



**Sociology 3344g (670)**  
**Digital Sociology**  
**Summer 2026**

**Instructor:** C. Lavrence

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**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

This course explores digital technologies from a sociological perspective and within their social, economic and political contexts. Key sites of digital sociality (social media, dating apps, selfies etc), their relationship to broader social inequalities and the algorithms conditioning online practices are explored from a range of critical, theoretical perspectives.

**Antirequisite(s):** The former Sociology 3373F/G.

**Prerequisite(s):** Third or fourth year standing in a Sociology or Criminology module.

**Extra Information:** 3 lecture hours.

**Course Weight:** 0.50

**Breadth:** Category A

**Subject Code:** SOCIOLOG

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This 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.

King's College at the University of Western Ontario  
Digital Sociology  
3344G (670)  
Summer 2026

**Course Information:**

Prof. Christine Lavrence

[clavrenc@uwo.ca](mailto:clavrenc@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Friday at 12 over zoom or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course explores digital technologies within their social, economic and political contexts. We explore key sites of digital sociality (selfies, cell phones, Instagram, TikTok), how platform structures and algorithms condition online practices, and how systems of social inequality work within digital practices. We investigate these questions from a range of critical and theoretical perspectives. We will examine the social implications of digital media, as well as the structural conditions and power relations they are immersed in.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Critically assess, interpret and compare a range of theories of media
- Make connections between different theorists and schools of thought
- Employ these theoretical frameworks to think through issues and practices related to digital media
- Employ these frameworks to think through digital media structures and practices, as well as the social issues and questions they are linked with
- Consider issues related to conducting sociological research on digital media platforms

**Mode of Instruction:** Asynchronous Online

**Course Requirements:**

**Antirequisite(s):** The former Sociology 3373F/G.

**Prerequisite(s):** 1.0 from Sociology courses at the 1000 level and third or fourth year standing in a Sociology or Criminology module.

**Course textbook/readings:**

Available online through library course reserves and linked through Brightspace course site, at no extra cost.

**Method of Evaluation:**

McLuhan Assignment: (Worth 30%). This assignment is an analysis of a historical or

contemporary event through the lens of McLuhan's theory. Due June 26 by 11:59pm.

Annotated Bibliography: (Worth 35%). Due July 10 by 11:59 pm.

Final Assignment: (Worth 35%). Two Essay Questions based on course materials.  
Due July 26 by 11:59 pm.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, co-pilot, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

### **Academic Considerations:**

There will be a 24-hour window after assignment deadlines before late penalties will start. After the 24-hour window, 2% will be deducted per day.

### **Schedule of Class Topics and Readings:**

#### **June 16: Theorizing Media: Part 1**

McLuhan, M. "The Medium is the Message"

#### **June 18: Theorizing Media: Part 2**

McLuhan, M. "The Medium is the Message"

#### **June 23: The Culture Industry**

Horkheimer, M and Adorno, T. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as  
Mass Deception

Recvlohe, C. "The Culture Industry in a New Media Age",.

<https://medium.com/swlh/the-culture-industry-in-a-new-media-age-fb074a0f2ef1>

#### **June 25: Digital Convergence and Communicative Capitalism**

Dean, J. "Communicative Capitalism"

#### **June 30: Polarization and Social Media**

Rathje, S., Van Bavel J. and van der Linden S. “Out-group animosity drives engagement on social media”

Optional Reading:

Goldenberg, A and Gross, J. “Digital Emotional Contagion”

June 2: **Misinformation and Social Media**

Mihailidis, P and Viotty, S. “Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in “Post-Fact” Society”

Optional reading:

Seaver, Highfield, and Abidin, “Algorithms” in Instagram

July 7: **Content Moderation and Algorithms**

Stockinger, Schäfer, Lecheler, “Navigating the gray areas of content moderation: Professional moderators’ perspectives on uncivil user comments and the role of (AI-based) technological tools”

Optional reading:

Seaver, Highfield, Abidin, “Content Moderation” in Instagram

July 9: **Marx and Social Media**

Rey, PJ. “Alienation, Exploitation and Social Media

July 14: **Adolescence, Social Media and Selfies**

Barnard “Spectacles of selfie Empowerment”

Optional Reading:

van der Wal, A. “In Their Own Words: How Adolescents Use Social Media and How It Affects Them

July 16: **Smartphones**

Mowlabocus, S. “The master of the swipe: Smartphones, transitional objects and interstitial time”

July 21: **TikTok**

Zulli, D and Zulli, D. "Extending the Internet meme: Conceptualizing technological mimesis and imitation publics on the TikTok platform."

July 23: **Instagram**

Leaver, T., Highfield T., and Abidin, C "Economies" in *Instagram*

Optional Readings:

Zillich, A. and Riesmeyer C. "Be Yourself: The Relative Importance of Personal and Social Norms for Adolescents' Self-Presentation on Instagram"

Dumas, T et al. "Lying or longing for likes? Narcissism, peer belonging, Loneliness and normative versus deceptive like-seeking on Instagram in emerging adulthood

# King's University College General Course Policies 2025-2026

## **1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

### **Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [here](#).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course. Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course. For further information, please see:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

### **Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

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, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/exams/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html).

## **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/personal-counselling>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

## **GBSV Support:**

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/gender-and-sexual-violence>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western’s Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

**Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom:** King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at [here](#).

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the 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; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/OriginalityReports-TurnItIn.html>.

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.

## **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member.

Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

## **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

## **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.