



The University of Western Ontario  
SOCIOLOGY 4455G-001

Challenging Law  
Winter 2025

Delivery Method – in person

**Instructor:** Dr. Brenda Kobayashi

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Department of Sociology**

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

**Course Description:** This course examines law as a social institution, exploring both classical and contemporary understandings of the law. By examining empirical examples, we examine different explanations of how the law operates and affects social relations.

**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):** none

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

Drawing on different theoretical frameworks, students will critically analyze law as a social institution. Students will develop a deeper understanding of law and society by examining: social issues that arise in Canada and beyond to understand their legal underpinnings and implications; the forces that shape the law and the social implications of law; how the law operates; the controversies surrounding law; what functions law fulfills; how law can be dysfunctional; the major assumptions in the study of law and society, among others.

**Course Material:**

A list of readings will be provided during the first class. These readings will be made available on Brightspace and/or through the library.

## **Communication:**

Your first sources of information are the course syllabus, attending class, and Brightspace. Students are required and expected to read the course syllabus in its entirety. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d21/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.

If you have a question or would like to discuss course content, please see me before, during, or after class, or during office hour (by appointment). Outside of class and/or office hours, email ([bkobaya@uwo.ca](mailto:bkobaya@uwo.ca)) is my preferred method of contact. You can expect a response within 24-48 hours on Mondays to Fridays between 9-5PM (EST). Prior to emailing me, please read the course outline, announcements, and any other supplementary material posted on Owl to see if your question has already been answered.

Students are expected to adhere to professional and courteous email etiquette. Emails are to be professionally prepared, spell-and grammar checked and not written in “text message” format. All communication must be written from your UWO account. The subject heading must read the course title and section. Sign the email with your full name and student number. Instructors and Teaching Assistants reserve the right not to respond to emails that do not adhere to such practices.

## **Method of Evaluation:**

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

Student-led seminar: 25%

Critical Reflection Paper: 15%

Participation: 25%

Final Term Paper: March 20<sup>th</sup> - 35%

**Student-led seminar:** Students will lead one class seminar, either individually or as a team. This will be dependent on class enrolment. The seminar will draw upon the assigned/required course readings, scheduled for that week. Additional information will be provided during the first lecture. **Sign-up for the student-led seminars will be done the first week of classes; thus, attending the first lecture on is an expected and mandatory requirement.**

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation: Student-led seminar. Thus, students are not eligible to submit a self-attestation accommodation for the student-led seminars.

**Critical Reflection Paper:** Students will submit one critical reflection paper, due one week after their scheduled seminar. The due dates will vary as they coincide with your seminar date. Additional details will be provided during the first class. Students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10%

per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. This flexibility deadline applies to all students, including students with accommodations through Accessibility Education. Late papers must be submitted to Turnitin via the Assignment tab on Brightspace with an additional copy emailed to the instructor and TA.

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment [Critical Reflection Paper] already includes flexibility in the form of [72-hour submission window] the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

**Participation:** Students are required and expected to attend all lectures, come prepared having done the assigned readings and to play an active role during the class seminars. Additional details will be provided during the first class.

**Essay:** Students will complete a research paper on a selected topic that is relevant to the course and is of interest to the student. This is to be a formal research paper. This essay is not a descriptive, but rather an argumentative paper. The final paper is to be 10 pages in length (approximately 2500 words), double spaced with standard formatting and text size (1" margins and 12-font) with proper referencing. A title page and bibliography are to be included, as additional pages. The final essay is worth 35% of your final course grade. Essays will be submitted to turnitin on Brightspace with a hard copy to be submitted in person (not electronically) at the beginning of class on **Thursday, March 20, 2025**. Students are expected to submit the final essay by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. This flexibility deadline applies to all students, including students with accommodations through Accessibility Education.

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment [Final Term Paper] already includes flexibility in the form of [72-hour submission window] the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility. Late papers must be submitted to Turnitin via the Assignment tab on Brightspace with an additional copy emailed to the instructor and TA.

### **Grading Guidelines:**

Grades (except the final exam and year-end mark) will be posted to Brightspace as they become available. Due to privacy regulations, I do not provide grades or discuss issues regarding grades via email. If you wish to discuss your grade(s) please contact or speak with me to set up an appointment, during office hours.

All evaluations are guided by Western's Undergraduate Grading Guidelines:

### **University-wide grade descriptors**

A+ 90-100: One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A 80-89: Superior work which is clearly above average

B 70-79: Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

C 60-69: Competent work, meeting requirements

D 50-59: Fair work, minimally acceptable

F below 50: Fail

For more information about the university grading standards, see the Registrar's Handbook: Grading Standards

**N.B.** To ensure the fair treatment of all students, so that no one individual receives any consideration or special treatment as a result of verbal complaints (e.g., arbitrary bumping up of grades) that is not equally received by others, there are no make-up assignments for low evaluation scores. Nor will requests to change a grade because it is needed for a future program be considered.

### **Assessment Re-evaluation:**

Any review of assessments should be done within two weeks of the mark being released. Students who wish to seek a re-evaluation of grades must justify in detail and in writing, exactly why they feel that a mark is not justified. Such a request should be based on reasons that are rooted in the specific course content and keeping in mind the expectations for the class. The assignment or exam will be re-graded in its entirety, not simply the questions or portion the student believes were scored improperly. Note, in the course of remarking an assignment or exam, the instructor or TA may discover errors or defects that were not originally detected on the paper or exam and as a result it is possible that a student's revised mark may go down, rather than up. Please note that in an event that a mark is re-evaluated, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the mark both upwards and downwards. The revised mark stands.

### **Course-Specific Conditions Required to Pass Course:**

\*Students who miss more than 2 classes throughout the semester, without an academic accommodation, will not meet the requirements to pass this course. All evaluations must be fulfilled to pass this course.

### **Classroom Conduct and Additional Information:**

This class will conduct itself on the principles of academic and intellectual freedom and mutual respect. Some readings and content will include topics about sensitive, difficult, and/or challenging issues that may be triggering and/or upsetting. I ask all students to help create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity during the lecture and discussion periods. Racist, sexist, or other derisive comments, intentional or otherwise will not be tolerated. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by everyone in this course.

Due to the sensitive nature of this course, participants are not permitted to record the sessions.

Recording of lectures, tutorials or virtual Meetings or online course content without the explicit consent

of the Professor, TA and students involved is ground for serious academic and or legal discipline. All course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member.

A laptop can be an effective tool for taking notes in class. However, it is distracting to the instructor, TA, speakers, and other students when students use their laptops or cellphones to access the Internet and/or make personal calls and/or send and receive messages during lectures. Students who use their laptop and/or cellphone during the class for any reason other than to take lecture notes are considered to be engaging in disruptive behaviour under the Student Code of Conduct. Students caught violating this policy may be asked to leave the class lecture. **General rule for use of electronics is to please be considerate of others' learning.**

During the seminars/presentations, it is essential that all participants stay focused on the presenters and their classmates. Thus, the use of laptop computers and other mobile electronic devices will not be permitted during student presentations and class discussions. I recommend printing the assigned readings on a weekly basis and bring them to class or alternatively take notes on the readings and bring your notes (printout or written) to class.

### **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:**

A detailed weekly course schedule along with assigned readings will be provided in the first lecture and will also be posted on Owl.

### **Artificial Intelligence:**

Faculty are encouraged to include a statement on AI use. Examples include:

All assignments must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI).

The use of ChatGPT or other AI services, including translation and grammar-checking tools is strictly prohibited in all assessments, including assignments, discussion forums, essays, tests, and examination. Unauthorized use of any AI services will be subject to academic discipline. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments. High AI and/or turnitin scores will be penalized.

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