



Sociology 4440f (570)
Social Worlds of Drugs and Addiction
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: A. Ning
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

Explores debates surrounding mind-altering substances. Morality, rights, and responsibilities regarding drug use are examined within broader historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts. Drawing upon ethnographies, films and policy documents, we consider how meanings of psychoactive drugs and addiction for diverse groups of people vary over time and across space.

Antirequisite(s): [Social Work 4430A/B](#).

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 from Sociology courses at the 1000 level, and 3rd or 4th year standing in an Honours Specialization or Honours Double Major offered 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.

Course Learning Outcomes

This course introduces and/or reinforces key sociological skills, namely, the ability to:

1. Demonstrate a holistic understanding of the interrelationships between societal, addiction, health and drug policy issues.
2. Situate past and present health and social issues both at local and global levels.
3. Identify, contrast and compare interdisciplinary health perspectives, recognizing the provisional status of knowledge.
4. Distinguish and build connections between different schools of thought.
5. Employ a diversity lens to addiction, health, social issues and drug policies.
6. Demonstrate analytical and critical thinking skills.
7. Advocate for cultural diversity and different forms of knowledge beyond Western systems of thought and practices.
8. Identify and explain the role of power and social inequities in shaping people's health, sickness and healing.
9. Design and develop persuasive arguments.
10. Write using academic language and argumentation.
11. Demonstrate self-awareness and appropriate interpersonal skills.
12. Demonstrate capacity to work independently and collaboratively in groups.
13. Link theory to practice, applying sociological skills and knowledge to real life situations.
14. Engage in problem-based and inquiry-based learning to propose meaningful changes/solutions to pressing issues within diverse communities.

SYLLABUS – LECTURE SCHEDULE

Sept. 9	Introduction Read: Course Outline
Sept. 16	Sociological Perspectives on Drugs, Drug Use and Addiction Read: Goode (2012): Drug Use: A Sociological Perspective <i>In</i> E. Goode <i>Drugs in American Society</i> , Eight Edition, Chapter 1: pp. 3-27 Lott-Schwartz (2019): 5 of the World's Most Mind-Bending Drug Cultures <i>In</i> <i>National Geographic</i> , January 25, 2019
Sept. 23	Drugs in Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspectives Read: Page (2003): Drug Use <i>In</i> C. Ember and M. Ember (eds.) <i>Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures</i> , pp. 374-382 Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (n.d.): History of Drug Policy in Canada. https://drugpolicy.ca/resources/guides/history/ Placek et al. (2025): Reconstructing Cross-Cultural Meanings of Addiction Among Women from Three Countries <i>In</i> <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , 22, 1064. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22071064 Film: <i>Hooked: Illegal Drugs and How They Got That Way, Part I</i>
Sept. 30	NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION – NO CLASS

Oct. 7 In-Class Short Critical Reflection

Oct. 14 FALL READING WEEK – NO CLASS

Oct. 21 Cognitive, Image and Performance Enhancers

Read: **London-Nadeau, Chan & Wood** (2019): Building Conceptions of Cognitive Enhancement: University Students' Views on the Effects of Pharmacological Cognitive Enhancers *In Substance Use & Misuse*, Vol. 54, No. 6, 908–920 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2018.1552297>

Oxborough & Place (2026): From bodybuilding to the local gym: how performance-enhancing drugs can damage the heart. *In The Conversation*, February 6, 2026.

Dowling, Thurston and Byun (2026): The Enhanced Games: 'dangerous clown show' or a wake-up call for traditional sport? *In The Conversation*, May 22, 2026.

Video: [*Men, muscles, and the pursuit of the 'perfect body'*](#)

Oct. 28 Pharmaceuticalization of Society: Social Problems as Medical Problems?

Read: **Busfield** (2015): Assessing the Overuse of Medicines *In Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 131, pp. 199-206

Dertadian (2023): Is non-medical use normal? Normalisation, medicalisation and pharmaceutical consumption. *In International Journal of Drug Policy* Vol 119, 104123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2023.104123>

Shanouda & Orsini (2023): Ozempic, the 'miracle drug,' and the harmful idea of a future without fat. *In The Conversation*, August 20, 2023.

Muhammad & Cheema (2025): Letter to the Editor: From prescription to trend: the misuse of Ozempic in the age of social media. *In Annals of Medicine and Surgery*, 87(10): 6876–6877. doi: [10.1097/MS9.0000000000003801](https://doi.org/10.1097/MS9.0000000000003801)

Video: [*The Ozempic Effect*](#)

Nov. 4 Legalized Recreational Marijuana in Canada: Prospects and Challenges

Read: **Haines-Saah et al.** (2025): Reconceptualizing cannabis use risks in the context of health and social inequities: Insights from a qualitative study with young people in Canada. *In International Journal of Drug Policy* 138 (2025) 104474. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104474>

Seabrook, Seabrook and Gilliland (2025): Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome in Youth: Clinical Insights and Public Health Implications. *In International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22(4): 633. doi: [10.3390/ijerph22040633](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22040633)

Bergamini (2026): Commentary: Legalization's blind spot: youth exposure to stronger cannabis. *In Policy Options*, May 4, 2026.

NB: Research Project Outline Due

Nov. 11 Harm Reduction and/or Drug-Abstinence Interventions

Read: **Zolopa et al.** (2025): A scoping review of harm reduction practices and possibilities among indigenous populations in Australia, Canada, and the United

States. In *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Vol. 269, 112597

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2025.112597>

Adam et al. (2026): Dismantling harm reduction funding in Ontario: Safe consumption sites and the organized abandonment of people who use drugs. In *Critical Sociology*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205261463743>

Lim (2026): Ontario to end funding for 7 supervised drug consumption sites, province confirms. In *CBC News*, March 16, 2026

Kolla & Gomes (2026): What the Evidence Says about Defunding Ontario's Remaining Supervised Consumption Sites. In *Evidence Brief* March 20, 2026

Video: [*Is Ontario Moving Forward or Backward on Addiction Care? The Rundown.*](#)

Nov. 18 **In-Class Midterm Exam**

Nov. 25 **Toxic Drug Supply and the Opioid Overdose Death Crisis: Pros & Cons of (De)Criminalization of Drugs**

Read: **Ning & Csiernik** (2022): Why has the Opioid Crisis Remain Unchanged? The Limits of Bio-Scientific Based Policies. In *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, Volume 24 (1) <https://doi.org/10.1080/1533256X.2022.2071822>

Fischer et al. (2026): Outcomes and implications of British Columbia's 'drug decriminalization initiative' for health-oriented drug policymaking. In *International Journal of Drug Policy* 150 (2026) 105181

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2026.105181>

Peters (2026): B.C. won't extend its drug decriminalization project, health minister announces. In *CBC News*, January 14, 2026

MacDiarmid (2026): Opioid deaths dropped 23% in 2025 — bringing 'cautious optimism' from Canada's top doctor. In *CBC News*, June 15, 2026

Video: [*End of drug decriminalization project 'a real disappointment,' says former B.C. chief coroner.*](#)

Dec. 2 **Prevention and Treatment of Drug Misuse**

Read: **Fornssler et al.** (2026): Substance use stabilization model: A proposed framework for addressing substance use concerns in Canada. In *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-026-01168-z>

Olubanwo (2026): Addiction Medicine Beyond Biomedical Recognition: Structural Determinants, Indigenous Governance, and the Epidemiologic Imperative for System Transformation in Northern Saskatchewan In *Public Health*, 20 (2702) Vol 1.

Magnuson (2026): Commentary: When ideology replaces evidence in the drug poisoning crisis. In *Policy Options*, January 27, 2026

Video: [*Montreal program tackles roots of substance use*](#)

Dec. 9 **Show & Tell of Research Projects and Discussion**

Dec. 11 **Final Research Project due by 11:59 pm in BRIGHTSPACE's Assignments tool**

N.B. Course syllabus is subject to changes at the instructor's discretion.

**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.