



Sociology 3346f (570)
Sociology of Mental Health
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: J. Comeau

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course offers an overview of the ways a sociological perspective informs our understanding of mental health. It explores various definitions, theories, and forms of mental illness, our responses to mental illness, and how social factors affect mental disorder.

Antirequisite(s): [Sociology 3385F/G](#), if taken at Brescia in 2014-15.

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

Extra Information: 3 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.

Sociology 3346f (570)

Professor Jinette Comeau

Email: jcomeau5@uwo.ca

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Introduction

This seminar-based course will provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches used in the Sociology of Mental Health, with a focus on the social antecedents and consequences of some of the most common mental disorders experienced in the general population. We will examine social inequalities in exposure to stress and access to coping resources to offset the effects of stress. A special emphasis will be placed on understanding how Sociological research related to mental health can help improve the lives of individuals living with mental disorders.

Learning Outcomes

As we work through the course material, students will be able to:

- Understand, evaluate, critique, and apply the key theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the Sociology of Mental Health
- Identify, explain, and engage with the key themes and debates in the Sociology of Mental Health
- Identify and explain the social antecedents and consequences of common mental disorders
- Understand, explain, and critically analyze the organization of mental health care and services in Canada and the United States
- Develop and apply critical writing and oral communication skills related to the Sociology of Mental Health

Course Readings

A selection of readings associated with the key themes in this course will be made available on OWL Brightspace.

OWL

All course content will be available through OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>

Login using your UWO username and password. Check Brightspace regularly for information on the course schedule, materials such as lecture slides and readings, announcements, grades, and the full evaluation details. You will also be required to submit all assignments and evaluations to Brightspace.

Method of Evaluation

1. Participation (15%)

A seminar-based course such as this requires active participation on the part of all students. To that end, each class will involve discussion periods where students will have the opportunity to ask questions, critically evaluate the course readings for that week, and complete in-class activities. Attendance is

required. Discussions are meant to encourage you to think critically about the course material – there is no single right or wrong answer. Accordingly, in-class activities will be evaluated as pass/fail based on effort. Students are permitted to miss two discussion periods per term without penalty.

2. Midterm Exam (25%)

The midterm exam will be administered in class on October 3 and will cover all material reviewed up to that point. Academic consideration to write a make-up for missed mid-terms exams will require formal supporting documentation from the Academic Advising Office.

3. Creative Project (25%)

Students will work individually or in small groups (2-3 members) to critically analyze a piece of popular media or culture while applying theories and concepts from the Sociology of Mental Health. Students will have the opportunity to present the results from their critical analysis in whatever format they choose (e.g. poster, video, podcast, audio documentary, photo exhibit or scrapbook, or any other creative medium) and will submit an accompanying essay (2,500 words). Submission of this work can occur anytime between October 10 and November 28, determined at the beginning of the term. Students should be prepared to briefly discuss their work at our weekly discussions.

4. Final Exam (35%)

The final exam for this course will be held during the December exam period (Dec 11-22). The university registrar will determine the date and time. It will cover ALL material seen in this course, with an emphasis on material after the mid-term exam. Academic consideration to write a make-up for missed final exams will require formal supporting documentation from the Academic Advising Office.

Artificial Intelligence & Plagiarism

All work submitted as part of this course must be completed independently by the student without any aids. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including but not limited to ChatGPT, for this course is NOT permitted under any circumstance. Please see the course policies below for additional details.

Course Outline and Readings (subject to minor variations)

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 September 5	Introduction Theoretical and conceptual perspectives in the Sociology of Mental Health	Pearlin, 1989 Pearlin, Avison, & Fazio, 2008
Week 2 September 12	Theoretical and conceptual perspectives continued	George, 2013 Waddell, 2005 Phelan, Link, & Tehranifar, 2010
Week 3 September 19	The social construction of mental health and perspectives on medicalization	Bruce & Raue, 2013 Horwitz, 2011
Week 4 September 26	Stigma and Mental Health	Link & Phelan, 2013 Marcussen, 2025

Week 5 October 3	Midterm Exam	
Week 6 October 10	Gender, sexuality, and mental health	Rosenfield, Smith, & Fekete, 2025 Hart, 2019 Miller, 2025
Week 7 October 17	Socioeconomic status and mental health	Mutaner et al., 2013 Raphael et al., 2019 Seabrook & Avison, 2012
Week 8 October 24	Race/ethnicity and mental health	Williams, 2018 Louie & Wheaton, 2018
Week 9 October 31	Digital technologies, social media, and mental health	Twenge, 2017 Odgers, 2018 Wolfers & Utz, 2022
November 3-7	Reading Week	
Week 10 November 14	Mental health and the criminal justice system	Hiday & Ray, 2025 Jaggi et al., 2016
Week 11 November 21	Religion and mental health	Schieman, Bierman, & Ellison, 2013 May, 2018
Week 12 November 28	Organization of mental health care	Dobransky, 2025 Scheid & Greenber, 2008
Week 13 December 5	Agency and recovery	Watson, 2012 Yanos, Knight, & Roe, 2008 Whitley & Campbell, 2014

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.