



Sociology 3344f (570)
Digital Sociology
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

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
Sociology 3344F 270
Digital Sociology Fall 2026

Course Information:

Digital Sociology 3344F 670

Dr. Christine Lavrence clavrenc@uwo.ca

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:

1. Critically assess the sociological research on digital media.
2. Critically assess, interpret and compare a range of theories on, well as the sociological i implications of, social media
2. Employ these frameworks to think through digital media structures and practices, as well as the key social and policy issues and questions they are linked with
3. Consider issues related to conducting sociological research on digital media platforms

Mode of Instruction: In-person instruction

Course Requirements:

Antirequisite(s):

The former Sociology 3373F/G.

Prerequisite(s):

Third or fourth year standing in a Sociology or Criminology module.

Course textbook/readings:

Available online through Brightspace course site, at no extra cost.

Method of Evaluation:

- 1) Attendance and Participation: 10%
- 2) McLuhan assignment: 25% - Analysis of a media event through the lens of McLuhan.
- 3) 2 in-class critical reflections – 2 x 10% = 20% - In-class written exercises focusing on class discussions and course readings. You can either write 3 and have the top 2 marks count or just write 2.
- 4) Debate: 15% - Group debates
- 5) Final Written Assignment: 30%

Students will have a 48-hour window after deadlines to hand in assignment before it is considered late.

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

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

Sept 11: Introduction

Sept 18: Theorizing Media:

McLuhan, M. "The Medium is the Message"

Sept 25: 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>

In class reflection

October 2: Digital Convergence

Dean, J. "Communicative Capitalism"

Optional readings:

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

boyd, d "Social media is Now Parasocial media"

October 9: Digital Polarization

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

Optional readings

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

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

In-class reflection

October 16: Reading Break

October 23: AI

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

MacDonald, C. “AI is ruining my Education”

October 30: In class debate # 1 on AI

Nelson, A. “Structured Absence”

November 6: Adolescence, Digital cultures and mental health

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

Optional Readings:

Spectacles of self(ie) empowerment: Networked individualism and the logic of the (post) feminist selfie

Zillich, A. and Riesmeyer C. “Be Yourself: The Relative Importance of Personal and Social Norms for Adolescents’ Self-Presentation on Instagram”

In-class reflection

November 13: In-class debate # 2 on Banning Social Media to youth under 16

Wu, SL. (2026). Implications of Australia’s social media ban

November 20: TikTok

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

Optional readings:

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”

November 27: Theorizing the visual and the Photograph

Sontag, S. "On Photography" excerpts

Cunningham, N. "Face Value: An Essay on the Politics of Photograph"

December 4: Wrap Up

**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.