



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY [4455G-001]
Challenging Law
Winter 2026

Delivery Method – In-Person

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

Course Description: This course examines law as a social institution, exploring both classical and contemporary understandings of the law. By examining empirical examples, we examine different explanations of how the law operates and affects social relations.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above in any Department of Sociology module, or fourth year in any module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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:

Drawing on different theoretical frameworks, students will critically analyze law as a social institution. Students will develop a deeper understanding of law and society by examining: social issues that arise in Canada to understand their legal underpinnings and implications; the forces that shape the law and the social implications of law; how the law operates; the controversies surrounding law; what functions law fulfills; how law can be dysfunctional; the major assumptions in the study of law and society, among others. Students will develop skills in class attendance and engagement, as well as strengthen their presentation abilities, critical thinking, and academic writing.

Course Material:

A list of readings will be provided during the first class. These readings will be made available on Brightspace and/or through the library.

Communication:

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 enrolled in the course.

If you have a question or would like to discuss course content, please see me before, during, or after class, or during office hour (by appointment). Outside of class and/or office hours, email (bkobaya@uwo.ca) is my preferred method of contact. You can expect a response within 24-48 hours on Mondays to Fridays between 9-5PM (EST). Prior to emailing me, please read the course outline, announcements, and any other supplementary material posted on Owl to see if your question has already been answered. I reserve the right not to respond to emails asking questions whose answers are already available on Brightspace or have been covered in class.

Students are expected to adhere to professional and courteous email etiquette. Emails are to be professionally prepared, spell-and grammar checked and not written in "text message" format. All communication must be written from your UWO account. The subject heading must read the course title and section. Sign the email with your full name and student number. Instructors and Teaching Assistants reserve the right not to respond to emails that do not adhere to such practices.

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.

Student-led seminar: 25%
Critical Reflection Paper: 20%
Participation: 20%
Final Term Paper: 35%

Student-led seminar: Students will lead one class seminar as a team. The seminar will draw upon the assigned/required course readings, scheduled for that week. The presentation must engage with the key themes of the assigned readings for that week and align with the broader themes of this course. Additional information will be provided during the first class. Sign-up for the student-led seminars will be done the first week of classes; thus, attending the first lecture is an expected and mandatory requirement.

In accordance with university policy, instructors may designate one assessment per course per term that requires official supporting documentation for academic consideration. In this course, the student led seminar has been designated as that assessment. As a result, students cannot submit a self-attestation for accommodations related to the student-led seminar. Academic consideration for the student-led seminar requires submission of formal supporting

documentation provided to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office within 48 hours of the presentation date. Unless extenuating circumstances do not allow, students must email their fellow presenter(s) and the instructor prior to the presentation date. No alternative evaluations or reweighting of scores will be offered for the student led seminars. Similarly, students who do not present during the scheduled class time before the end of the semester will not receive an alternative evaluation or reweighting of scores and will receive a "0" grade for this evaluation.

Critical Reflection Paper: Students will submit one critical reflection paper (worth 20% of course grade), due one week after their scheduled seminar, at the start of class. Papers must be submitted to Turnitin via the Assignment tab with a hardcopy brought to class. The due dates will vary as they coincide with your seminar date. 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 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. This flexibility deadline applies to all students, including students with accommodations through Accessibility Education. Late papers must be submitted to Turnitin via the Assignment tab on Brightspace with an additional copy emailed to the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their papers are submitted on time. It is also the student's responsibility to ensure their paper is uploaded and uploaded correctly to Turnitin via Brightspace. Papers that are not uploaded to Brightspace or uploaded incorrectly will receive a grade of "0". If a student/team presents on the last week of class, the 72-hour flexibility deadline for the critical reflection paper will not apply.

Participation: This course meets for 3 hours per week. This is an upper year course and as such students are required and expected to attend all classes and to come prepared having read all the required readings. It is mandatory that students play an active role during class discussions and presentations. Participation is worth 20% of the final course grade. Participation grades are based on in-class engagement; therefore, no alternative evaluations or reweighting of scores will be offered. Participation is a mandatory, non-negotiable component of the course, and the grade is final (non-negotiable). Attending classes without actively participating will not contribute to your participation grade. Similarly, you will not receive grades for simply participating in group discussions or giving opinion-based responses that are not backed by course readings or other scholarly sources. Students who miss more than two classes will fail the participation component of the course.

Essay: Students will complete a research paper on a selected topic that is relevant to the course and is of interest to the student. This is to be a formal research paper. This essay is not a descriptive, but rather an argumentative paper. The final paper is to be 6 pages in length (approximately 1500 words), double spaced with standard formatting and text size (1" margins and 12-font) with proper referencing. A title page and bibliography are to be included, as additional pages. The final essay is worth 35% of your final course grade. Essays will be

submitted to turnitin on Brightspace with a hard copy to be submitted in person (not electronically) at the beginning of class on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. Students are expected to submit the final essay 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 the 72 hour the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. This flexibility deadline applies to all students, including students with accommodations through Accessibility Education. Late papers must be submitted to Turnitin via the Assignment tab on Brightspace. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their paper is uploaded and uploaded correctly. Papers that are not uploaded to Brightspace or uploaded incorrectly will receive a grade of "0".

Grading Guidelines:

Non-attendance and failure to meet course requirements and expectations will directly and negatively impact your final course grade (grade reduction or course failure). There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Grades (except the final exam and year-end mark) will be provided in class or posted to Brightspace as they become available. Due to privacy regulations, I do not provide grades or discuss issues regarding grades via email or Zoom. If you wish to discuss your grade(s) please contact or speak with me to set up an appointment, during office hours.

All evaluations are guided by Western's Undergraduate Grading Guidelines:

University-wide grade descriptors

- A+ 90-100: One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- A 80-89: Superior work which is clearly above average
- B 70-79: Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- C 60-69: Competent work, meeting requirements
- D 50-59: Fair work, minimally acceptable
- F below 50: Fail

For more information about the university grading standards, see the Registrar's Handbook: Grading Standards

N.B. To ensure the fair treatment of all students, so that no one individual receives special consideration or special treatment as a result of verbal complaints (e.g., arbitrary bumping up of grades) that is not equally received by others, there are no make-up assignments or alternative evaluations for low evaluation scores or missed evaluations. Nor will requests to change a grade because it is needed for a future program be considered. As stated above, your final course grade will be negatively affected if you do not attend class or meet all course requirements and expectations. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Assessment Re-evaluation:

Any review of assessments should be done within two weeks of the mark being released. Students who wish to seek a re-evaluation of grades must justify in detail and in writing, exactly why they feel that a mark is not justified. Such a request should be based on reasons that are rooted in the specific course content and keeping in mind the expectations for the class. The assignment or exam will be re-graded in its entirety, not simply the questions or portion the student believes were scored improperly. Note, in the course of remarking an assignment or exam, the instructor or TA may discover errors or defects that were not originally detected on the paper or exam and as a result it is possible that a student's revised mark may go down, rather than up. Please note that in an event that a mark is re-evaluated, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the mark both upwards and downwards. The revised mark stands.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

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

Course Policies

This class will conduct itself on the principles of academic and intellectual freedom and mutual respect. Some readings and content will include topics about sensitive, difficult, and/or challenging issues that may be triggering or upsetting. I ask all students to help create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity during lecture and discussion period. Racist, sexist, or other derisive comments, intentional or otherwise, will not be tolerated. Additional details may be posted on our course Brightspace page. Students are responsible for keeping themselves informed of these policies.

Due to the sensitive nature of this course, participants are not permitted to record the sessions.

Recording of lectures, tutorials or virtual meetings or online course content without the explicit consent of the Professor, TA and students involved is ground for serious academic and or legal discipline. All course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member.

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>