



SOCIOLOGY 430 001

Alcohol, Well-Being, Grey Zone

Winter 2020

Class Time: Wednesday 2.30 – 5.00 pm Classroom: SJ1 3020

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Dr. Kieran Bonner - Email: kmbonner@uwaterloo.ca

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Office Hours: T. 5.00 – 6.00pm W. 5.00- 6.00pm Also by appointment

Course Description

This seminar proposes to develop an understanding of the relation between well-being, culture, law, 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 concerns with, law, thinking, learning and addiction. In the case of all topics, 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 paradigmatic 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 12	20%
Take-Home Paper/Exam	April 10 (Distributed on 1 st)	50%
Online Assignment (5 Response to Readings = 5%, 10 Response to Responses = 5%)	Ongoing	10%
Participation		10%
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Total		100%

Online Assignments:

Response to Reading Material: 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 use and regulation and/or intoxication; **each response is worth 1% with all 5 being worth a total of 5%.** This is a completion exercise. The questions will be posted the day after the class and **the Responses to the Reading is due on the following Tuesday by noon.**

Response to Responses: 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**

Tuesday by 10 pm. These are completion assignments **and you will get 5% for completing all 10 responses.**

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:

Depending on enrolment and class preference, there are between 4 and 8 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. 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, euphoria, law, 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 –

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Jan. 8 Introductions	Overview of the Course and its Requirements. – Knowledge Creation: Discovery vs. Interpretation	Course Outline. Student self-intro
2	Jan. 15	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. 22	Profound Desire Ch 1 Euphoria In-Class Response 2 Edwards Ch. 2	Bonner E-Reserve
4	Jan. 29	The Prohibition Experiment In-Class Response 3 (Organize Seminar Presentations)	Edwards Ch. 6; Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic</i> . Edwards, Ch. 3
5	Feb. 5	Science, Self-Understanding, Addiction and AA . Exam Review: Seminar 1 on Gadamer 2, 3	Edwards Ch.8. Valverde Ch 5.
6	Feb. 12	Mid-Term Exam.	
7	Feb 19	Reading Week - No Class	
8	Feb. 26	Motivation and the Desire to Learn: Seminar 2 on Gadamer 4, 5	Bonner (E-Reserve) Gadamer 3, 4
9	Mar 4	The Grey Zone: Plato's Laws, Medical Science, Anthropology on Alcohol Consumption. Seminar 3 on Gadamer Ch 6 and 7.	Bonner (E-Reserve)
10	Mar. 11	The Grey Zone Continued: Plato Laws on Alcohol Consumption.	Bonner e -reserves Seminar 4 on Gadamer Ch 8 and 9.
11	Mar 18	Health, Well-Being, Intoxication. Seminar 5 on Gadamer, Ch. 10 and 11.	Simmel, Sociability Edwards Ch 12 – 13
12	Mar 25	Desire, Folly and cultural addiction. Seminar 6. Gadamer Ch 12 and 13	Bonner, <i>Ironic Intoxication</i> Edwards, Ch. 4 Ch. 13
13	April 1 Hand out take-home exam	Thinking, Desire, Euphoria and Addiction. Course Review. Take-Home Exam	Bonner e- reserves <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 15) 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 22) “The opening chapter of this book might be seen as a voyage around a molecule, with commentary coming from the laboratory sciences. In the present chapter the journey has been as transformed by religion and popular culture.” Edwards P. 29. Critically analyze this statement.

Question 3. (Jan 29) Edwards uses Britain to illustrate how society has responded to drunkenness over history. In early 18th 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?

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.
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- 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 – 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.