

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY 3362G-200 (Sociology of Utopia)

TERM:	Winter Term 2025
INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Michael E. Gardiner
CONTACT:	megardin@uwo.ca
DELIVERY METHOD:	Blended

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. We'll conclude with a consideration of the utopian/dystopian possibilities of the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

Prerequisite(s):

Registration in third year or above

Antirequisite(s): N/A

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will:

- * Have a deep and broad understanding of contemporary social theory as it relates to utopianism
- * Understand how social theory informs other branches of sociology
- * Significantly develop their critical and creative thinking & writing skills
- * Develop presentation skills (clearly express ideas and arguments orally & lead discussions)

MAIN TEXTS

All readings are online via OWL Brightspace/Weldon Library with one exception:

Peter Frase, *Four Futures: Visions of the World after Capitalism*, London and New York: Verso, 2016.

Physical copies can be purchased through the campus bookstore; alternatively, electronic copies can be ordered via:

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/246224/four-futures-by-peter-frase/9781781688151>

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Synchronous Class participation	15%
Forum responses (asynchronous)	10%
Class presentation	20%
Term paper proposal	10%
Term paper	45%
Total:	100%

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. SYNCHRONOUS VIRTUAL MEETINGS (15%)

All seminars will be synchronous sessions via Zoom scheduled during the allotted time above, between 9:30 am – 12:30 pm Tuesdays weekly (transitional break 10:45 am – 11:00 am).

Attendance is mandatory. Half the class will participate in the first hour and fifteen minutes (9:30 am – 10:45 am), and the other half in the second hour and twenty minutes (11:00 am – 12:15 pm), organized typically around two oral presentations (more on this below). **Web cameras must normally be turned 'on' at all times during class unless formal dispensation from Western has been obtained.**

2. Asynchronous responses to readings (10%)

10% of the final grade will be allotted to written responses to class discussion questions for two marks each, 150-200 words each post. Five answers should be posted over the course of the term, no more than one per week. Such postings also cannot involve questions or readings student base their oral presentation on (see below).

3. Class presentation (20%)

Each student will be required to present orally on one of the readings assigned in a given week. This will be a critical précis that raises questions for class discussion. Prepare for a 10-12 minute presentation. The use of (very) short video clips or other materials is acceptable, but has to be approved by the Professor in advance. A week after the presentation, the student will submit a written version of the talk for grading (20% of final grade). What this entails is a short essay-type paper, 5-6 pages long, 12-scale font, double-spaced, with cleaned-up text and a clear beginning, middle, and end, that engages critically with the major themes and positions taken up by the reading(s) as you see them. Try to give me a sense of what you think of the claims made, whether they hold up to scrutiny, etc. Citations should be properly referenced. You can refer to outside sources, but this is not mandatory. You can use any citation style you like, so long as it is a recognized format and consistently applied.

4. Term paper proposal (10%)

Term paper proposals will be due Monday 16th Feb. by 12:00 pm (noon). Two pages maximum point form, single-spaced, plus one page of references (minimum five outside class readings).

The Professor will comment on the proposal and provide feedback and additional references relevant for the writing of the final term paper.

5. Term paper (45%)

The final term paper, 10-12 pages, double-spaced, 12-scale font Times Roman), worth 45% of the final grade, will be due Tues April 7th by 4:00 pm. (Comments on major term papers will only be provided if requested in advance of submission, and late assignments will receive no written feedback.)

Important Policies

AI Policy: Students are expected to write their essays unaided and in their own words. Using AI programs such as ChatGPT to write an assignment will be treated as a Scholastic Offence in a manner similar to plagiarism.

Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration](#) – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html . 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 scheduled 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 in the course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf> or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Once the request and supporting documentation have been received and reviewed, appropriate academic consideration, if granted, shall be determined by the instructor in consultation with the academic advisor, in a manner consistent with the course outline. Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam, unless otherwise specified in the course outline. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup text/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty Academic Counselling Office.

Students who fail to write a make-up test or special examination will receive a grade of zero on that assessment. No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Religious Accommodation: Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or University approved emergency during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Code of Student Conduct: It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize him or herself with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and

that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) they may have taken. Students must familiarize themselves with the Student Responsibility for Course Selection policy https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf and the Registration and Progression policy https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf. Students are responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Requirements for their degree program https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf.

Support Services:

Office of the Registrar Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

[Faculty Academic Advising](#) - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

[USC services](#) offers information about student the health/dental plan, Bus Pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

[Mental health](#) – Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

[Health & Wellness Services](#) – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>. Additional on-campus services are also available <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/services/index.html>.

[Accessible Education](#) provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

[Gender-Based and Sexual Violence](#) – Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: http://uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

[Western Libraries](#) – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.

[Writing support](#) – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>

Bookstore: Search for Textbook availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search>