



Sociology 3346f (570)
Sociology of Mental Health
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: J. Comeau
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course offers an overview of the ways a sociological perspective informs our understanding of mental health. It explores various definitions, theories, and forms of mental illness, our responses to mental illness, and how social factors affect mental disorder.

Antirequisite(s): [Sociology 3385F/G](#), if taken at Brescia in 2014-15.

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing in a module in Criminology, Criminal Justice or Sociology.

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.

Professor Jinette Comeau
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Introduction

This seminar-based course will provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches used in the Sociology of Mental Health, with a focus on the social antecedents and consequences of some of the most common mental disorders experienced in the general population. We will examine social inequalities in exposure to stress and access to coping resources to offset the effects of stress. A special emphasis will be placed on understanding how Sociological research related to mental health can help improve the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Learning Outcomes

As we work through the course material, students will be able to:

- Understand, evaluate, critique, and apply the key theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the Sociology of Mental Health
- Identify, explain, and engage with the key themes and debates in the Sociology of Mental Health
- Identify and explain the social antecedents and consequences of common mental disorders
- Understand, explain, and critically analyze the organization of mental health care and services in Canada and the United States
- Develop and apply critical writing and oral communication skills related to the Sociology of Mental Health

Course Readings

A selection of readings associated with the key themes in this course will be made available on OWL Brightspace.

Recommended: *Sociology of Mental Health: Theories, Social Contexts, and Systems (Fourth Edition)* edited by Teresa L. Scheid and Eric R. Wright, Cambridge University Press. More details about the cost and how to purchase a print or digital copy of the textbook is available here:

https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=KC&term=W2026A&courses%5B0%5D=570_KC/SOC3346F

OWL Brightspace

All course content will be available through OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>

Login using your UWO username and password. Check Brightspace regularly for information on the course schedule, materials such as lecture slides and readings, announcements, grades, and the full evaluation details. You will also be required to submit all assignments and evaluations to Brightspace.

Method of Evaluation

1. Participation (15%)

A seminar-based course such as this requires active participation on the part of all students. To that end, each class will involve discussion periods where students will have the opportunity to ask questions, critically evaluate the course readings for that week, and complete in-class activities. Attendance is required. Discussions are meant to encourage you to think critically about the course material – there is no single right or wrong answer. Accordingly, in-class activities will be evaluated as pass/fail based on effort. Students are permitted to miss two discussion periods per term without penalty.

2. Midterm Exam (25%)

The midterm exam will be administered in class on October 19 and will cover all material reviewed up to that point. Academic consideration to write a make-up for missed mid-term exams will require formal supporting documentation from the Academic Advising Office.

3. Creative Project (25%)

Students will work individually or in small groups (2-3 members) to critically analyze a piece of popular media or culture while applying theories and concepts from the Sociology of Mental Health. Students will have the opportunity to present the results from their critical analysis in whatever format they choose (e.g. poster, video, podcast, audio documentary, photo exhibit or scrapbook, or any other creative medium) and will deliver an oral presentation of their work to the class. Submission of this work can occur anytime between October 26 and December 7, determined at the beginning of the term.

4. Final Exam (35%)

The final exam for this course will be held during the December exam period (Dec 11-22). The university registrar will determine the date and time. It will cover ALL material seen in this course, with an emphasis on material after the mid-term exam. Academic consideration to write a make-up for missed final exams will require formal supporting documentation from the Academic Advising Office.

Artificial Intelligence & Plagiarism

All work submitted for this course must be completed independently by the student without any aids. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including personal chatbots and other generative tools, for this course is NOT permitted under any circumstance. Please see the course policies below for further information

Course Outline and Readings (subject to minor variations)

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 September 14	Introduction Theoretical and conceptual perspectives in the Sociology of Mental Health	Pearlin, 1989 Pearlin, Avison, & Fazio, 2008
Week 2 September 21	Theoretical and conceptual perspectives continued	George, 2013 Waddell, 2005 Phelan, Link, & Tehranifar, 2010

Week 3 September 28	The social construction of mental health and perspectives on medicalization	Bruce & Raue, 2013 Horwitz, 2011
Week 4 October 5	Stigma and mental health	Link & Phelan, 2013 Recommended: Chapters 5 & 6
October 12 – 16	Reading week	
Week 5 October 19	Midterm Exam	
Week 6 October 26	Gender, sexuality, and mental health	Rosenfield & Mouzon, 2013 Hart, 2019 Recommended: Chapters 10 & 12
Week 7 November 2	Socioeconomic status and mental health	Mutaner et al., 2013 Raphael et al., 2019 Seabrook & Avison, 2012 Recommended: Chapter 4
Week 8 November 9	Digital technologies, social media, and mental health	Twenge, 2017 Odgers, 2018 Wolfers & Utz, 2022
Week 9 November 16	Climate change and mental health	Manning & Clayton, 2018
Week 10 November 23	Organization of mental health care	Scheid & Greenber, 2008
Week 11 November 30	Mental health and the criminal justice system	Hiday & Ray, 2025 (from course textbook) Schnittker et al., 2012
Week 12 December 7	Agency and recovery	Yanos, Knight, & Roe, 2008

**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.