The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3362F-001
Sociology of Futures
Fall 2026

Instructor: Dr. Scott Schaffer
Department of Sociology
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Course Description: This course will concentrate on the formation of the Western future-oriented tradition in sociology, including the ideas of the main theorists of sociological futures, efforts to implement such theories, and current debates within future-oriented 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 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.

2025-2026

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

- Show understanding of different aspects of theorizing sociologically about the future;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the varieties of theoretical approaches to and ethical implications of versions of the future;
- Understand the challenges of translating sociological theories of the future into concrete social action or policy;
- 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: You will not be required to purchase any texts for this course. Readings for this course will appear on the Perusall platform, where you will also be discussing them.

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 TA 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: In-class writing exercises	10% -- due weekly at end of lecture
Weekly work: In-class discussion and recitation	10% -- assessed weekly
Midterm essay examination	15% -- in class in Week 6 (October 22)
Paper assignment (min. 2500 words)	35% -- components due across the term; paper is due in last class session (December 3)
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 in-class writing exercises for each class session; and the participation in discussion in both formats of the class session. The Perusall work and in-class discussions will be evaluated on a numeric basis; the in-class writing exercises 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, the weight will be automatically shifted to the final exam; no accommodation is needed or required.
- For the paper assignment and each phase of the assignment, note that there is a three-day grace period in which you can submit the course paper without penalty. For the phases of the assignment, submissions between four and seven days late will receive half-credit, while those after one week will receive zero credit. 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

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(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.

Course Schedule, Lectures, and Readings:

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

Electronic Device Usage: During regular lectures, my preference, supported by scientific research about retention of ideas, is that laptops are not used for note-taking, and instead they are hand-written on paper or tablet computer. (You'll find that trying to completely transcribe my lecture presentations will not be as helpful as you think.) You are welcome to record class lectures and discussions subject to the conditions presented in the Student Code of Conduct. During exams, no use of *any* electronic device is permitted.

Artificial Intelligence: Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering, preliminary research purposes, and light editing of a student's original prose (proofreading and spell- and grammar-checking). 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 must reflect the student's own thoughts, analyses, interpretations, 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 support them in producing original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments. Any use of any form of AI, including editing, must be declared in the written work and the URL for the chat must be provided, or the weight of that assignment will be shifted to a subsequent one.

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Department of Sociology
Effective September 1, 2026.

Academic Policies

Scholastic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the Scholastic Offences Policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf .

Plagiarism: 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 the 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 Western University and 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.

Prior to any examination, students must turn their cellphones off and store them in their bags/coat at the front of the room. The use (or possession) of cellphones or other communications technologies during examinations is strictly prohibited. Those caught using a cell phone or other communication technologies, or even the physical possession of these technologies during an examination, will result in a zero on the examination in question. Similarly, the use (or possession) of these technologies during examination breaks (bathroom breaks during an exam) will also result in a zero. Intent does not matter. Forgetting to put away your cellphone or other communication technologies, whether during the examination or on examination breaks (bathroom breaks), are not justifications. It will result in a zero on the examination in question. In sum, your cellphones should never be seen or heard during an examination and should always be stored in your bags/coats at the front of the room.

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.

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

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. Students must ensure course prerequisites have been completed successfully or special permission from the Dean is obtained. Students who fail to so do will be removed from the course without adjustments to fees. The decision may not be appealed.

Student Responsibility for Course Selection:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf

Registration and Progression:
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf

Graduation Requirememts:
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf

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 regularly scheduled 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.

Procedure on makeup assessments for Social Science students and for courses offered by the Faculty of Social Science (Effective September 1, 2026):

If academic consideration is granted, students should consult the course outline for information regarding how the missed assessment will be addressed and follow any instructions provided by the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, the weight of a missed test/quiz or mid-term may be transferred to another assessment in the course, including the final exam, rather than requiring a makeup assessment. Reweighting is not available for missed final exams.

Students are entitled to **one makeup assessment opportunity** for a missed test/quiz, mid-term, or final exam supported by approved academic consideration. **No additional makeup opportunities will be provided**. Makeup assessments represent the final opportunity to complete a missed course assessment. 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.

What happens if I miss a makeup assessment as a Social Science student or in a course offered by the Faculty of Social Science?

Students who miss a makeup assessment are not eligible for an additional makeup opportunity. Depending on their circumstances, they may:

1. Remain enrolled in the course and accept a grade of zero on the missed makeup assessment. Students should consult the course outline and calculate whether they can still achieve a passing grade in the course.
2. Withdraw from the course through Student Center before the published drop deadline. A course dropped before the deadline will result in a withdrawal (WDN) without academic penalty. Part-time students should consult the Registrar's Office refund schedule to determine whether a tuition refund is available. Students enrolled full-time in 4.0-5.0 courses are generally not eligible for tuition refunds when a course is dropped.
3. If the published drop deadline has passed and the missed makeup assessment is supported by appropriate documentation, students may submit their documentation through the Student Absence Portal to request a **WDN (withdrawal without academic penalty)**. Approval is not automatic and remains subject to Faculty review. Requests for a second makeup assessment will not be considered.

Students are encouraged to carefully consider their ability to complete a makeup assessment as scheduled, as no further opportunities to complete the missed work will be available.

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 Advising Office.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence 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.

Guidelines for Grades/Marks:

The Department of Sociology has grade distribution guidelines that all instructors are expected to follow. Generally, and with few exceptions, this means that the number of A's in a course cannot exceed the number of B's, and class means are expected to fall within a prescribed percentage range. This means that your final grade depends on your ranking relative to your peers. Courses with grades falling outside this range may be adjusted, up or down. These guidelines do not prohibit a student achieving 95% or higher in all their courses, but it does mean that an entire course cannot be made up of students receiving 95%. This policy combats grade inflation, contributing to higher standards, and ensuring uniformity across all courses of the same level. Motivated and hard-working students receive grades well above the course averages. The use of grade guidelines, including any adjustments of grades, either up or down for this purpose, cannot be used as the basis of an appeal.

Sociology 1000-Level
A's not to exceed B's
Means in the range of 68-72%

Sociology 2000-Level
A's not to exceed B's
Means in the range of 70-75%

Sociology 3000-Level
Means in the range of 73-80%

Sociology 4000-Level
Means in the range of 78-82%

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** – information available regarding student health/dental plan, LTC 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 https://www.uwo.ca/health/ 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.
- **Accessible Education** provides support 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 on the Wellness and Wellbeing website https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.
- **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 also available https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html.
- **Writing Support Centre** – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available to undergraduate students https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/.
- **Bookstore:** Search for Textbook/course material availability and cost https://bookstore.uwo.ca/course-materials-textbooks/course-materials-and-textbooks.