

New Topics in Sociology: Intimate Relationships

SOC298H1S

Winter 2026

Schedule: Mondays, 11:10am - 1:00pm

Instructor: Joanna R. Pepin [j.pepin@utoronto.ca]

Teaching Assistant: Mattea Kott [mattea.kott@mail.utoronto.ca]

Office Hours: By appointment

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 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 policies shape contemporary relationships
- Discuss how demographic attributes shape and sustain relationship inequalities
- Evaluate how relationship processes are constrained by social inequalities

1.2 Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is **SOC100H1**. 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 40 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. Readings will be posted 1 week before each class lecture on Quercus, as I tend to make changes as the semester goes along, depending on our pace and current events.

3 Components

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

Assessment	Worth	Due
In-class Activities	10%	Due weekly in class
Midterm	15%	Monday, Feb 09
Final Exam	25%	TBD
Fact Check Paper	50%	2 deadline options: Feb 23, Mar 30

4 Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	In-class Activities	Tests	Fact Check
1	5-Jan	01 Relationship science	A01		
2	12-Jan	02 Love	A02		
3	19-Jan	03 Mate selection	A03		
4	26-Jan	04 Relationship scripts	A04		
5	2-Feb	05 White weddings	A05		
6	9-Feb			Midterm	
16-Feb NO CLASS - Reading Week					
7	23-Feb	06 Film	A06		Deadline Option 1
8	2-Mar	07 Modern intimacy	A07		
9	9-Mar	08 Division of labor	A08		
10	16-Mar	09 Household economics	A09		
11	23-Mar	10 Relationship outcomes	A10		
12	30-Mar	Study Review			Deadline Option 2

Week Dates	Topic	In-class Activities	Tests	Fact Check
TBD		Final Exam		

5 Evaluation

5.1 In-Class Activities (10%)

There will be 10 in-class activities. 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.

Each assignment will be graded as “meets expectations (1%)”, “somewhat meets expectations (.65%)”, or “does not meet expectations (0%)”.

Late or missed submissions for in-class activities will not be accepted under any circumstances, as in-class activities facilitate real-time interaction and engagement that cannot be replicated outside of class.

Each student is provided with one “Life Happens Pass” for in-class activities. This pass will replace the lowest assignment score (even if it is a 0) with full-credit.

The weight of each additional missed activity (or activity marked as not meeting expectations) is **automatically shifted to the average of your test scores.** For example, if the average score on your midterm and final exam is 85%, you will receive an 85% for any in-class activities marked as a zero. Your average test score will also replace any in-class activity score lower than your test average. *You do NOT need to inform us when you miss an activity, these adjustments happen automatically at the end of the term.*

5.2 Midterm (15%)

The purpose of the midterm is 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. The midterm will cover material from topics 1-5.

The midterm will be taken in-person, in our regular classroom during the class time noted on the schedule. It will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. More details will be provided closer to the midterm date.

Missed tests: Students who miss the mid-term will receive a mark of zero for that test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three days of missing the mid-term, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)

- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test for family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor directly.

If you miss both the mid-term and make-up mid-term (and appropriate documentation was provided in both instances), the 0 received for the midterm will be replaced by your final exam score.

5.3 Final Exam (25%)

The final exam is scheduled by the university during the final exam period. It will be in-person and cumulative in nature (i.e., cover all 10 substantive topics). The exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions.

Please note that, per university policy, if you make personal commitments during the final exam period, you will not receive special consideration and **no special arrangements will be made in the event of conflicts resulting from personal commitments such as travel arrangements**. If you think you have a [qualified scheduling conflict](#), please review the Arts & Sciences procedure for reporting the conflict as soon as possible.

5.4 Fact Check Paper(s) (50%)

You will be asked to write a *1500-2000* word examination of a claim you find in the media related to a course topic. Think of this as a writing assignment structured as: "I read that XXXX, but in reality the research says YYYY."

Writing one Fact Check (FC) is required. You also have two additional options:

- Submit 1 FC, which will comprise the entire 45% of your FC grade (choose deadline 1 or 2).
- Submit 1 FC by deadline 1, and revise your FC by deadline 2. Your FC grade will be the average of your two scores*.
- Submit 2 FC (1 per deadline). Your highest FC grade will comprise the entire 45% of your FC grade.

*Note that if your revised FC score is lower than your first FC score, your first FC score will stand (except in instances of academic integrity cases).

The deadlines for the papers are as follows:

Options	Deadline
Fact Check Paper Deadline #1	Monday, Feb 23 by 11:10am
Fact Check Paper Deadline #2	Monday, Mar 30 by 11:10am

Additional assignment details will be provided separately. Papers will be submitted online through Quercus and will be checked diligently for plagiarism (plagiarism will, at a minimum, result in a grade of 0 on the paper).

Feedback will be provided as extensively as possible for papers submitted by the first deadline. Feedback will be more limited thereafter due to the amount of grading and time restrictions that arise later in the term. Your papers will be graded based on the following scale (0-100):

- <50 = no submission/clearly does not demonstrate effort/major flaws
- 50: marginal
- 60: adequate
- 70: good
- 80: excellent
- 90+: outstanding

Paper Extension & Late Paper Policy

A 7-day grace period is available for all students, for any reason (documentation not required). Students may use the 7-day grace period for none, one, or both paper deadlines. **You do NOT need to inform us if you decide to use the grace period.**

After this 7-day grace period, the late deduction is **5% for each 24-hour period** the assignment is late starting with the last day of the grace period.

Options	Grace Period End Dates
Fact Check Paper Deadline #1	Monday, Mar 2 by 11:10am
Fack Check Paper Deadline #2	Monday, Apr 6 by 11:10am

NOTE: The grace period should be used as just that (a grace period in case something unexpected happens such as illness, a personal emergency, etc.) and not a planned time to write your paper. No further extensions will be granted, as the policies described above are designed to be flexible, acknowledging students encounter unforeseen challenges while also maintaining transparency, applying equally to all students.

5.5 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	

Percentage	Letter	GPA	Definition
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 make-up an in-class activity?

Because in-class activities depend on live engagement, they cannot be submitted late or made-up afterward.

I assume any reason for your absence was valid, but it remains each student's responsibility to manage their schedule, including choices about late registration, overlapping classes, or outside commitments that require travel. Choosing how to allocate time is part of the learning process, and those choices carry consequences that must be anticipated and accepted.

Please make use of the flexibility already offered in this course. If ongoing challenges prevent you from staying engaged, I encourage you to reach out to your College Registrar for additional support.

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

The policies on deferrals/incompletes/extensions described for each assessment above are aligned with Universal Design for Learning principles. All students know the policies in advance, and they apply equally to all students.

Because flexibility is built into the class already, there will be no further extensions or individualized opportunities to improve your grade. I will offer the benefit of the doubt that whatever caused you to miss a test or deadline was valid. That may be illness, oversleeping, a technical glitch, a family emergency, or something else. I understand that students, much like faculty, have responsibilities and priorities outside of their schoolwork, and that all of us have unexpected difficulties that may arise. This is why I build flexibility into the course. You will receive no judgement from me for taking advantage of that flexibility.

We all need to use caution and weigh the costs and benefits of our choices appropriately. I trust you to do so and not make additional requests beyond the flexibility offered here. This flexibility is designed to offer all students the same opportunities rather than favoring only those students who are comfortable making special requests. If you are dealing with a prolonged issue that is interfering

with your ability to stay engaged in the class and meet course standards, I strongly encourage you to reach out to your College Registrar who may be able to connect you with university support.

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.

6.3 Can I do extra credit?

I don't offer extra credit out of fairness for all students in the course. There is flexibility built into the assignments already to allow you to overcome poor performance on early assignments/tests.

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 assessments.

Please do not ask for opportunities for extra credit, as it isn't just a harmless request. Even the request itself adds to the instructor's workload by requiring responses outside the planned curriculum, and it signals a lack of trust in the professor's commitment to academic integrity. Such requests also undermine fairness, erode equity, and weaken trust in the grading system among peers.

6.4 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. Sometimes these happen. 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.

6.5 What if I need to contact you?

The best way to get in touch outside of class is to directly email your TA first. Accessibility accommodation matters should be directed to the professor.

Use your University of Toronto email (emails from non University email addresses may go unanswered) and start the email subject line with “SOC298H.”

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 (e.g., ‘Dear Prof. X’, ‘Sincerely, Student Y’).
 - No text-speak (e.g., ‘Hey!’ ‘Hi there!’).
- Do your part in solving what you need to solve.
 - Don’t ask about something that’s answered right on the syllabus.

6.6 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, and homework assignments 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/meetings may be granted to a student at the discretion of the instructor and normally for the sole purpose of accommodating a student’s accessibility 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 11 or 12 point Times New Roman, Aptos, Calibri, or 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

Turnitin plagiarism detection software is integrated within Quercus. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site](#). I am not comfortable with the widespread use of this software, which effectively provides large quantities of student work to a for-profit company whose future business uses may include using it to train machine learning and AI tools. Consequently, none of the assignments for this course are set for automatic review by Turnitin. However, if I have reason to suspect plagiarism, I may use this tool to detect plagiarism.

If you object to your work being subject to review by Turnitin, add a comment when you submit your assignment. If I do find that we need to review your assignment for plagiarism and you have asked that I not use Turnitin, I will ask that you provide sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper you submit is truly yours. If you cannot or decline to provide the requested documentation and do not consent to us using Turnitin for review, I will decline to mark the assignment.

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 Artificial Intelligence

Students may choose to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools as they work through the writing assignments. I encourage you to limit your use to collecting ideas, searching for literature, grammar/copy editing, and outlining. Be aware that AI tools are often wrong, overly generic, and lacking in critical nuance. My expectations for you are considerably higher than that. You will need to be more persuasive and creative at building arguments, thinking critically, and making connections between ideas than any of these tools. Over-reliance on AI will prevent you from learning the skills necessary to complete work at the level expected for this class. Students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

7.6 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.

7.7 Writing Support

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