



**Sociology 3344g (570)**  
**Digital Sociology**  
**Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**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 (270)  
Winter 2026

**Course Information:**

Dr. Christine Lavrence

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

Lecture Friday 11:30-2:30

Office Hours Thursday 1-2 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:** In-person

**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:**

Participation: 10%

Presentation: 15% Group presentations based on an assigned reading with the purpose of generating class discussion on key ideas

McLuhan assignment 25%: Analysis of a media event through the lens of McLuhan. Due February 6 11:59pm.

In-class Critical Reflection: 25% A 5-6-page written assignment (double-spaced) based on course material that 1) explores key questions and arguments of the text 2) assesses the text critically and 3) considers future directions of research. Written in class March 6.

Final Assignment: 25% A final written assignment synthesizing course material. Due by April 7 11:59pm.

## **Academic Considerations:**

Students will have a 48 hour window after the deadlines for the McLuhan Assignment (due February 6) and the Final Assignment (due April 7) before they are considered late.

## **Schedule of Classes and Readings:**

### **January 9: Introduction**

### **January 16: Theorizing Media**

McLuhan, M. "The Medium is the Message"

### **January 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>

### **January 30: Digital Convergence**

Dean, J. "Communicative Capitalism"

### **Group Presentation reading:**

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

### **February 6: Digital Polarization**

Esau, K. "The Quality of Connections: Deliberative Reciprocity and Inclusive Listening as Antidote to Destructive Polarization Online"

### **Group presentation readings (choose one):**

Esau K., et al. "Destructive polarization in digital communication contexts: a critical review and conceptual framework"

Goldenberg, A and Gross, J. "Digital Emotional Contagion"

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"

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

### **February 13: AI**

Jungherr, A. "Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: A Conceptual Framework"

### **Group presentation reading:**

Lin, B. "The AI Chatbot Always Flirts With Me, Should I Flirt Back: From the McDonaldization of Friendship to the Robotization of Love"

### **February 27: Adolescence and Social Media**

#### **Group presentation readings: (choose one)**

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

Kuhn, J and. Riesmeyer, C. "Adolescents' Norms of Self-Presentation on Snapchat: Bitmojis as An Expression of Identity Development"

Guha, P. "Online and Abused: Girls of Color Facing Racialized Sexual Harassment"

#### **March 6:**

In-class Critical reflection

#### **March 13: Instagram**

Rey, PJ. "Alienation, Exploitation and Social Media

#### **Group Presentation readings: (choose one):**

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"

#### **March 20: TikTok**

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

#### **Group presentation reading (choose one):**

Entrena – Serano, C. "Watch, Scroll, Repeat: How Interface Design Shapes Consumptive Curation Affordances on TikTok"

Bhandari, B and Bimo, S. "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media"

#### **March 27 Wrap Up**



# 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](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](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/](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](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.

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](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](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.