

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo  
Department of Sociology and Legal Studies  
SOCIOLOGY 430 001**

**Alcohol, Well-Being, Grey Zone  
Winter 2019**

**Class Time: Th. 2.30 – 5.00 (ish) pm Classroom: SJ1 3020**

**Instructor and T.A. Information**

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**Course Description**

This seminar proposes to develop an understanding of the relation between well-being, culture, and alcohol consumption in light of the grey zone. The grey zone is an interpretive area referring to the irremediable zone of ambiguity that haunts even the most apparently resolute discourse. This idea points to an ontological indeterminacy, in the face of which decisions have to be made with regard to the health of a person, a system, or a society. This grey zone haunts all understanding and knowledge, including knowledge of health and illness. Along the way we will examine the concern with addiction. In the case of both alcohol consumption and addiction, the analysis will be used to tease out the way the grey zone is embedded in practices and in understandings made available through a variety of disciplinary traditions. For example, cultural discourses concerning alcohol consumption highlight the grey zone by presenting alcohol both as an aid to health (in moderation) and a source of illness (in excess). During the nineteenth century, the addiction paradigm was developed using alcohol consumption as the case; this paradigm is now applied to a myriad of behaviours—in fact, it sometimes seems, to almost any behaviour at all.

Overall, the course has a strong reflexive character. By reflexivity I mean developing our knowledge of the subject matter and our ability to take responsibility for that knowledge. That is (and more formally), we want to develop our knowledge of well-being and our knowledge of what makes that knowledge possible. **Because of this reflexive character, there will be times when the issues seem convoluted and the questions difficult and challenging. Thus, as with all my courses, perplexity (aporia) will be a necessary experience in this class.**

**Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Understand the idea of the grey zone as a practical and theoretical issue
- B. Address the case of the relation between culture and alcohol consumption as an example of the grey zone of life
- C. Develop an understanding of the notion of well-being.

- D. Address the socio-cultural understandings that led to the idea of 'the demon drink.'
- E. Address the relation between addiction and the AA solution
- F. Address the wider issue of the relation between addiction, folly and self-understanding
- G. Develop the art to think critically and analytically.

## Readings

Required:

Gadamer, *The enigma of health*

Edwards. *Alcohol: The World's favorite drug*

There will be other readings including Simmel, Weber, Blum, Valverde, Bonner, etc. These will be available on Electronic Reserves

## Available on LEARN

- As posted on LEARN

## Course Requirements and Assessment

### Assignments:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Seminar Presentations	Throughout term	10%
Mid-term exam	Feb 14	20%
Take-Home Paper/Exam	April 4	50%
Online Assignment (5 Response to Readings = 5%, 10 Response to Responses = 5%)	Ongoing	10%
Participation		10%
Total		100%

## Online Assignment

Over the course of the term, each student will respond to 5 of 11 or so questions on the readings, ideally 2 before Reading Week and 3 after Reading Week. These responses should be approximately 200 words in length. The questions will be based on the theories, readings, concepts, as they apply to the grey zone, alcohol and/or intoxication; each response is worth 1% with all 5 being worth a total of 5%. The questions will be posted the day after the class and **the Responses to the Reading is due on the following Tuesday by noon.**

Students are also required to respond to another students' response once a week. You must do 10 responses, 5 before and 5 after Spring Reading Week and they need to be a paragraph in length (80 words approximately). These **Responses to Responses are due on Wednesday by noon.** These are completion assignments and you will get 5% for completing all 10 responses. These are completion exercises.

## Class Participation

### Class Participation in the first half of the course involves In-Class Responses.

In-Class Responses – You will write a couple of paragraphs (no more than one page) **in class** on a question posted before the class (see below). You get you to discuss the question with a partner in the class and I will pick them up at the end. These will be used as participation and attendance markers. I have posted approximate days (below) on which these will be done but that is tentative not firm.

### Seminar Presentations:

There are 6 seminar presentations in the latter section of the course. All of these presentations are on chapters from Gadamer's *The Enigma of Health*. You are required to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and use them in class to discuss the relevant topics. You are encouraged to take notes on the readings and use them in class to discuss relevant topics. All students will take a turn as Seminar Leaders for one of these. Seminar Leaders should locate **one additional scholarly reading (min 7 pages, max 15 pages) and one additional news item, and post these works to the relevant LEARN discussion group** by noon on the Monday before class, along with the questions from the readings they pose for the class. The latter questions will be what the Seminar Leaders use to lead the discussion in class. The content of the extra article must illuminate some aspect of the class focus of alcohol, well-being, grey zone and ideally relate to the chapter in Gadamer that you are addressing. The additional reading can be from a scholarly journal or book, while the additional news item can be from a news source, a reputable blog or website, magazine; focus on finding timely sources that speak to a current event. Distribution of hand-outs to the class and use of technology are encouraged

Overall, participation is graded based on four criteria: attendance, class participation in discussion, online discussion and discussion response papers. Attendance is a requirement of this seminar. In order to succeed in this course you need to do the readings, participate in class, write clearly and submit assignments on time. An overarching criterion is development in the course. By development here I mean a commitment to engaging the material. If you demonstrate development in the course through increased participation in class and improved discussion responses this is graded more favourably than a contribution that wanes throughout the term. **Effectively, if you attend and participate well, your grade will reflect the highest mark you have received in a graded assignment. If it is average, it will reflect your average grade; if low, it will reflect your lowest grade or even less.**

**Course Outline / Class Schedule -**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
1	Jan. 10 Introductions	Overview of the Course and its Requirements. – Knowledge Creation: Discovery vs. Interpretation	Course Outline. Student self-intro
2	Jan. 17	The methodological and ontological issues involved in the study of well-being. -In-Class Response 1. Edwards Ch. 1	Reading Blum 1 – 15 (esp. 9 – 15 of <i>Grey Zone in Health and Illness</i> ); Bonner on Gadamer, <i>Phaedrus ...</i>
3	Jan. 24	Desire, Euphoria, Addiction  In-Class Response 2	Bonner E-Reserve  Edwards Ch. 2
4	Jan. 31	“The enigma of the brain”. In-Class Response 3 Organize Seminars	Blum. <i>Enigma</i> . (E-Reserve) 108-124 Edwards, Ch. 3
5	Feb. 7	“The enigma of the brain” Exam Review Seminar 1. Gadamer 2 and 3.	Blum. <i>Enigma</i> .
6	Feb. 14	Mid-Term Exam.	
7	Feb 21	Reading Week - No Class	
8	Feb. 28	The Grey Zone: Medical Science and Anthropology on Alcohol Consumption  Seminar 2 Gadamer 4, 5	Bonner (E-Reserve)  Gadamer 3, 4
9	Mar 7	The Grey Zone Continued: Plato on Alcohol Consumption: Seminar 3 Gadamer Ch 6 and 7.	Bonner (E-Reserve)
10	Mar. 14	Health, Well-Being, Intoxication	Simmel, Sociability Edwards Ch 12 – 13
11	Mar 21	The demon drink: The Prohibition Experiment. Seminar 4. Gadamer Ch 8 and 9	Edwards Ch. 6; Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic</i> .
12	Mar 28	Science, Self-Understanding, Addiction and AA . Seminar 5 Gadamer, Ch. 10 and 11.	Edwards Ch.8. Valverde Ch 5.
13	April 4 Hand out take-home exam today	Desire, Folly and Addiction Seminar 6. Gadamer Ch 12 and 13- Course Review and discussion of Take-Home Exam	Bonner, <i>Ironic Intoxication</i> Edwards, Ch. 4 Ch. 13 <i>Globalization of Addiction?</i>

**This is a tentative course outline in the sense that student interest and the emerging course conversation may require the introduction of new material, spending more time with existing material or even returning to material covered earlier. The outline, therefore, is not so much a contract as a proposal.**

#### In-Class Response Questions

Question 1. (Jan 17) What does Edwards mean when he says: “Alcohol is fun, the wine of the Eucharist, a profitable and taxable commodity, but a drug among drugs and highly ambiguous in its costs and benefits.” (11)

Question 2. (Jan 24) Edwards separates alcohol’s meaning for the individual from its meaning in society, calling the latter a secondary meaning. How sociologically sound is that distinction?

Question 3. (Jan 31) Edwards uses Britain to illustrate how society has responded to drunkenness over history. In early 18<sup>th</sup> century it received a new prominence, moving from an individual to a social problem. In what way does the focus on health as against morality or sin influence this change?

Potential In-Class Question? “Intoxication with alcohol is a temporary chemically induced mental disorder where the intoxicated person is generally not out of touch with reality, but will still respond to what culture dictates.” (57) What does Edwards mean here and is the ‘not’ an error?

#### Notes:

**Email is not conducive to discussion and not an alternative way to receive class material.**

Discussion of assignments, class material or sociological questions is welcome at class, during office hours or by appointment. Appointments should be made during office hours or in class for another time. **This course is registered on UW LEARN. Please activate your UW email account.**

#### **UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS**

[The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations](#) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or on the link provided above. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for

granting an alternative examination time.

### **Late Work**

Late Penalty on Take Home Exam – 5% (out of 100%) per day including weekends.

### **Electronic Device Policy**

Uses of electronic devices are not encouraged and they should not interfere with student learning.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students will be spontaneously asked to respond to the readings, which will also serve to note attendance. Another method of attendance taking is having students respond in class to questions posted online.

### **Important Information**

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

**[Academic Integrity Office \(UW\)](#):** A resource for students and instructors.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome’s University.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

**Note for Students with Disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.