



**Sociology 2270a (571)
Foundations of Social Theory
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

Instructor: A. Ning

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

A comprehensive survey of the founding theories and theorists (among others, Marx, Weber and Durkheim) of sociology, and of the social and historical contexts out of which their theories grew. Students will be introduced to the principal philosophical and epistemological questions concerning the nature of sociological knowledge.

Antirequisite(s): [Sociology 2240E](#), [Sociology 2263A/B](#).

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 from Sociology courses at the 1000 level.

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.

Foundations of Social Theory
Sociology 2270A (571)
Fall 2025

Professor: Dr. Ana Ning

E-mail: aning@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00-2:00 pm or by appointment, in-person or virtual

The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the main bodies of classical sociological theory proposed by such pioneers as Comte, Spencer, Martineau, Marx, Durkheim and Weber. To illustrate the relevance of these earlier works to contemporary sociological study, our lectures and discussions will engage in a dialogue that combines both classical and contemporary perspectives to examine in-depth recurring questions and problems faced by theorists as well as by individuals in the everyday world.

The ultimate goal of the course is to encourage students to use disciplinary perspectives to establish their own analysis of the world around them, so they can appreciate the practical value of the subjects they are studying in illuminating their environment directly or indirectly.

Format: In-person lectures, seminar discussions, readings and films.

Evaluation: Short Quiz: 20% (**Timed via OWL BRIGHSPACE, Oct. 6, 2025**)
Midterm Exam: 25% (**In-class, Nov. 10, 2025**)
Final Exam: 25% (**Official December Exam Schedule**)
Group Facilitation and Discussion: 15% (**See OWL BRIGHTSPACE course site**)
Attendance and Participation: 15% (**See OWL BRIGHTSPACE course site**)

Required Readings: 1. Foundations of Social Theory by Dr. Ana Ning
– available in the “Course Readings” tab in the OWL Brightspace course site (**No Cost**).

Academic Integrity:

Within this course, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools [such as Chat GPT] is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation as this constitutes a form of academic plagiarism. It is expected that you will submit work that is truly your own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial). Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software such as Turnitin that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

NB: Please refer to our **OWL BRIGHTSPACE course site** for details regarding course assessments, expectations and policies.

Course Learning Outcomes

This course introduces and/or reinforces key sociological skills, namely, the ability to:

1. Demonstrate a holistic understanding of societal and cultural processes.
2. Situate past and present social issues both at local and global levels.
3. Identify, contrast and compare theoretical positions in sociology, recognizing the provisional status of knowledge.
4. Distinguish and build connections between schools of thought.
5. Employ a decolonizing lens to social issues.
6. Demonstrate creative, analytical and critical thinking skills.
7. Advocate for equity, diversity, inclusivity and different ways of being, doing and knowing beyond Western systems of thought.
8. Identify and explain the role of power and social inequities in shaping people's lives.
9. Design and develop persuasive arguments.
10. Write using academic language and argumentation.
11. Demonstrate self-awareness and appropriate interpersonal skills.
12. Demonstrate capacity to work independently and collaboratively in groups.
13. Link theory to practice, applying sociological skills and knowledge to real life situations.
14. Engage in problem-based and inquiry-based learning to propose meaningful changes/solutions to pressing issues within diverse communities.

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SYLLABUS – LECTURE SCHEDULE

SECTION I – THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

- Sept. 8 **Introduction and Overview of the Course**
Read: Course Outline
- Sept. 15 **Relevance of Sociological Theory: Different Ways of Knowing and Doing**
Read: **Go, J.** (2023). Thinking against empire: Anticolonial thought as social theory. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 74(3), 279–293.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12993>
Groups A and B seminars

SECTION II – THE EARLY ORIGINS OF SOCIOLOGY

- Sept. 22 **Enlightenment, Conservative Reaction: Martineau, Comte and Spencer**
Read: **Delaney** (2014) Chapter 1: The Early Roots of Sociological Theory in **Classical and Contemporary Social Theory: Investigation and Application**, New York, USA: Pearson Education Inc. (pp 13-29).
- Film:** *Human Zoos: America's Forgotten History of Scientific Racism*
Groups A and B seminars

SECTION III – EXPANDING THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

- Sept. 29 **Conflict Theory and the Critique of Society: The Marxist Tradition**
Read: **Ritzer** and **Stepnisky** (2014) Chapter 2: Karl Marx
Introduction to Fetishism of Commodities in **Sociological Theory**, New York, USA, McGraw-Hill (pp.43-59).
Group A Seminar begins
- Oct. 6 **SHORT QUIZ TIMED IN OWL BRIGHTSPACE (1 hour)**
- Oct. 13 **The Structures of Capitalist Society: Marx's Critique**
Read: **Ritzer** and **Stepnisky** (2014): Chapter 2: Karl Marx: Capital, Capitalists, and the Proletariat to Summary in **Sociological Theory**, New York, USA, McGraw-Hill (pp. 59-75).
Group B Seminar begins
- Oct. 20 **Social Facts and Social Order: The Legacy of Durkheim**

Read: **Ritzer** and **Stepnisky** (2014): Chapter 3: Emile Durkheim: Introduction to Justice in **Sociological Theory**, New York, USA, McGraw-Hill (pp. 76-91).

Group A Seminar

Oct. 27 **Early and Late Durkheimian Theory**

Read: **Ritzer** and **Stepnisky** (2014): Chapter 3: Emile Durkheim: Suicide to Summary in **Sociological Theory**, New York, USA, McGraw-Hill (pp. 92-111).

Group B Seminar

Nov. 3 **NO CLASS – FALL READING WEEK**

Nov. 10 **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

Nov. 17 **Conflict and Analysis: The Legacy of Weber**

Read: **Dillon** (2010): Sociology: Understanding Social Action: Culture and Economic Activity: in **Introduction to Social Theory: Theories, Concepts**, and their Applicability in the Twenty-First Century Maiden, Wiley-Blackwell (pp. 118-132).

Group A Seminar

Nov. 24 **Substantive Sociology: Weber's Contributions**

Read: **Dillon** (2010): Power, Authority and Domination in **Introduction to Social Theory: Theories, Concepts**, and their Applicability in the Twenty-First Century Maiden, Wiley-Blackwell (pp. 133-151).

Group B Seminar

Dec. 1 **Social Interaction: The Legacy of Georg Simmel**

Read: **Simmel** (1904) Fashion and The Metropolis and Mental Life in Peter Kivisto (Ed.) (2013) **Social Theory: Roots and Branches** (pp. 104-109 and pp. 116-124).

Groups A and B Seminars

N.B. FINAL EXAM DURING OFFICIAL DECEMBER EXAMINATION PERIOD

N.B. Course syllabus is subject to changes at the instructor's discretion.

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 https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

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://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

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 (under [Special Examinations](#)).

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://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-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/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

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://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing 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.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also 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://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

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

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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 your 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/Originality Reports - 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.