



Sociology 3379f (570)
Crime, Punishment, and Pop Culture
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: M. Elliott
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course critically examines how crime and punishment are represented in film, television, music, books, and other forms of popular culture. We investigate how these depictions shape - and reflect - our understandings of crime and impact criminal justice policy.

Prerequisite(s): [Sociology 2266A/B](#), and third or fourth year standing in a Sociology or Criminology module.

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.

King's University College
Sociology 3379G (570)
Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture
Winter 2026
Professor M. Elliott

Course Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to encourage student engagement and regular participation. The goal is to allow students an opportunity to develop their skills in a range of areas, including communication, professionalism, and critical thinking. Not only are these abilities vital for success in a number of settings, but they allow students to cultivate an understanding of their role in society as responsible and well-educated global citizens.

By the end of the term, successful students will:

- Identify, apply, and evaluate various frameworks of knowledge production, particularly where these systems relate to crime, corrections, and criminal justice;
- Connect contemporary social issues to the criminal justice system while drawing out how these macro-level social forces impact processes of criminalization and victimization;
- Understand how representations of crime, punishment, and justice in media may be researched, highlighting ethical concerns and methodological approaches;
- Establish linkages across disciplines, levels of analysis, and various forms of popular culture to broaden criminological perspectives;
- Contribute to an inclusive, supportive, and collegial classroom environment;
- Develop self-confidence in their mastery of the material and their ability to convey that knowledge to an audience of their peers; and
- Present criminological research, theories, and interpretations in a clear, coherent, and accessible manner using relevant technologies and/or other creative modes of delivery.

Teaching Philosophy: In my view, the learning experience reaches its fullest potential when students are welcome to actively participate in their own learning. As a King's graduate myself, I recognize that the small class sizes provided on this campus offer us an ideal space in which we can challenge ourselves and engage with the course material critically. While I strive to foster a classroom environment based on fairness, mutual respect, empathy, and mentorship, learning is a two-way street. Students enrolled in this course should be willing to commit to those same principles, with an understanding of the tenacity, autonomy, and discipline required to succeed in both an upper-year and essay credit.

On my part, I recognize that sometimes life happens. We are all human beings with a complex set of roles and responsibilities that keep us busy outside of the classroom. While I set high standards for student achievement, I also acknowledge that not every student is in a position to give their best across every single week of the semester. Given this consideration, I do my best to provide opportunities throughout the semester for students to demonstrate their passion, commitment, and engagement in the course. If you are feeling concerned about your ability to

succeed in the course, I would strongly encourage discussing this with me so that we can plan a way forward that is equitable, accommodating, and fair with respect to your peers.

Class Format: In-person.

Course Materials: All course readings will be made available on our course Brightspace site; thus, no purchases are required on the student’s part. Assigned readings will begin in Week 2.

Communication: Students should expect any course announcements and updates to be posted on Brightspace and thus are encouraged to check it regularly.

Email: mellio57@uwo.ca

- Please include the course code in the subject heading (e.g. “3379 – question”).
- Always begin an email with a salutation, such as “Hello Professor Elliott,”
- Complete your email with a valediction, such as “best regards,” and your name.
- All email messages should be well-prepared, proofread, and written respectfully.
- You can expect email responses within three business days.

Grade Descriptors: Grading in this course is subject to Western’s university-wide undergraduate grading scale, found below.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
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

Simple Grade Breakdown:

- Participation and Engagement = 20%
- Midterm Examination = 20%
- 3-Stage Collaborative Learning Plan, worth 60% total (further details below)
 - Research Outline = 10%
 - Presentation = 15–35%
 - Final Essay = 15–35%

Evaluation: The components described below are each *essential* requirements for the course.

Participation and Engagement (20% of final grade):

This portion of your grade is earned on a **regular, weekly** basis. At least once per lecture, students will be provided an opportunity to participate. In most courses I’ve taught, this has

taken the format of a low-stakes, written reflection submitted by the end of class. Given the smaller class size, the specific mode of participation may shift to accommodate student engagement, preference, and convenience (e.g. in-class discussions, Brightspace forums, etc.).

In-Class Midterm Examination (20% of final grade):

The midterm examination will take place in class on **Monday, March 9, 2026**. Students will be provided 2.5 hours to complete it. The examination will cover all course material (including readings, lectures, class discussions, and videos) from the start of the course to the last class held before the midterm on Monday, March 2. Students should anticipate the midterm to be composed of multiple choice and short answer questions. Further details regarding the exam will be provided in lecture as we approach the examination date, in accordance with student feedback and class progression.

3-Stage Collaborative Learning Plan (60% of final grade total):

- 1) Research Outline (10% of final grade)
- 2) Presentation (*minimum 15%, maximum 35%* of final grade)
- 3) Final Paper (*minimum 15%, maximum 35%* of final grade)

The 3-stage collaborative learning plan is a project that requires students to complete a critical analysis or 'case study' of crime- or punishment-related popular culture. While the completion of **all three stages** is required for success, students are offered some flexibility as they may determine the weight distribution between their presentations and final papers. Students are encouraged to carefully assess themselves in terms of their busy schedules, personal strengths, and general preferences. The weight of the presentation and the final paper must add up to 50% in total, with neither component weighing less than 15% or more than 35%.

Students must formally declare their weighting scheme to the professor over email no later than **Monday, February 2, 2026**. Students who do not make a declaration by this date will automatically default to a 25% weight for each assignment.

Stage 1: Research Outline (10% of final grade):

The research outline is due by **11:59 pm on Monday, February 23, 2026**. The assignment is a brief document (no more than one double-spaced page, excluding your references page) that establishes your preliminary plans for the final project. Outlines must: name the piece of popular culture you intend to analyze and explain why; identify at least **one** course reading and at least **two** high-quality external references that will be used to support the analysis; and describe how you intend to combine these elements into a compelling, unique, and in-depth analysis. The strongest outlines will have a (working) thesis statement and clearly demonstrate to the reader why this is a viable pathway for critical analysis.

Stage 2: Presentation (up to 35% of final grade):

During the second week of lecture, students will sign up for one of four possible presentation dates (March 16, March 23, March 30, or April 6). These presentations will serve as a stepping stone between the research outline and the final paper, ensuring that work begins on your

analysis well in advance of the end of the course. Presentations should fall somewhere between 15 and 20 minutes, accomplishing each of the following objectives:

- (1) Outline the key takeaways of the reviewed literature, incorporating the lecture and/or assigned reading you selected and at least **two** high-quality external references;
- (2) Explain how this material (both assigned readings and external references) contributes to *your argument* about your selected piece of popular culture. Ask yourself: what kind of perspective did this reading bring to this form of popular culture? How might our understanding become more critical through the lens of these readings? Are there competing viewpoints that must be considered? Remember to place emphasis on the *criminological/sociological* implications of your analysis.
- (3) Draw connections between your subject, your analysis, and the real world. Are there any historical or contemporary events that we could understand better through your presentation? In other words: beyond the popular culture itself, why does your analysis matter? What would make your presentation unique, insightful, and impactful for an audience of your peers, or even an audience of those outside academia?
- (4) Generate interaction and/or engagement among your peers. In the past, this has often taken the format of critical discussion questions, but it can absolutely be accomplished through more creative means as well (e.g. Mentimeter.com, Kahoot.com, Genially.com).

Stage 3: Final Paper (up to 35% of final grade):

The final paper is due by **11:59 pm on Wednesday, April 8, 2026**. As the last stage of the collaborative learning plan, the final paper is the fullest evolution of your critical analysis. Your chosen piece of crime- or punishment-related popular culture remains the subject, though the expectation is that your thesis statement from the earlier stages is most fully established, explored, and developed for your reader. Students are encouraged to draw on their skills in research, analysis, and criticism in order to draw out relevant criminological insights through the 'example' or 'case study' of their selected piece of popular culture.

More detailed versions of the assignment instructions for the presentation and final paper will be made available on Brightspace. **Students are REQUIRED to review these documents for course-wide policies on academic integrity.**

Late Penalties:

In the absence of academic accommodations, any late assignment is subject to a 5% grade deduction for each 24-hour period that passes beyond the original deadline (ie. 12 hours late = no late penalty, 24 hours late = -5% late penalty, 48 hours late = -10% late penalty, etc.).

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.