



Sociology 3382f (570)
Capitalism in our Time
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: A. Datta

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course will examine how the fragmentary and flexible capitalism of our time is producing new forms of social inequalities, emotional traumas, commodified cultural practices and forcing individuals to engage in endless self-enhancement to cope with an unstable and hyper-competitive social world.

Antirequisite(s): [Sociology 3327F/G](#) if taken in 2015-16 or 2016-17.

Prerequisite(s): 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.

SOCIOLOGY 3382: CAPITALISM IN OUR TIME

As materialism promises satisfaction but, instead, yields hollow dissatisfaction, it creates more cravings. This massive and self-perpetuating addictive spiral is one of the mechanisms by which consumer society preserves itself by exploiting the very insecurities it generates. – **Gabor Maté**

Culture plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, images, and desiring maps that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think about themselves and their relationship to others. From this perspective, culture is the primary sphere in which individuals, groups, and institutions engage in the art of translating the diverse and multiple relations that mediate between private life and public concerns – **Henry Giroux**

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

I. Course Overview

It is a paradox of our time that capitalist democratic societies generate massive prosperity as well as deep inequality and injustice. The course is designed to unpack this paradox. In addition, it will examine how the capitalist social order in North America has significantly transformed our living conditions and social relations. The course will focus on the historical emergence and contemporary status of capitalism as a mode of governance of the individual, institutions, society, humanity, and the natural world.

The course shall provide you with sociological analyses, historical contexts, conceptual tools, theoretical perspectives, and empirical studies that will enable you to engage in systematic and critical thinking about capitalism in our time.

II. Course Evaluation

Presentation: 25%

Reflection Paper: 25%

Final Essay: 35%

Participation: 15%

Presentation: The presentation must draw on and generate class discussions on the weekly readings. You must also present *at least three questions* for the class to discuss. Other requirements and recommendations will be provided in class on **September 9**.

Reflection Paper: The reflection paper must be 3-4 pages (900 - 1200 words), double-spaced, and examine and analyze *at least one required reading* from the weeks of September 16, September 23 or October 7. Other requirements and recommendations will be provided in class. **Due: October 15 (Upload to Brightspace)**

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Final Essay: The essay must be 7-8 pages (2100-2400 words) double-spaced. The requirements and recommendations will be provided in class. **Due: December 9 (Upload to Brightspace)**

A Note on Sources: Students should rely primarily on published academic sources (monographs and academic journal articles) in completing assignments.

Participation: Participation will be evaluated broadly to include class attendance, speaking, active listening, asking thoughtful and relevant questions and expressing ideas in class. Your comments and questions should be based on insights from the assigned readings. Ideally, you should have done the week's readings before coming to class to get the most out of lectures and seminar discussions. Thus, planning ahead is essential to keeping up with the course readings.

III. Required Readings

The required and additional learning materials are available on the KUC Library's online course reserve platform. At no extra cost.

IV. Reading Breakdown *(The schedule may change if circumstances require it)*

Week 1 (September 9): Introduction

Overview. Lecture & Presentation Dates.

Week 2 (September 16): Is the Capitalist Culture Toxic?

CARL CEDERSTRÖM & ANDRE SPICER – The Perfect Human

Additional Learning Activity: GABOR MATE – *The Myth of Normal* ("Our culture is killing us")

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OunLuFaB6BE>

Week 3 (September 23): Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Capitalism and Late Capitalism

C.B. MACPHERSON – Democratic Theory: Ontology & Technology (Sections: 1, 2 & 3)

TOBY CARROLL - Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Late Capitalism: Capital, Ideology, and Making the World Market (2022)

Additional Learning Activity: SIMON CLARKE – The Neoliberal Theory of Society (2005)

September 30 – No Class (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)

Week 4 (October 7): Personal Character and Social Reproduction under Late Capitalism

RICHARD SENNETT - Drift: How Personal Character is attacked by the New Capitalism

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NANCY FRASER – Care Guzzler: Why Social Reproduction Is a Major Site of Capitalist Crisis

October 14 – No Class (Fall Reading Week)

***Due - Reflection Paper (October 15)**

Week 5 (October 21): The Social Pathologies of Precarization and Privatization

JANINA HIRTH & MARKUS RHEIN - Algorithmic Assembly Lines (2021)

PAUL GLAVIN & SCOTT SCHIEMAN - Dependency and Hardship in the Gig Economy: The Mental Health Consequences of Platform Work (2022)

Additional Learning Activity: JEFFREY WINTERS (From *The Blind Spot*) - How oligarchs dominate our democracy (2026) <https://www.pbs.org/video/how-oligarchs-dominate-american-democracy-and-always-have-qfxhfs/>

and

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2026/05/14/how-oligarchs-dominate-our-democracies-and-preserve-inequality/>

Week 6 (October 28): Financialization of Everyday Life

RAE DUFTY JONES – Housing and Home: Objects and Technologies of Neoliberal Governmentalities

IVIS GARCIA - The Two-Income Debt Trap: Personal Responsibility and the Financialization of Everyday Life

Additional Learning Activity: ALEX LOFTUS & JESSICA BUDDS – Neoliberalizing Water

Week 7 (November 4): Commodification of the Self and Emotions

ILANA GERSHON – You Are Just like Coca-Cola: Selling Your Self through Personal Branding

ILANA GERSHON – The Breakup 2.1: The ten-year update

Week 8 (November 11): Market Mechanisms in Higher Education

MICHAEL PETERS & PETAR JANDRIC – Neoliberalism and the University

CRIS SHORE - Management Consultants and University Futures: Academic capitalism and the capture of UK public higher education (2026)

Week 9 (November 18): Ecology and Health under Capitalism

RAJ PATEL & JASON MOORE – Cheap Nature (2017)

MOGHA KAMAL-YANNI - Why we need to break Big Pharma's Power before the next Pandemic hits (2023)

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Additional Learning Activity: CAITLIN MANNING & JOE BENDER - *Defending Land, Ocean and Air* (2018)

Week 10 (November 25): The Neoliberal Subject and its transformation

JIM MCGUIGAN – The Neoliberal Self

ROBERT DORSCHER - A new middle-class fraction with a distinct subjectivity: Tech workers and the transformation of the entrepreneurial self (2022)

Week 11 (December 2): Consultology Kills Democracy

MARIANA MAZZUCATO & ROSIE COLLINGTON – Chapters 5 and 8 from *The Big Con* (2023)

Additional Learning Activity: IAN TYRRELL - The unfulfilled American dream stalks Mike Davis's dystopian Los Angeles in his masterful *City of Quartz* (2022) <https://doi.org/10.64628/AA.gs5hn7jcv>

Week 12 (December 9): Resistance and Transformation

OWEN WORTH – Resistance to Neoliberalism before and since the Global Financial Crisis

Additional Learning Activity: MICHAEL JACOBS & MARIANA MAZZUCATO – From *Rethinking Capitalism* <https://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player/rethinking-capitalism>

***Due - Final Essay (December 9)**

**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.