

Western University
SOC9258: INEQUALITY OVER THE LIFE COURSE

Fall 2022

Dr. Kim Shuey

Wednesdays 1:30 until 4:30 **VIRTUAL class meetings**
See OWL 'Zoom' tab for Zoom meeting links.

Office hours: by appointment or after class via Zoom

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Course Description

This class is designed to introduce you to a Life Course Perspective as a lens for viewing and understanding social inequality. A Life Course Perspective focuses on the intersection of individual lives, social structure and inequality, and social change. It emphasizes inequalities in experiences across individual lives and the way those patterns are shaped by broader social inequalities, history and change. This approach can be combined with other theoretical frames and applied to a wide range of substantive questions related to health, work, family, education, migration, political attitudes, and criminal careers and course readings provide some examples of these applications. A main goal of this course is to apply aspects to your own substantive interests to gain greater understanding of social inequality.

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Synthesize and critically evaluate theoretical arguments, current research and scholarship relating to life course sociology
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly discussion and debate

Course Organization

Details regarding the logistics of virtual class meetings will be discussed on the first day of class. See OWL for necessary details for each week and Zoom links to class meetings.

Methods of Evaluation

Schedule of assignments

Weekly	Participation, discussion, article selection, reflections
November 16	Paper idea due
December 14	Term paper due

Evaluation breakdown

Participation in class discussion	20%
Leading seminar discussions	20%
Reflections (4 submissions)	20%
Final paper	40%

Participation

Students are expected to participate in class, providing their thoughts and opinions on the day's topics and drawing connections across the readings and the weeks. Involvement will be promoted through seminar presentations that discuss important concepts from selected readings, raise questions, and encourage discussion of ideas. Everyone is expected to read all the assigned readings each week and actively participate in the discussion—to ask questions, speak to debates in the literature, challenge what class members have said, and relate the material to your own interests. Also be prepared to discuss the contribution of the additional article of interest that you have chosen to read each week.

Webcam use is expected during class meetings. Please talk to me if you have a situation that makes the use of video challenging beyond the occasional technological hiccups we are all experiencing.

Leading seminar discussions

In the first week of class students will sign up for a class session. The leader (or leaders depending on enrolment in the course) will carefully study the assigned readings and assist the class with understanding key concepts and topics. Leading the class also involves preparing questions to stimulate discussion and assisting with keeping the dialogue moving during that session's discussion. Leaders are welcome to prepare supporting slides to be shared ahead of time via OWL or screen shared on Zoom. The purpose is not merely to provide a summary of the readings to the class, but also to engage the class in a critical analysis that synthesizes, compares, critiques, and draws conclusions about what we know of the topic based on the readings. The issues should stimulate critical and evaluative discussion.

Reflections

Students will submit **FOUR, approximately 3-page (double-spaced) reflections** on the articles and material covered that week (**DUE THE WEEK OF THE READINGS**). This is not meant to be a summary of the articles, but a forum for processing the topic of the day and for relating the material to your own research interests and understanding how a life course lens might contribute to your understanding. For these reflections you should identify **AN ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ARTICLE** that connects the course material to your area of interest. Some suggestions are provided in the course outline. This will help you prepare and gather ideas for your final paper. In your reflections you may also pose questions/topics you would like to raise during class discussion.

Final paper

Paper idea: Before finalizing your paper topic, students must submit a two-page description of your plans (ungraded) for discussion and approval. Proposals should demonstrate that you have selected a topic and have started conducting some preliminary research, providing a brief outline of your plans, key literature related to your plans, and relevant ideas from your reflection papers.

Final Paper: The final paper (approximately 20 to 25 pages) should be on a substantive topic of interest to you and must incorporate and apply elements and principles of a Life Course Perspective on inequality to your area of study. The paper should contain a critical literature review of both theoretical and empirical work related to your topic and contain sources beyond class readings. ***PhD students have the option for completing an empirical or policy paper.* More details about the paper will be discussed in class. Please follow the ASA or APA Style Guidelines. **All papers should be submitted via OWL.** You must also submit your paper to **TURNITIN** through OWL located in the “assignments” tab.

Important Policies

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the

student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- **active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Course Schedule and Topics

September 14

Welcome and overview of the course

September 21

The life course perspective as a framework for understanding inequality

September 28

Age, cohort and social change in studies of inequality

October 5

Macro-level sociohistorical forces shaping the life course: the State and historical events

October 12

Dynamics of the Individual Life Course: Timing, transitions, trajectories, turning points

October 19 – No class

October 26

Unequal life courses

November 2 BREAK WEEK, no class

November 9

Mechanisms of Inequality – Cumulative dis/advantage

November 16

Structural Inequality across the Life Course

November 23

Linked Lives

November 30

Human Agency

December 7

Application and Policy Relevance