would like to discuss. You may want to analyze its strengths or weaknesses, explain why you agree or disagree, or evaluate its contribution or applicability in helping us understand the social context of racial inequality. You do not have to address all the readings, but you can draw on similarities or differences between them if you would like. Build up your commentary so that you lead into one clear and

focused question that engages with the aspect you discuss throughout your submission. The questions students pose in their commentaries will guide our weekly discussions. As such, you should be ready to elaborate on the points raised in your submission during class discussions. Commentaries are due online every Monday at 12:00pm (noon) (except for week one). Over the course of the semester, you will submit 11 commentaries, but your lowest score—out of the 11—will be dropped from your overall grade for this component of the course.

### **Reading-Based Class Activities/Discussion (20%), weekly**

In-class activities and discussions are designed to hone your understanding of the course material through collaborative learning. Such activities 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. Your grade will be evaluated based on preparation (i.e., your engagement with course material) and participation.

Attendance is not an explicit part of the methods of evaluation, but if you do not attend class, you cannot demonstrate your understanding of the course material during in class activities/discussions and/or engage with your colleagues. To receive a passing grade in this course, you must attend a minimum of 80% of classes. This requirement will be waived only in exceptional circumstances with documentation.

Please inform me as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a class for medical or personal reasons.

### **Class Presentation (15%), due TBA (on the first day of class)**

This assignment requires you to identify and bring in material (e.g., a news item, a policy, short video clip, case, historical event, artwork) related to the topic of the week, deliver a brief presentation (~10 minutes), and lead the class in a sociological discussion (~20 minutes). This assignment will likely be done in pairs (depending on the number of students). You will select a topic and date for your presentation during the first week of class. You (and your partner) must inform me, via email, of the material you will be presenting on one week prior to your presentation date (i.e., the Tuesday before you present).

### **Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (15%), due Sunday, October 15, 2023**

Students will submit a proposal and annotated bibliography for feedback to help them prepare their final essay. Your proposal should include an introductory section, listing your research question, thesis/argument, an explanation of the topic's sociological relevance and how it relates to the course. Your proposal will also outline of the supporting arguments and evidence that will make up the body of your essay. The annotated bibliography requires you to identify and explain the relevance of five scholarly sources you will cite in your essay. The proposal should be 3 to 4 pages (double spaced) in length. Proposals must be submitted electronically on OWL and a hard copy must be submitted at the start of class on Tuesday, October 17.

### **Final Essay (40%), due Sunday, November 26, 2023**

Students will write a final essay on a topic of their choice, related to the content of this course. You will identify and analyze a social problem or aspect of racial inequality from a sociological perspective by incorporating the theories, concepts, and other ideas from class as well as outside sources to support your argument. Your argument should be focused and specific and you should take a position on the issue. The paper should be 10 to 12 pages

(double spaced) in length. Essays must be submitted electronically on OWL and a hard copy must be submitted at the start of class on Tuesday, November 28.

### **Student Absences:**

#### ***Missed classes:***

Please inform me as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a class for medical or personal reasons.

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:***

The only assignments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade are the 10 weekly commentaries (which are worth 1% each, totaling 10%). In most cases, students will be granted a one-week extension, but they will be subject to a 0.25 deduction from their grade for each day the commentary is late. After 7 days, the commentary will no longer be accepted. If a student's circumstances require a longer absence or extension, alternative arrangements will be made at the discretion of the instructor.

#### ***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. In most cases, students with approved documentation will be granted an extension.

#### ***Absences from in-class tests or exams:***

There are no tests or exams for this course.

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

The weekly course schedule and readings will be listed in a separate document posted on OWL.

### **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](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

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

