



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 4344G 001
Digital Data
Winter 2025
In-person

Instructor: Dr. Lyn Hoang (lhoang3@uwo.ca)
Department of Sociology

This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description: Digital data come in many formats and are very useful for social science research. This course addresses how to use digital data for various purposes. Students will get hands on experience that is useful for a variety of careers.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above in any program.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

1. Trace the history of data within digital society.
2. Contextualize the role of digital data within social sciences research.
3. Assess methodological challenges in using digital data for evidence-based recommendations.
4. Examine differences in data protection laws across various jurisdictions.
5. Apply digital data in empirical research to make policy recommendations.

Course Material:

- **Required Text(s):** No required textbook for this class.
- Weekly readings will be posted on Brightspace in the corresponding Lecture

Students are expected to do the lesson readings as these will be the basis for class discussions, assignments, and evaluations. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to engage with any additional/suggested material as these will help to contextualize class discussions and provide further examples.

Communication:

- **Before contacting me:** Students are responsible for checking the course Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Make sure to check announcements or syllabus before emailing me a question.
- **How to contact me:** The best way to reach me is through email: lhoang3@uwo.ca. Emails will be monitored daily; students will typically receive a response within 48 – 72 hours (there may be delays in response times during long weekend holidays). Messages sent via Brightspace discussion forum may not receive timely responses as they are not monitored daily.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described below are essential requirements for the course. The use of ChatGPT, OpenAI or any other AI software is **NOT PERMITTED** within this course. Any assignment, and/or exam submission with suspected use of AI software will result in an **automatic failure** and will be escalated to the Department Chair for further investigation of possible scholastic offense. **Do NOT use AI in this course, it is NOT worth it.**

Evaluation Breakdown:

Description	Weight	Due Date
Lecture Attendance + Participation	20%	Weekly
Reflection Paper	15%	Jan 27 @ 11:59pm (72-hour grace window – Final submission Jan 30 @ 11:59pm)
Conversation/Discourse Analysis Paper	25%	Feb 24 @ 11:59pm (72-hour grace window – Final submission Feb 27 @ 11:59pm)
Content Analysis/Netnography Paper	30%	Mar 31 @ 11:59pm (72-hour grace window – Final submission Apr 3rd @ 11:59pm)
3M Presentations	10%	Mar 31 – in class.
	100%	

Evaluation Details:

Lecture Attendance + Class participation (20% of total grade): Attendance is expected and will be taken for every class. There are twelve weeks' worth of classes, but the first and last classes will not be counted towards your attendance/participation grade. Thus, there are **TEN** classes where attendance/participation will be determined. Students are permitted to miss **ONE** of these ten classes without supporting documentation. For any additional missed lectures, students will receive a grade of zero for that class's attendance/participation. Students are also expected to proactively participate in class discussions. Class participation will be measured through an assessment of the **quality** of your contribution in addition to your preparedness based on reading course material, raising interesting questions, applying key concepts, engaging with your peers. Class participation is **NOT** solely based on a quantitative measurement of your contributions (e.g., how much or often you talk).

Please note, because not all elements of this assessment are required in the calculation of the final course grade, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for any additional missed classes.

Reflection Paper (15% of total grade): Students will work individually to draft a critical reflection paper. Students will be given a list of topics that they can choose for the reflection paper. Students will write a 5 – 7 page paper (double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). More instructions will be distributed on Brightspace.

A digital copy of the paper will be submitted online to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

Flexible submission window - Students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. Assignments will not be accepted after 2 days past the 72-hour submission window (e.g., 5 days from original due date). Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of 72-hour submission window, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

Conversation/Discourse Analysis Paper (25% of total grades): Students will work individually to conduct a conversation/discourse analysis using social media data. Students will design a research question, engage the methodological strategy to collect their virtual qualitative data, and then apply relevant sociological concepts/theories pertaining to internet and digital society to address their research questions and develop potential policy recommendations informed by their findings. Students will write a 10 – 12 page paper (double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). More instructions will be distributed on Brightspace.

A digital copy of the paper will be submitted online to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

Flexible submission window - Students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. Assignments will not be accepted after 2 days past the 72-hour submission window (e.g., 5 days from original due date). Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of 72-hour submission window, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

Content Analysis/Netnography Paper (30% of total grade): Students will work individually to conduct a content analysis or netnography analysis using social media data. Students will design a research question, engage the methodological strategy to collect their virtual qualitative data, and then apply relevant sociological concepts/theories pertaining to internet and digital society to address their research questions and develop potential policy recommendations informed by their findings. Students will write a 10 – 12 page paper (double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). More instructions will be distributed on Brightspace.

A digital copy of the paper will be submitted online to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

Flexible submission window - Students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. Assignments will not be accepted after 2 days past the 72-hour submission window (e.g., 5 days from original due date). Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of 72-hour submission window, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

3M Presentation (10% of total grade): In the last class, all students will give a 3-Minute presentation using one slide to sum up their project, findings, and policy recommendations for their content analysis/netnography assignment. This presentation is to aid students in developing the skills necessary to pitch their findings, ideas, or policies recommendations in a concise manner to a variety of stakeholders.

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course, per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the following assessment: Group Presentation has been designated as requiring supporting documentation.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Artificial Intelligence:

All assignments for this course must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI). Any suspected use of AI will result in automatic zero for the assignment and the matter will be escalated to the department chair for investigation of possible scholastic offence.

Academic Policies:

Scholastic 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:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism: Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

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.

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that **supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams)** and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described in the course outline. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty Academic Counselling Office.

Missed Tests and Exams: Students with an approved absence from an in-class test will be required to write a make-up test. The make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test. Course professors may not be available to respond to questions during the make-up test/exam slots.

Students with an approved absence from a final exam in December or April will be required to write a makeup exam known as a Special Examination. Permission to write a Special Examination may be granted on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documentation provided to the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Students who fail to write a make-up test or special examination will receive a grade of zero on that assessment. No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Religious Accommodation: Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#).

Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Accessibility Options: Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disab

[ilities.pdf](#) . Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:
www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html .

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

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence: Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going 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
https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html .To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca .

Additional resources:

Registrar Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <http://westernusc.ca/services>

Course Selection: Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite courses they may have taken.

If a student enrolls in a course for which they do not have the prerequisites, they may be removed from the course and have it deleted from their record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to their fees in the event that they are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

If a student takes a course that is antirequisite to a course previously taken, they will lose credit for the earlier course, regardless of the grade achieved in the most recent course.

Please visit your Home Faculty Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters:
https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html .

Bookstore: Search for Textbook availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search>