

SOC*4430: Alternative Social Possibilities

Winter 2019

Seminar: Wednesdays, 7:00-9:50 pm

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Office Hour: Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 pm

Course Description:

The end of the Cold War was memorable for bold proclamations on the ultimate state of the world. At the outset of the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher consecrated the marriage of neoliberalism and capitalism, declaring *There Is No Alternative*. At the end of the decade, Francis Fukuyama marked the triumph of liberal democracy over communism, expounding upon *The End of History*. Against this backdrop – these foreclosures on other futures, on alternatives to the *status quo* – sociologists persist in imagining the world *otherwise*, generating important questions around alternative social possibilities: How can we confer upon individuals and groups more autonomy in their lives? How do we build solidarity that is also inclusive? How do we create more an equal society? Is ‘utopia’ even a desirable goal, or merely a pathway to ‘dystopia’? Today, in 2019, we are presented with new questions that stir the sociological imagination: How can we confront our rapidly aging population in innovative ways? How can we navigate the new social realities brought about by digital technologies? How can we think innovatively about addressing climate change? Is the ‘sharing economy’ really to our benefit? What might a decolonized relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous/racialized peoples look like? This course, ambitiously, joins those larger theoretical questions for imagining society differently with their practical application amid current social realities.

Seminars will be largely class-discussion-oriented. Students will each be responsible for presenting on one of the assigned weekly readings, to be selected by everyone at the first class based on a lottery system. Regular attendance and contribution to the general discussion of the readings is essential to the success of the course and will constitute a portion of students’ final marks. A final research paper will allow students to investigate a topic of their choosing, situated broadly within the themes of the course.

The required readings list will be posted on Courselink for students. No purchase of a textbook is required as readings will be made available online through the library’s ARES system.

Learning Objectives & Outcomes:

- Students will interrogate and expand their understanding of the meaning of ‘the social’
- Students will question and critique existing modes of social organization in the West, with particular attention to social problems in Canada
- Students will build their theoretical and conceptual tool kit for analyzing different social realities
- Students will develop their methodological reasoning in completing a research paper
- Students will develop their presentation skills
- Students will consider their own location within structures of power and privilege
- Students will exercise professionalism and ethics in their completion of assignments, with attention to guidelines on academic integrity
- Students will demonstrate intellectual curiosity and develop their problem-solving, decision-making, listening, and communication skills
- Students will show leadership, accountability, personal organization, teamwork, and time management

Grading:

- 22% Weekly Seminar Participation
- 20% One Seminar Presentation
- 18% Nine Weekly Reading Responses (due before each class, starting week two)
- 40% Research Paper (5% for the proposal due March 6th & 35% for the paper due April 5th)

Note: this outline may be periodically subject to updates to provide additional information; in such instances students will be notified.

Standard Statements - UNDERGRADUATE ([AVPA office](#))

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <mail.uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. [See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.](#)

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty is Friday, March 8. For [regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar.](#)

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email sas@uoguelph.ca or see the [website](#).

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to

remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. [*The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.*](#)

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The [*Academic Calendars*](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.