



Sociology 4488g (570)
Selected Topics
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: L.Bikos

Email: levans8@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

Topic and course description will be available at time of registration.

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in third or fourth year of one of the Honours Specializations or Honours Double Majors in Sociology or Criminology.

Extra Information: 3 seminar 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.

**Department of Sociology
Kings University College
Special Topics 4488G, Section 570
Winter 2026**

Instructor: Prof. Lesley Bikos

Email: levans8@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Fridays 11:30-12:20pm, in person or virtually, please make an appointment if possible

Mode of Instruction: In person

Course Description Angela Y. Davis (2003) referred to the ‘prison industrial complex’ as overlapping interests of the state and industry that use surveillance, crime control, punishment, and ‘correctional’ activities, organizations, and institutions as solutions to economic, social and political problems. Decades of scholarship, social movements, and community work by those with lived/living experience provide examples and opportunities of how we do the collective work of dismantling interlocking systems of power and domination to disrupt the endless, intergenerational cycles of carceral violence. This experiential, seminar-style course takes a deep dive into the prison industrial complex – what it is, how it operates, who/how it impacts, resistance, and the work of building a healthy, thriving society focused on community-led safety and care, equity, justice, and liberation for All Our Relations.

Course Learning Outcomes By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Gain an in-depth understanding of the prison industrial complex as a carceral, colonial, white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchy, ableist, classist, capitalist project through historical, material, and cultural lenses.
2. Critically analyze the ongoing impacts for Indigenous, Black, racialized communities, women, queer communities, disabled people, street involved, unhoused and community members living in poverty through an intersectional lens.
3. Apply relevant critical sociological and criminological theories/concepts and Indigenous scholarship and ways of knowing and being to course themes, including critical race, Black feminist, queer, intersectional, disability justice, decolonial, abolitionist, transformative justice, and liberatory scholarships.
4. Learn about the opportunities for transformative change from local, national, and international examples led by those with lived/living experience of being incarcerated, who work with incarcerated peoples, social movement and community builders, and/or scholar activists.
5. Critically engage with how we collectively dismantle interlocking systems of power and domination in our everyday lives and at community, institution, and state levels, address root causes and prevention, and co-create systems of accountability and conflict management rooted in community care.
6. Engage deeply with decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-oppression (un)learning/learning through self-reflections on assumptions and socialization within colonial carceral system.

Course Materials The main text, *Abolitionist Intimacies* by El Jones (2022) is required for this course. You can order the book here <https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/abolitionist-intimacies> at a cost of \$26.00. There is a discount for students if you fill out the form in the link above. You can also access a free copy through the Western OMNI library system or the London Public Library who has an e-book option. A new or used copy is fine. This text is mandatory as we will use it throughout the semester. Please reach out to me if you have any barriers acquiring this text. Additional, free supplemental materials will be posted to our course site along with the weekly schedule.

Contact Information The best way to reach me is via email at levans8@uwo.ca. I will respond within 48 business hours.

Method of Evaluation

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| 1. Weekly seminars | 30% |
| • Participation (self-assessment chart due March 20th) | 15% |
| • Brief informal presentation | 5% |
| 2. Critical Reflection | 25% |
| • Due Feb. 27th (48 hr grace period) | |
| 3. Book Report, Oral Assignment (March 20/27) | 25% |

The university requires that a 2000 and above essay course must contain written assignments that meet at least 2500 words and must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course. Because this is an essay course, the Senate Regulations state that you must pass the essay component to pass the course. That is, the average mark for your written assignments must be at least 50%.

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT) is not permitted for work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

Attendance Requirement: This course requires consistent attendance to do well and support its learning style and outcomes. If you have barriers for this requirement, for example due to family care responsibilities or disability accommodations/access needs, please contact me. I never expect you to come to class ill and life happens, so two weeks of class participation/seminar work can be missed without penalty for any reason (you do not have to reach out to me). You get **two total** for the term. This includes missing class and/or not submitting the weekly work required before class. Meaning there **are not** four potential 'freebies.' Missing class and/or not submitting the weekly seminar materials has the same outcome - one freebie gone to support the pedagogical structure of the course. If you miss submitting the seminar material for that week, please feel welcome and encouraged to still attend class – you will still benefit from the discussions and learning. Your seminar grade and/or participation grade for the missed week will be redistributed to your final grade twice in the term, after that will be a grade of zero for that week. Frequently missed classes without prior arrangements/agreements will significantly impact your seminar and attendance grades and require a meeting to discuss your progress in the course.

Weekly Seminars: This course is a seminar-style course with a twist. Each week you will submit short answers **by 5pm the day before class** based on the weekly materials to the same questions I will provide. These can be written, audio files, video files, Zines or other forms of art that provide enough information for assessment. These responses will be the foundation of our weekly time together and be used in small group and larger group discussions, to provide clarification on points and/or answer questions, make connections to real-life cases and events, and plan activities for further learning/application to course concepts, theoretical ideas, and/or resistance movements/actions. Understanding that our best work often comes over the course of a semester, these submissions will not be individually graded but reviewed as a whole semester of contributions in deciding your final grade for this portion of the course. A progress report will be provided within the first 5 weeks to allow you time for adjustments as needed.

Participation: *Tied to your weekly seminar grade* is an additional participation grade for group and larger class discussions. Because this is a seminar-style course, *attendance with participation/engagement* is required. Our classroom is a community where we will learn together and engage with complex ideas. Being accountable and supportive of each other during weekly class seminars is part of our shared responsibility. This means attendance, completing weekly materials, and meaningful engagement during seminar discussions (both small group and larger class discussions) and activities. Frequently missed

classes will significantly impact your participation grade as will consistently not being prepared for class or being frequently distracted by technology. On March 20th you will complete a self-assessment participation chart for me to consider in marking your term contributions.

Brief Informal Presentation: You will choose one class to research and give a brief 5 minute informal chat that will focus on meaningful change. Work toward disrupting the prison industrial complex is happening all around us! This assignment will help us all learn more about the initiatives, grassroots, organizational, and creative ways people are enacting meaningful changes everywhere.

Critical Reflection: You will submit a critical reflection toward the end of term to reflect on your journey through the course. Please note: You do not have to align with everything you learn in this course, your reflections are your own and will be marked on your critical engagement and use of evidence to support, not your agreement. The process of thinking through your stance and why has value within itself. Further details will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace under the content section. A 48-hour grace period is built into the reflection due date.

Oral Assignment: In the final two weeks during regular class time (you will only attend one of the days) there will be an individual and in-person book report oral assignment. Several book titles will be provided for you to choose from and will be the basis of this assignment. Details and instructions will be posted and discussed in class. Should you have accommodations you wish to discuss or barriers to an oral assignment, please make an appointment with me. Please note that formal accommodations will be needed to miss your date/time for this assignment.

Course Outline

Weekly topics are subject to change to support the flexibility needed for the experiential learning structure of the course.

January 9th: Introduction (attendance is important):

- Going over the course
- Creating our Community Agreement

January 16th: What Do We Mean by Carceral Systems?

- The reality of ‘inside,’ dehumanization and state-sanctioned violence
- The barriers to advocacy and justice for those inside and their loved ones
- **Guest Speaker (class on Zoom)**

January 23rd: Prisons and Punishment as Social Control

- Prisons as a colonial, white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchy, ableist, classist, capitalist project

January 30th: Prisons and Punishment as Social Control Continued

- The modern manifestation of the institution of slavery, colonization, asylums and eugenics, poverty houses, carceral redlining, environmental destruction, racial capitalism and more.

February 6th: The Players: Overview of the Prison Industrial Complex

- Government/State/Politics, Media, Nonprofits, Social Services, Universities, Police, Courts, Industry

February 13th: The Game: The Prison Industrial Complex

- Surveillance, Punishment, Profit, Control, Oppression, Power

February 20th: Reading Week

February 27th: Transformative Change: Short and Medium-term Goals/Actions

- Mitigating harms in the short/medium term for those incarcerated
- Interventions for the reduction of rates of incarceration
- Indigenizing prisons/state run restorative justice
- Policy interventions e.g., decriminalization, Gladue
- Divest, Defund, Reallocate police and prisons

March 6th: Resistance and Liberatory Movements for a Prison Free Future

- Abolitionist Movement, Abolitionist Feminism
- Indigenous Justice, Self-determination, Land Back
- Disability Justice
- Transformative Justice
- **Guest speaker**

March 13th: Creating Healthy and Vibrant Communities: Collective Care

- Healing those who harm, are harmed, communities harmed
- Healing from, and challenging ourselves, to dismantle colonial carceral socialization “the cop/prison within”
- Community and movement building, joy and hope, mutual aid
- Addressing root causes and prevention, co-creating systems of accountability and conflict management rooted in community care
- Investments in people, communities, the natural world
- Interconnection, reciprocity, and co-liberation

March 20th: Oral Assignment (in person during class time)

- **Participation self-assessment due**

March 27th: Oral Assignment (in person during class time)

April 3rd: No class, College Closed

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.