

New Topics in Sociology: Intimate Relationships

SOC395H1S

Winter 2024

Schedule: Mondays, 3:10pm - 5:00pm

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Teaching Assistants: TBD

1 Course Description

This course provides an in-depth examination of intimate relationships across the life course, with an emphasis on sociological theoretical perspectives, contextual factors, and key sociological policy debates. We will consider trends in the development and maintenance of intimate relationships, and the ways relationships are contingent upon the social fabric of society. Drawing on historical, sociological, demographic, economic, and psychological perspectives, we will discuss changes in dating, union formation, household relationships, and intimacy. Special attention will be paid to the ways modern romance can operate differently by social groups (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, race, and social class), with heterogeneity in the meaning and implications.

1.1 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify conceptual and methodological challenges to relationship science
- Describe demographic and cultural trends in intimate relationships
- Explain how historical contexts and social policies have shaped contemporary relationships
- Discuss how gender, sexuality, race, and class shape and sustain inequalities in relationships
- Demonstrate how processes in intimate relationships are constrained by social inequalities

1.2 Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 FCE of 200 level Sociology courses. As per university guidelines, those without this requirement will be removed at time of discovery and without notice.

2 Required Texts

There is no textbook for this course. Required readings will be available on Quercus.

We will typically read about 50 pages of material per week (sometimes less, sometimes more). The lectures build on the readings, and I expect that you have read the assigned texts ahead of class. It is critical that you keep up with these readings.

3 Components

All assignments, evaluations, and tests must be submitted via Quercus.

Assessment	Worth	Due
In-class Activities	20%	Due weekly in class
Test 1	25%	Monday, Feb 12
Test 2	25%	Monday, Apr 1
Students choose 1 of 2 options below:		
Paper & Slides (Option 1)	30%	3 deadlines: Feb 05, Mar 04, Mar 18
Infographic & Critical Reflections (Option 2)	30%	weekly/variable

4 Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	In-class Activities	Tests	Paper (option 1)
1	2024-01-08	Relationship science	A1		
2	2024-01-15	Love	A2		
3	2024-01-22	Mate selection	A3		
4	2024-01-29	Relationship scripts	A4		
5	2024-02-05	White weddings	A5		Proposal
6	2024-02-12			Test 1	
	2024-02-19	FAMILY DAY - University closed			
7	2024-02-26	Household economics	A6		
8	2024-03-04	Division of labor	A7		Slides
9	2024-03-11	Modern intimacy	A8		
10	2024-03-18	Relationship outcomes	A9		Paper
11	2024-03-25	When things go bad	A10		
12	2024-04-01			Test 2	

5 Evaluation

5.1 In-Class Activities (20%)

Except for test days, in-class activities will take place during each lecture. There will be quizzes, short in-class writing assignments, data exercises, and collaborative discussions followed by answering questions related to the readings and lectures. Activities are due in class and may take place at the beginning, middle or end of lecture.

There will be 10 in-class activities. Each assignment will be graded as “meets expectations,” which receives full credit (2%) and “does not meet expectations,” which will receive no credit (0%).

In-class activities cannot be submitted after class unless the professor explicitly makes an exception in class for all students. In other words, there are no personal deadlines.

Each student is provided with one “Life Happens Pass” for in-class activities. This pass will replace the lowest assignment score with full-credit.

If you miss more than one in-class activity (for any reason) or a activity is marked as “not meeting expectations,” then the weight of each additional missed activity is automatically shifted to your average test scores. For example, if you earn an 80% on Test 1 and a 90% on Test 2, your average test score is 85% ($80 + 90 / 2$). If you miss three in-class activities, the first missed activity will receive full credit (2%) (use of your Life Happens Pass) and your second and third missed activities would each receive 1.7% ($.85 * .02 * 100$). **You do NOT need to inform us when you miss an activity, these adjustments happen automatically at the end of the term.**

5.2 Tests (50%)

There will be 2 tests over the course of the semester, each worth 25% of your final grade. The purpose of the tests are not to evaluate memorization but rather familiarity with theories, concepts, trends, and approaches to understanding intimate relationships. All materials in this course (i.e., readings, lectures, videos, and discussions) are considered “fair game” for test questions. Test 1 will cover material from weeks 1-5 and Test 2 will cover material from weeks 7-11.

Each test will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. They will be taken in-person during the class times noted on the schedule. More details will be provided closer to the test dates.

Make-up tests are ONLY offered in the following circumstances:

1. Illness which must be declared on Acorn and proof of this declaration provided.
2. Unexpected extenuating circumstances such as a family or non-illness- related personal emergency in which case you must contact your college registrar and have them email the Professor to confirm the circumstance.
3. Another course test within 24 hours of a test in this course, in which case you must provide the course syllabus of the conflicting test (to confirm their test time) as well as proof of enrollment in that course via an Acorn screenshot.

5.3 Two Options for the remaining 30%

Students will choose whether they the remaining 30% of their final grade comes from one semester long term paper assignment, or a series of smaller assignments, submitted throughout the semester.

5.3.1 Option 1: Paper & Slides (30%)

The term paper and presentation slides will be a semi-structured assignment, with opportunities to get feedback on the way towards a final paper. It will substantively engage a topic raised in one of the course readings, subject to approval.

About 8 to 10 powerpoint slides will summarize your research question and findings on the topic. The final paper needs to be 2500-3000 words in length.

Stage 1: Proposal (2.5%)

The first stage involves a two page proposal laying out the topic on which you propose writing a term paper, the research question you plan on answering, and a tentative title for your projected paper. This stage is completed to ascertain the suitability and feasibility of your topic and its alignment with the course objectives.

Stage 2: Submission of slides (7.5%)

The second stage is the submission of your slides (uploaded as a .pptx or .pdf to Quercus page). This is done both as a way for students to communicate effectively their hard work to their peers, and to receive feedback on them in order to help with the final write-up.

Stage 3: Submission of final write-up (20%) The final stage is the submission of the term paper, one digital copy (.pdf format) through Quercus & Turnitin.

Each stage is mandatory. You cannot move to the next stage without completing the previous one. While these are the only mandatory stages, you are highly encouraged to communicate with your TA several times in the semester and to sit down and chat with them at various points to get further guidance and feedback on the term paper. Further details will be discussed in the early weeks of the semester. A more detailed description of the assignment will be distributed separately.

The deadlines for papers and slides are as follows:

Deadline	Date
Proposal Deadline	Monday, Feb 05 by 3:10pm
Slides Deadline	Monday, Mar 04 by 3:10pm
Final Paper Deadline	Monday, Mar 18 by 3:10pm

Paper Extension & Late Paper Policy

Everyone is likely to experience an unexpected disruption during their academic studies. This course provides flexibility for EVERYONE by offering a 7-day grace period at each stage.

After the 7-day grace period, the late deduction is 5% for each 24-hour period the assignment is late starting with the day the assignment is due. For example, an assignment submitted 12 hours

late would receive a 5% late penalty, an assignment submitted after 25 hours would receive a 10% late deduction.

Because this is a staged assignment, students must submit earlier stages of the work even if they cannot earn more than a 0%. For example, students must submit a proposal in order to submit slides, even if the proposal receives a 100% late penalty (e.g., will be scored a zero).

NOTE: If something unexpected happens (e.g., you get sick, a personal emergency, etc.), you will only get a further extension if your circumstance happened BEFORE the 7-day grace period and it affects you throughout the grace period. In other words, the grace period should be used as just that (a grace period for if something goes wrong and not a planned time to write your paper).

Deadlines	Grace Period End Dates
Proposal	Monday, Feb 12 by 3:10pm
Slides	Monday, Mar 11 by 3:10pm
Final Paper	Monday, Mar 25 by 3:10pm

5.3.2 Option 2: Infographics (20%)

Students will identify recent academic journal articles (published since 2018 in the Journal of Marriage and Family, American Sociological Review, Demography, or Gender and Society) on a topic covered in class. Students will read this journal article and produce a one page infographic synthesizing and communicating the content of the article, as well as how it links to the course content. Infographics should convey the research question(s) of the academic article, the literature it contributes to, theories and methods it employed, the main findings and contributions of the article, and how it connects to an aspect of our course content. Infographics must contain a visual element and a link to the original journal article it is based on.

Each student choosing option 2 will submit two of these over the semester, worth 10% each. They are due the Friday before the topic is discussed in class. Students are allowed to submit one additional infographic if they are unsatisfied with their marks on a previously marked assignment. The highest scoring Infographics will be used to calculate students' final grade. **You do NOT need to inform us if you decide to submit an additional infographic to replace a low score, as the adjustment will happen automatically at the end of the term.**

NOTE: Infographics will never be accepted late. If you cannot submit it on time, then you can complete one(s) that is/are due the following week. It is in students' best interest to front-load completion of Infographics when possible, such as planning to complete them by week 09, so that an Infographic from weeks 10-11 can be used as a backup if an unforeseen circumstance arises.

5.3.3 AND Five Critical Reflections of the News (10%)

These 250-350 word assignments involve engaging critically with a specified week's readings and making connections between them and the real world. Students will locate a news article connected to a lecture topic, briefly summarize the content of the article, and critically reflect on it. These reflections can take many forms, such as fact checking (The news says X, but our class readings say Y), evaluating a new research finding getting media attention, using an event (such as celebrity relationship gossip) as a case study to highlight the significance of the course materials or new

questions raised. All essays must make a clear argument, demonstrate understanding of the class readings, and appropriately apply the class material. Do not use quotes from the readings for this, but instead use entirely your own words.

Each student choosing option 2 will submit (at least) five of these over the semester, worth 2% each. They are due the Friday before the topic is discussed in class. Students may submit more than five CRs if they are unsatisfied with any score. The highest scoring CRs will be used to calculate students' final grade. **You do NOT need to inform us if you submit more than five activities to replace a low score(s), these adjustments happen automatically at the end of the term.**

NOTE: CRs will never be accepted late. If you cannot submit it on time, then you can complete one(s) that is/are due the following week. It is in students' best interest to front-load completion of CRs when possible, such as planning to complete CRs by week 09, so that a CR from weeks 10-11 can be used as a backup if an unforeseen circumstance arises.

5.4 Arts & Sciences Grading Scale

Percentage	Letter	GPA	Definition
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent
85-89	A	4.0	
80-84	A-	3.7	
77-79	B+	3.3	Good
73-76	B	3.0	
70-72	B-	2.7	
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate
63-66	C	2.0	
60-62	C-	1.7	
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal
53-56	D	1.0	
50-52	D-	0.7	
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate

6 FAQs

6.1 Can I have an extension or take the test at a later date?

As adults, you have a lot of other things going on in your life and you are the one best equipped to decide what merits your time and attention. Sometimes, that isn't school. And that's okay. This course is designed to offer a substantial amount of flexibility to students in ways that respects student privacy by minimizing the need for disclosure of personal circumstances.

The following flexibility policies are offered:

In-class activities

- One "Life Happens Pass" will replace the lowest FQ score with full-credit.

- Any further missed FQ (for any reason) is automatically replaced by the average test score (no limit on how many FQs can be replaced).

Tests

- The ability to schedule a make-up a test if you have multiple tests in a 24-hour period (see make-up policies above for how to apply for this).

Paper & Slides | Infographics & Critical Reflections

- Choice in choosing one semester long term paper assignment or a series of smaller assignments, submitted throughout the semester.
- A no-questions-asked 7-day grace period to submit the proposal/slides/paper with no late penalties (option 1).
- The ability to choose any 2 out of 10 content weeks to submit an infographic (option 2).
- The ability to choose any 5 out of 10 content weeks to submit a CR (option 2).
- The ability to submit 1 additional infographic to replace a low score (option 2).
- Only the top 5 CRs scores will count toward students final grade (option 2).

BE ADVISED: There will be no further extensions or individualized opportunities to improve your grade. Every decision you make as an adult has adult consequences. I can't hold each student to different standards than every other student because of the decisions you made. It would be impossible for me to evaluate and create an individualized learning plan that fairly accommodates each student's unique and personal circumstances. If I say yes to one student, I must give the entire class that same extension to be fair. Making exceptions for students who ask disadvantages students who don't feel comfortable asking. In other words, I can't say yes to special requests from students who email to ask, so please don't; I will ignore any such requests.

Be aware that assignment closing dates and deadlines are automated within Quercus. For example, if something is due at 11:59pm on Mar 1st, it will be marked late if it is submitted at 12:00am on Mar 2nd, and if an assignment is set to close (i.e., late assignment is not accepted) at 11:59pm on Mar 1st, Quercus will not accept submissions at 12:00am on Mar 2nd. I will not provide extensions due to slow internet, connectivity issues, or other technical delays that result in submission after the deadline. Start the submission process well enough in advance to ensure that your assignments will be fully submitted before the deadline.

Students who miss a test need to declare their absence on the system (ACORN) and email the instructor (not the TA). Note that this can only be used once during the semester. Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar email the instructor.

6.2 Can I do extra credit?

I don't offer extra credit out of fairness for all students in the course. Please do not ask for opportunities for extra credit. There are no exceptions.

I appreciate that you are managing competing demands on your time and that you care about your grade. Instead of spending extra energy completing even more assignments, use it to do your best on the remaining assignments.

6.3 Will you change my grade?

If you have a question about the grading of any piece of work or believe that your assignment or test has been mismarked, first consult with the TA who graded your work. For simple mathematical errors, simply alert your TA of the mistake. For other grade appeals, submit a short memo that clearly states specific reasons to justify the request and backs up these reasons with evidence from your assignment. If you cannot resolve your questions with the TA, you should consult with the instructor.

If you ask for your grade to be changed on any assignment, your grade may stay the same, be increased, OR decreased after the TA or instructor reconsiders your work. Be advised that we err on the side of being too generous, rather than stingy, during the first pass of grading. Thus, it is possible that when your assignment is re-examined, your grade might be lowered.

Any questions about grading an assignment or test must be raised within two weeks of the date that the assignment was graded. In other words, if you do not review your work in a timely fashion, you may forfeit your right to question the grading of your work.

6.4 What if I need to contact you?

The best way to get in touch outside of class is to directly email your TA first, unless the matter requires the professor's attention (i.e., missed test due to medical reason).

Use your University of Toronto email (emails from non University email addresses may go unanswered) and start the email subject line with "SOC395H."

Do not expect an immediate response. We will make every effort to respond to emails within 24-48 business hours (i.e., Monday through Friday, between 9am – 5pm).

Academic tip #1 How to address TAs and instructors

- Err on the side of formality
 - For faculty (with Ph.D.s), use "Professor LastName" or "Dr. LastName" unless directed otherwise.
 - Instructors without Ph.D.s usually invite you to use first names (but will likely not be offended if "Professor" slips out).
- Use a formal, respectful writing style
 - Include opening and closing salutations (discuss examples).
 - No text-speak.
- Do your part in solving what you need to solve.
 - Don't ask about something that's answered right on the syllabus.

[Additional information on how to email professors](#)

6.5 Can I record or share class materials?

Video, audio, and photographic recording of lectures is prohibited without my explicit permission. The selling or dissemination of tests, study guides, homework assignments and handouts is prohibited without my explicit permission. The selling or dissemination for commercial purposes of notes derived from my lectures is also prohibited without my explicit permission.

Permission to record or share lectures and/or meetings may be granted to a student at the discretion of the instructor and normally for the sole purpose of accommodating a student's particular needs and only for the purposes of private study. Students who are entitled to record the lectures because of accessibility accommodations are required to sign a form stating that the recording is made for personal use only. Out of fairness to everybody (and because it is unlawful to record somebody without their consent in Ontario), this will be required of all students who wish to make a recording of the lectures. Students who have obtained permission to record a lecture should do so in a manner which ensures the privacy of other students present.

7 Policies & Required University Notices

7.1 Quercus Information

This Course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. New information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at <https://q.utoronto.ca>.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GRADES POSTED ONLINE: Grades posted on Quercus are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

7.2 Assignment Submission

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins using 12 point Times New Roman, 11pt Calibri font, or 11pt Roboto.

Written work must be submitted via Quercus. No work will be accepted over e-mail. When you submit files, they should be in PDF or .doc(x) format unless otherwise specified. Other file formats will not be graded and will be treated as unsubmitted assignments.

Students can typically expect work to be returned within two weeks unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise. Please consider that TAs, who grade much of the work, are unionized workers with rights, lives, and other demands on their time.

7.3 Academic Integrity

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Please see the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) for specific information on academic integrity at UofT.

7.4 Plagiarism Detection

Our original software, the University's plagiarism detection tool, is embedded within Quercus. Therefore, all assignments submitted through Quercus may be subject to Ouriginal review. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the website for the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation](#).

If students prefer their work not be subject to Ouriginal review, they must notify the instructor at least 48 hours before the assignment deadline to arrange an alternative submission through Quercus AND provide sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the work they submit is truly their own. The alternative is in place because, strictly speaking, using Ouriginal is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Plagiarism: Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the [Code of Behavior on Academic Matters](#)). Do not present someone else's ideas as your own. Give proper references to others' ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, err on the side of a reference. Turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

7.5 Accessibility and Student Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible.

7.6 Writing Support

Students are urged to seek assistance from the University of Toronto [Writing Centre](#) should they anticipate challenges in this area.