



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 2279A-001
Unequal Cities
Fall 2025

Delivery Method: In-Person

Instructor: Dr. Lora A. Phillips

Email: lphill33@uwo.ca

Course Description: This course examines inequality by exploring how it occurs across cities and how different social groups experience cities unequally by examining class, race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, and sexuality. It also examines how urban social problems, such as poverty, homelessness or gentrification reflect and generate urban inequality.

Prerequisite(s): None.

Anti-requisite(s): None.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

The public often thinks of the city in terms of its built environment (i.e., the buildings, roadways, landscaping, signature structures, housing patterns, transportation patterns). In many ways, these elements of the built environment shape the nature of urban life. But humans have created the built environment. Theoretically, we call this process externalization, because the city becomes what we make it. On the other hand, the city shapes us, and we are forced to adapt and fit in. We call this side of the process internalization. The relationship between these two processes of internalization and externalization is one of constant tension, which we call a dialectic. Understanding this dialectic is at the heart of urban sociology, because we try to discern both how urban life is shaped by processes of human action and how human action is constrained by urban processes themselves. (Hiller 2014:xiv-xi)

Put simply, in this course we will explore how humans create unequal cities while, at the same time, cities create unequal humans. In doing so, we will focus primarily on the contemporary Canadian context; however, the key frameworks and concepts presented may also be applied to other periods and contexts.

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Identify, describe, compare, and apply key theoretical concepts related to urban sociology and inequality.
- Understand the dialectic between cities and identity, as well as between cities and social problems.
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas using effective oral and written communication.

Course Materials:

1. Readings listed on the detailed reading list, which are posted to OWL.
2. iClicker software.

Communication:

Office hours: Fridays from 1 to 2pm or by appointment (SSC 5401). Email: lphil33@uwo.ca. Emails received after normal business hours (i.e., 9am to 4pm, Monday through Friday) may not be replied to until the next business day, and students should plan accordingly ahead of evaluation dates. Additionally, email is not suitable for questions requiring considerable exposition; these questions are suited for in-person exchange during office hours. Office hours are drop-in and first come, first serve. Students are responsible for checking the course [OWL Brightspace](#) site 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.

Course Schedule and Readings:

The reading list and weekly schedule is available on the course Brightspace site.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Midterm	October 16, 2025	35%
Reading Checks	Throughout term*	10%
Group Discussions	Throughout term*	15%
Final	Exam period	40%

*See below for additional information regarding due dates and grading.

Midterm

The midterm will be administered **during the first 60 minutes of class on Thursday, October 16**. Students will have 60 minutes to answer 60 questions, predominantly in a multiple-choice format (with four response options per question). The Midterm may also contain true or false questions, not to exceed one-fourth of all questions. Course material from Weeks 1-6 will be eligible for testing, with 70% of questions coming from lectures and 30% of questions coming from readings. No electronic devices, books, cheat sheets, dictionaries or aids are permitted during the examination.

Per university policy on academic considerations (found [here](#)), requests for academic consideration related to the midterm **must** follow the procedures enumerated in the Absence from Course Commitments section of the Course Policy Document. Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment, per course, per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course, the Midterm has been designated **as requiring supporting documentation**. Students with an approved absence from the Midterm will be required to write a makeup exam during the departmental Midterm make-up exam period (location and date TBD).

Final

The final will be administered **during the Final Exam period**, with the date and location determined by the registrar's office. Students will have 120 minutes to answer 60 questions, predominantly in a multiple-choice format (with four response options per question); however, the exam may also contain true or false questions, not to exceed one-fourth of all questions. The Final will be cumulative, but there will be a greater focus on material covered after the Midterm, with 70% of questions coming from lectures and 30% of questions coming from readings. No electronic devices, books, cheat sheets, dictionaries or aids are permitted during the examination.

Per university policy on academic considerations (found [here](#)), requests for academic consideration related to the Final **must** follow the procedures enumerated in the Student Absences section of this syllabus. Please note that:

“Requests for examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods . . . **ALWAYS** require formal supporting documentation.” Students with an approved absence from the Final will be required to write a makeup exam during the departmental Final make-up exam period (location and date TBD).

Reading Checks

This course has ten (10) **in-class** reading checks, which will be administered and marked using iClicker. Each reading check will consist of one (1) multiple-choice question related to the materials assigned for that class period (see the Course Schedule and Readings section). Although the reading checks will be open-book and open-note, each reading check must be completed within 2.5 minutes. As such, students are **strongly encouraged** to familiarize themselves with the materials ahead of class.

Of the ten (10) in-class reading checks, the **eight (8)** with the highest mark will be counted towards the final grade. If a student misses more than two (2) reading checks, they will receive a grade of zero on each additional missed reading check. If a student attending class experiences a technological issue with iClicker that prevents them from completing a reading check, the student **must** speak to the instructor prior to the end of the same class period. No other academic consideration will be granted for missed reading checks.

Group Discussions

This course has ten (10) **in-class** discussions. Working in groups of three to five (3-5) students, you will respond to a prompt designed to extend your knowledge of course material through direct application of sociological ideas. One group member will be designated as the notetaker, and this student must submit the group’s response to OWL Brightspace **by the end of class**.

Of the ten (10) group discussions, the **eight (8)** with the highest mark will be counted towards the final grade. If a student misses more than two (2) group discussions, they will receive a grade of zero on each additional missed discussion. If the designated notetaker experiences a technological issue with OWL Brightspace that prevents them from submitting the group’s response, the notetaker **must** speak to the instructor prior to the end of the same class period. No other academic consideration will be granted for missed group discussions.

Course Policies:

Artificial Intelligence

All assignments must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI).

Lectures and Course Materials

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringement of copyright is an academic offence.

Recording Lectures

Recording lectures is not permitted. Some of the topics we discuss may be sensitive. If students choose to share personal stories or experiences, they should not worry that they are being recorded. If you require a recording device for medical or other reasons, please see me.

Electronic Devices

All types of technology are welcome in class, but they must not interfere with lecture or distract other students. Please note, research suggests students do better when taking notes by hand. If your electronic device distracts me or another student, you will be asked to put it away and not permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Cell phones should be turned to silent at the beginning of class.

Extra Credit

Extra credit will be offered at my discretion. In the rare event that extra credit is offered, it will never be offered on an individual basis; all extra credit opportunities will be offered to the entire class.

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

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 using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html . 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. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf> or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Once the request and supporting documentation have been received and reviewed, appropriate academic consideration, if granted, shall be determined by the instructor in consultation with the academic advisor, in a manner consistent with the course outline. Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam, unless otherwise specified in the course outline. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup text/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

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.

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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. 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 or University approved emergency 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.

Code of Student Conduct: It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize him or herself with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. 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 course(s) they may have taken. Students must familiarize themselves with the Student Responsibility for Course Selection policy https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf and the Registration and Progression policy https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf. Students are responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Requirements for their degree program https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf.

Support Services:

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

[Faculty Academic Advising](#) - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

[USC services](#) offers information about student the health/dental plan, Bus Pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

[Mental health](#) – 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.

[Health & Wellness Services](#) – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>. Additional on-campus services are also available <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/services/index.html>.

[Accessible Education](#) provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. 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.

[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 or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: http://uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

[Western Libraries](#) – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.

[Writing support](#) – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>

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