



The University of Western Ontario  
SOCIOLOGY 4455F-001

Challenging the Law

Fall 2024

In-person

**Instructor:** Dr. Ballucci, Associate Professor

**Department of Sociology**

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**Course Description:** This course examines the law as a product of social action, organizations, and processes. Contrary to the traditional legal approach, which views the law as a formal system of rules operating autonomously from society, this workshop treats law as a social institution. We will examine concepts and frameworks for thinking about law and legal process. We will explore classical and contemporary theoretical and empirical developments in sociology and in the more interdisciplinary area of socio-legal studies. This course aims to understand how sociologists study law and explain some of the patterns and dynamics of law in various social settings. We will focus on classical theoretical contributions to the sociology of law, selected writings from the contemporary sociology of law, and empirical themes of law and law-related processes to which sociological theories will be applied. This course greatly emphasizes gender, race, and the implantation and process of law. Upon completing this course, students should understand how sociologists study law and empirically analyze the relevant dynamics of law and law-related phenomena.

**Prerequisite(s):** Enrolment in fourth year of Honors Specialization in Sociology or Criminology.

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):** None

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

This course aims to examine the law as a product of social action, organizations, and processes. Contrary to the traditional legal approach, which views the law as a formal system of rules operating autonomously from society, this workshop treats law as a social institution. We will examine concepts and frameworks for thinking about law and legal process. We will explore classical and contemporary theoretical and empirical developments in sociology and in the more interdisciplinary area of socio-legal studies. This

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### ***Learning Outcomes:***

By the end of this course, students should:

- be familiar with the sub-discipline of the sociology of law
- have an understanding of the connection between law and society
- be aware of the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status and social class on justice outcomes
- use knowledge on socio-legal theories to analyze contemporary problems in Canadian society.
- critically reflect on media reports concerning justice issues.

### **Course Material:**

#### **Required Text(s):**

All readings will be made available to students on Bright space, as a PDF link in the syllabus or via email.

#### **Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>) 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.

#### **How to Contact Me:**

I can be contacted via email at [dballucc@uwo.ca](mailto:dballucc@uwo.ca). Only emails that use proper etiquette will be answered. For example, a salutation is required. "Hello Professor Ballucci, or Dr. Ballucci" is acceptable. "Hey", "Miss", or the absence of a salutation is not sufficient. Also, no texting terminology is acceptable. Lastly, provide me with your name, the course and the section (if applicable) that you are emailing about.

Also, please do not email me questions about course content or course procedures. I will take time in every class to answer these types of questions. There are, however, two main exceptions to this policy:

1. You are experiencing a personal emergency that I need to know about before the next class.
2. You want to make an appointment to see me.

I will try to respond to these emails within 24 hours on weekdays. I answer emails infrequently over the weekend.

## **Method of Evaluation:**

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

1. Leading discussion on an article 10%
2. Brief work 10% (2 cases) for each week - 20%
3. *Ted Talk* 15%
4. Final Paper, Case Analysis 40%
5. Weekly Participation 15%

### ***1. Leading a discussion on an article 10%***

You will each lead the discussion on 1 article (on your own or in pairs or groups, depending on class size) on the required readings. This is NOT simply a summary of the article. Students who ONLY summarize the article will receive a low grade. I think each presenter should focus on 1 main point and provide the summary background relevant to that point, as well as some discussion points. This exercise requires you to teach the class about the ideas and arguments in the article. This means you will need to understand the arguments presented in the piece. Each set of presenters will have 40 minutes (20 minutes each) to discuss the article and raise important points. Each presenter will receive an independent grade. Dr. Ballucci will ask questions and engage with students' points.

For those who are not presenting, you will need to come prepared. I will facilitate discussions and ask questions of the class. As discussed last week in the first class, this course is interactive. Students are expected to come to class prepared and ready to participate in discussions every week.

PLEASE see Appendix 1, the course schedule and readings document for further details.

### ***2. Brief work 10% for each week - 20%***

The success of this course as a seminar depends on informed and engaged student participation. All students are expected to attend class having done the readings and prepared for discussion. You must bring the reading material (on your computer is acceptable) with you to class each week, along with your nametag. Please refer to each other by name in class discussions.

This proportion of your grade will reflect your efforts to contribute meaningfully to building the case brief. This means participating in building the case brief and providing comments related to the readings that address course content. You will not be given grades for just sitting in a group and sharing your opinions or telling me what you think if it is unrelated to the course material. You must engage in meaningful conversations during brief development to attain these grades. I will evaluate not only how often you speak, but also the quality of your contributions. Your contributions should be informed by and grounded in the readings. Your attendance is also reflected in this grade. You will receive a mid-term grade on your participation.

### ***3. Ted Talk': Conference Style Presentation 15%***

In the last two weeks of the course, you will perform a Ted Talk on your own. The purpose is to showcase students' research papers in a format that appeals to the public. A strong Ted Talk will tell the class why the case you choose matters, why it is essential for people to reevaluate it in the manner you have chosen, and why people should care about your alternative analysis and interpretation.

If you have not seen a Ted Talk before, I encourage you to watch one. For this class, each student will present 8-12 minutes (depending on the class size). Remember, the key to this exercise is not to review all the components of your paper but rather to make your research attractive to a general audience, to policymakers, and your family at Christmas. This exercise will demonstrate the value of criminological research in the 'real world' and why it is essential to think about correctional practices, language, and societal reactions and ideas of people. If time permits, there will be a short question period.

#### ***4. Final Paper: Case Analysis 40%***

Your final requires you to choose and analyze a case using the feminist lens. This involves you to identify a case and create a case brief of that case. To follow, you must rewrite the case using the feminist perspectives we have reviewed and applied throughout the course. In short, you are to mimic what we have been doing all semester. This paper should summarize the case in a case brief format (4-5 pages); the re-write of the judgement should be 5-7 pages).

The papers must be original in that it will be written specifically for this course. They will be organized and articulate a coherent argument. They must use the appropriate literature and sources that would normally be expected for a scholarly paper being prepared for publication. All papers should be correctly referenced, using any one of the standard academic reference styles (use whatever you are familiar with as long as you are consistent in the paper).

You are required to use 8-10 sources. Of these sources, a minimum of 2 must be from the course (place an \* beside each of the references from the course). The remaining sources must be from beyond the course material. The final paper takes the place of a comprehensive final examination. All documents must be typewritten and double-spaced. Remember to leave time to proofread your work very carefully. This practice reduced the potential for grammar and spelling errors and increased your paper's clarity. Final papers for undergraduate students will be 10-12 pages long.

***Save your paper using your last name, NOT the name of the course.***

#### ***5. Weekly Participation: 15%***

In-class participation 20%: As a seminar, the success of this course depends on informed and engaged student participation. All students are expected to attend to class having done the readings and prepared for discussion. You **are** required to bring the reading material with you to class each week, along with your nametag. Please refer to each other by name in class discussions.

This proportion of your grade will reflect your efforts to contribute in **meaningful ways** to class discussions. This means providing comments related to the readings that address course content. You will not be given grades for giving your opinions or telling me what you think if it is unrelated to the course material. To attain grades for participation, you must engage in meaningful conversations in the class. I will evaluate not only how often you speak, but also the quality of your contributions. Your contributions should be informed by and grounded in the readings. Your attendance is also reflected in this grade. You will receive a mid-term grade on your participation.

### **Student Absences:**

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

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. 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.

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

The course readings and schedule are located on Brightspace and in a separate document posted on Brightspace entitled ‘ Course Schedule and Readings’.

**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
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

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