



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3362F-001
Sociology of Utopia
Fall 2024

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

Course Description: This course will concentrate on the formation of the Western utopian tradition in sociology, including the ideas of the main theorists of utopia, the history of modern "intentional communities", and current debates within utopian social thought.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above.

Antirequisite(s): None.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, 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.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Show understanding of different modes of social theorizing;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the varieties of theoretical approaches to the study of utopias and versions of the future;
- Show comprehension of the various sociological perspectives of the impacts of utopian thinking and social movements;
- Develop clear, well-thought, and increasingly sophisticated responses to questions posed;
- Display facility in and fluency with core sociological and theoretical concepts and utilise them in the development of oral and written arguments; and,
- Provide thoughtful discussion regarding the roles of agency and responsibility in social action.

Course Material: There is one (1) book that you are required to purchase for this course, which can be found in the University Bookstore, in the library, or in various online bookseller platforms:

Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (any edition will do)

There are also a number of required readings available through the Perusall platform, which is where you will do part of your weekly work. These readings are available without charge.

Communication: You are responsible for the checking the course Owl Brightspace site on a regular basis for news and updates. This will be the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the course.

For questions or messages that are very brief — in other words, you believe it will take no longer than three minutes to respond to — you can message Dr Schaffer or the TAs via the MS Teams channel. For questions that will take longer to respond to but are not conversation-length discussions, please use email. For conversation-length discussions, please arrange an appointment or come by office hours.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Weekly work: Perusall (readings/discussion)	10% -- due weekly at start of class
Weekly work: Entry and/or exit tickets	10% -- due weekly at start and/or end of lecture
Weekly work: In-class discussion and recitation	10% -- assessed weekly
Midterm examination	15% -- in class on Th Oct 10
Paper assignment	35% -- components due across the term; paper is due in last class session (Thurs Dec 5 th)
Final oral examination	20% -- occurs during December exam period
Lecture attendance and course engagement	Discretionary non-negotiable adjustment of up to +/-3%

Please note the following regarding your work in this course:

- We will be using standards-based assessment in this course, which means that you do not “lose marks” — marks are earned through the quality of the work submitted – in other words, we start marking up from 0, not down from 100.
- There are three forms of weekly work to do: the Perusall readings/annotations/discussion (linked to the Owl site); the entry and exit tickets for each class session; and the participation in discussion in both formats of the class session. The Perusall and in-class discussions will be evaluated on a numeric basis; the entry and exit tickets will occur in class and are for credit, half-credit, or no credit.
- Each of the three forms of weekly work will have ten (10) submissions. You are allowed to miss two (2) from each category without any penalty (so the 8 remaining submissions would be averaged to calculate your mark). If you miss three or more submissions within a category, then *all* missed work for that category will receive a grade of 0. Because of this flexibility with regard to these submissions, the professor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for these missed elements.
- For the midterm exam: if you are unable to write the exam in class on the assigned day, you will be given the opportunity to write it as a take-home exam that will involve more writing than expected in class.
- For the paper assignment, note that there is a one-week grace period in which you can submit the paper without penalty. After one week, papers will not be accepted barring serious incidents that merit academic consideration; these must be discussed with Dr Schaffer as soon as possible

- Dr Schaffer's evaluation of your performance throughout the course and the extent to which it is reflected in your course grade drive any kind of discretionary adjustment based on that performance (so if someone's mark is a C+ but they clearly worked their ass off during the term, it could be adjusted by up to 3 marks). Note that requesting this discretionary adjustment will disqualify you from receiving it.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. 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 schedule 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 elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Course Schedule, Lectures, and Readings:

The course reading and lecture schedule will be posted on Owl prior to the start of the course.

Artificial Intelligence: Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a

topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments.

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](#)” document

https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

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