



Sociology 3329f (570)
Special Topics
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: T. Bruno
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

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

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 from Sociology courses at the 1000 level.

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.

Soc3329F/CYS3392A (570):
SPECIAL TOPICS: RISK, REBELLION, & YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE
IN-PERSON FALL 2026

Instructor:
Tara Bruno
tara.bruno@uwo.ca

Office hours may also be held via zoom or in person. If you would like to arrange a meeting, please email the instructor.

Course Overview:

This course explores young people's substance use through sociological frameworks of **risk, rebellion, and social responsibility**. It examines the causes, meanings, and consequences of substance use, while considering how families, schools, communities, policymakers, and other institutions respond through prevention, intervention, regulation, and harm reduction. Treating youth substance use as a socially embedded phenomenon, the course examines how social inequalities, cultural norms, peer relationships, institutional practices, and processes of social control shape young people's experiences and understandings of substance use. Students will critically evaluate competing approaches to prevention, intervention, harm reduction, while also engaging with broader debates concerning risk, responsibility, regulation, inequality, and youth well-being.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Explain key sociological concepts and perspectives used to understand youth substance use, including socialization, normalization, vulnerability, risk, agency, deviance, rebellion, identity, social control, and social responsibility.
- Describe and interpret patterns of youth substance use using contemporary Canadian research and sociological evidence.
- Analyze how social location, social class, gender, race, Indigeneity, geography, and other forms of inequality shape young people's experiences of substance use and risk.
- Apply sociological theories of risk, agency, deviance, and rebellion to real-world examples of youth substance use.
- Analyze how families, schools, peers, popular culture, and other social institutions influence young people's understandings and practices surrounding substance use.
- Critically evaluate how substance use is defined, represented, regulated, and responded to, including the role of stigma, moral panic, and social control.
- Assess the assumptions, evidence, strengths, limitations, and potential unintended consequences of different prevention, intervention, and harm-reduction approaches.
- Locate, interpret, and use empirical evidence to develop informed arguments about youth substance use.
- Communicate sociological ideas effectively to academic and non-academic audiences, using appropriate evidence and concepts.
- Reflect critically on competing understandings of responsibility for youth substance use and consider the implications of different approaches for young people's well-being and autonomy.

Required Readings:

All assigned readings will be accessed from the course OWL Brightspace.

OWL Brightspace and Pulse App:

All course materials will be available through [OWL Brightspace](#). You will need to use your WesternID and password to access the system and our course. Be sure to check for messages and updates regularly on OWL Brightspace AND through your email notifications. I will post grades, class messages, slides, and all additional course materials on OWL Brightspace. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the new format on OWL Brightspace. If there is anything missing or things are unclear, please let me know. We will work on making this a good experience together. I encourage you to download the Pulse app for Brightspace to keep up to date on all messages and course related activities.

Course Evaluation Components:

In-class Participation (ongoing):	20%
Small In-Class Group Discussions (4 worth 2.5%each):	10%
Risk Assignment:	20%
Rebellion Assignment:	20%
Final Evidence Brief:	30%

Participation (ongoing):

Part of the learning expectations for this course are to attend class regularly and actively engage in class activities and discussions. Your attendance and participation in class will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Group Discussions:

There will be four **small in-class group discussions** held throughout the course. Each discussion will be based on the course assignments (1 for the risk assignment, 1 for the rebellion assignment, and 2 for the final evidence brief). Students will use these group discussions to share their ideas with others and provide written (250 words MAX) and verbal feedback to their peers about their ideas.

Risk Detective Assignment:

Students will be given a real-world claim and then challenged to find the evidence to support that claim, find any missing evidence, consider who is most impacted by the claim and why, and provide a brief sociological interpretation of the claim. At the end, students will determine if the claim is supported, partially supported, misleading or unsupported. This assignment will require at least 2 course concepts with supporting evidence. This assignment should not exceed 500 words. Further details will be provided on OWL Brightspace.

Is it Really Rebellion? Assignment:

Students will engage with a fictional scenario of youth substance use and then write three short perspectives on the issue presented in the scenario. Students will then provide a sociological analysis of what makes something rebellious. Is it the behaviour or how society interprets and responds to it? This assignment will require at least 3 course concepts with supporting evidence. This assignment should not exceed 500 words. Further details will be provided on OWL Brightspace.

Final Evidence-Brief and Reflection:

In lieu of a final exam, students will work throughout the final part of the course to develop and refine an evidence-brief for parents, educators, and/or community service providers. Using the principles of harm reduction, evidence-informed research, and insights from a local survey with youth, students will create a 2-4 page evidence-brief. Additionally, students will write a brief reflection on why they chose their particular topic/issue. All evidence-briefs must use a clear sociological foundation or theory to ground the work and include at least 6 timely and relevant scholarly sources using either ASA or APA formatting. Additional details and expectations will be posted on OWL Brightspace.

Grading Scale for Assessments (Western's university-wide expectations):

A+	90 percent or higher	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80 and 89.99 percent	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70 and 79.99 percent	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60 and 69.99 percent	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50 and 59.99 percent	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	49.99 percent or lower	Fail

Communication:

My primary objective is to make this course an enjoyable learning experience, where students feel comfortable learning and growing as sociologists. It is important that students understand that I am here to help you with whatever difficulties you may have or foresee happening. Email is usually the best way to get in touch with me. While I will try my best to respond to emailed questions and concerns within 24-48 hours, there are some circumstances where this cannot always be fulfilled (especially over the weekends). If for some reason you are having difficulty with the course material, the instructor, or any other problem for that matter, do not hesitate to address these concerns. There are many resources to help support you at King's and beyond.

Course Policy on AI Use and Turnitin:

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools including but not limited to ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools, are not permitted for work that is submitted for evaluation. There may be instances during in-class activities where these tools are used to demonstrate a lesson or explore ideas. However, if AI tools are used at any point, students must acknowledge use and state how the tool was used. Any unauthorized and undeclared use of AI in course work will be subject to academic discipline. 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between UWO and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Late Policy/Extensions/Academic Considerations:

If for some reason you are unable to meet any of the course requirements including attendance, participation, discussions or the assignments, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor prior to the deadline. In the case of any unforeseen circumstances, you will need to submit your request through the extranet within 48 hours of the missed assessment deadline. Students are permitted to have one self-reported absence without requiring formal documentation. The final evidence-brief assignment is exempt from this—

formal documentation will be required if the final deadline is missed. It will be up to the discretion of instructor and/or the Academic Dean's Office to determine if there are legitimate grounds for compassionate consideration or accommodations. You must be in-class to receive credit for in-person attendance and participation activities. Re-weighting of grades for missed coursework will only be considered on a case-by-case basis. A late penalty of 10% per day will be in effect for the assignments and final evidence-brief once the submission window has closed. Since the submission deadlines for all assessments already include flexibility (except the in-class activities and discussions), the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments or course components submitted past the deadlines.

Course Outline for Fall 2026:

Dates, Topics, Required Readings, Scheduled Due Dates

*****PART 1: Understanding Youth Substance Use*****

September 9: Moving Beyond the Individual

- *Tasks/Due:* Introduction and Administrative Business; Explore Brightspace layout
- *Readings:* Course Outline

September 16: Youth, Culture, Socialization, and Normalization

- *Tasks/Due:* In-Class Discussion for Risk Assignment; written feedback to peers due end of class;
- *Readings:*
 - Becker, H. S. (1953). Becoming a Marihuana User. *American Journal of Sociology*, 59(3), 235-242.
 - Brain, K., Parker, H., & Carnwath, T. (2000). Drinking with Design: Young drinkers as psychoactive consumers. *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy*, 7(1), 5-20.

*****PART 2: Vulnerabilities and Risks*****

September 23: Inequality, Social Location, and Substance Use

- *Tasks/Due:* Work on Risk Assignment; Consider peer feedback and refine your focus;
- *Readings:*
 - Raphael, D., Bryant, T., Mikkonen, J. and Raphael, A. (2020). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Oshawa: Ontario Tech University Faculty of Health Sciences and Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management.
 - Health Canada. (2025). Alcohol and Drug Use among Students in Canada, 2023-24. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada.

September 30: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

- *Tasks/Due:* Work on Risk Assignment
- *Readings:* NO CLASS and NO READINGS

October 7: Risk, Responsibility, and Moral Panic?

- *Tasks/Due:* Risk Assignment DUE October 9th by 11:59PM on OWL Brightspace
- *Readings:*
 - Michaud, L., Kolla, G., Rudzinski, K., & Guta, A. (2024). Mapping a moral panic: News media narratives and medical expertise in public debates on safer supply, diversion, and youth drug use in Canada. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 127, 104423.
 - Goodyear, T. et al. (2025). Taking stock of youth substance use portrayals: A critical content analysis of Canadian news media, 2016–2024. *Social Science & Medicine*, 379, 118188.

October 12-16: Reading Week

- *Tasks/Due:* Catch-up and start to think about Rebellion Assignment
- *Readings:* NO CLASS and NO READINGS

*****PART 3: Agency, Identity, and Rebellion*****

October 21: Youth Agency, Deviance, and Rebellion

- *Tasks/Due:* In-Class Discussion for Rebellion Assignment; written feedback to peers due end of class;
- *Reading:* Burmeister, J. R., & Jung, J. K. (2025). High Risk, Low Key: The New Face of Drug Use. *Substance Use: Research and Treatment*, 19.

October 28: Drugs, Identity, and Subcultures

- *Tasks/Due:* Work on Rebellion Assignment; Consider peer feedback and refine your focus;
- *Reading:* Kelly, B. C., Trimarco, J., Leclair, A., Pawson, M., Parsons, J. T., & Golub, S. A. (2015). Symbolic boundaries, subcultural capital and prescription drug misuse across youth cultures. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 37(3), 325-339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12193>

November 4: Regulation and Social Control of Use

- *Tasks/Due:* Work on Rebellion Assignment
- *Readings:*
 - Longshore, D., Chang, E., Hsieh, S.-C., & Messina, N. (2004). Self-Control and Social Bonds: A Combined Control Perspective on Deviance. *Crime & Delinquency*, 50(4), 542-564.
 - Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2017). The impact and effectiveness of minimum legal drinking age legislation in Canada. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.
 - Ministry of Education. (2022). Ontario's code of conduct for the education sector. Government of Ontario. Toronto, ON.

*****PART 4: Social Influences*****

November 11: Families and Substance Use

- *Tasks/Due:* Rebellion Assignment DUE November 13th at 11:59PM on OWL Brightspace;
- *Reading:* Woodward, T. C., Smith, M. L., Mann, M. J., Kristjansson, A., & Morehouse, H. (2023). Risk & protective factors for youth substance use across family, peers, school, & leisure domains. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 151, 107027.

November 18: Schools and Substance Use

- *Tasks/Due:* In-Class Discussion for Final Evidence-Brief; written feedback to peers due end of class;
- *Readings:*
 - Public Health Agency of Canada. (2021). Blueprint for Action: Preventing substance-related harms among youth through a Comprehensive School Approach. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Health
 - Anchoring Change. (2026). School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention: A Multi-Tiered and Developmental Approach for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools in Canada. Vancouver: Anchoring Change.

November 25: Popular Culture and Substance Use

- *Tasks/Due:* Consider peer feedback and refine your focus;
- *Readings:*
 - Barbieri, S. et al. (2018). A Social Media-Based Acute Alcohol Consumption Behavior (NekNomination): Case Series in Italian Emergency Departments. *Interactive Journal of Medical Research*, 7(1), e2.
 - Hurren, K. (2014, February 11). Why Canadian students are accepting 'neknominations': Dangerous drinking game allows students to stand out. Maclean's, SJC Media. Toronto, ON.

*****PART 5: Prevention, Intervention, and Social Responsibility*****

December 2: Prevention, Intervention, and Harm Reduction Approaches

- *Tasks/Due:* In-Class Discussion for Final Evidence-Brief; written feedback to peers due end of class;
- *Readings:*
 - Halsall, T., Lachance, L., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2020). Examining the implementation of the Icelandic model for primary prevention of substance use in a rural Canadian community: A study protocol. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 1235.
 - Stockings, E., Hall, W., Lynskey, M., Morley, K. I., Reavley, N., Strang, J., Patton, G., & Degenhardt, L. (2016). Prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, and treatment of substance use in young people. 280-296.
 - Kourgiantakis, T., Hamilton, A., Tait, C., Tekirdag Kosar, A. K., Lau, C. K. Y., McNeil, S., Lee, E., Craig, S., & Goldstein, A. L. (2024). Reducing the harms of cannabis use in youth post-legalization: Insights from Ontario youth, parents, and service providers. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 21(1), 193-21.

December 9: Social Responsibility & Social Policy

- *Tasks/Due:* Final Evidence-Brief DUE (no later than Dec 9)
- *Reading:* Halsall, T., Mahmoud, K., Pouliot, A., & Iyer, S. N. (2022). Building engagement to support adoption of community-based substance use prevention initiatives. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 2213.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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 at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see

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

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.