
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

WINTER 2025

SOC* 4430: Alternative Social Possibilities

Course Description

Sociology does not just investigate and analyze society, it also develops research and practices intent on creating alternatives to the existing order. What do alternatives to the constraints of present-day society look like? Is every future a dream of the past? How are problems identified? Who imagines these solutions? How are they implemented? This course will examine big ideas as well as pragmatic solutions to the question of social change that animates so much of the critical and progressive literature in sociology. This seminar will explore practical and experimental approaches to social change, including topics such as utopian thinking, experiments in collective living, art and creativity, prison abolition, and anti-oppression pedagogy. Students will not only learn about past and present approaches to social change, they will also experiment with transformative practices via class activities and assignments.

As a seminar, students are expected to attend and actively participate in class. The learning environment will focus on open dialogue, belonging, active learning, and creativity. Students should be prepared to explore and experiment with their learning inside the classroom. Please discuss any concerns or needed accommodations with the instructor as soon as possible. This is an in-person class; there is no online option to attend.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Compare perspectives on social change in the social sciences
- Compare lineages of social change and activism in the contemporary period
- Critically evaluate research and case studies on developing social alternatives
- Understand practical and conceptual tensions between theory and practice
- Identify the strengths and limitations of utopian thinking
- Apply critical and creative thinking to diverse examples
- Employ effective communication skills
- Employ effective collaboration and group work skills

Evaluation

Weekly Questions (15%):

The 'Assignment' Assignment (25%)

Discussion Leader (5%):

Final Project (55%; multistage)