



Department of Anthropology
Anthro 365F: Anthropology of the Future
COURSE OUTLINE
Fall 2026

August 17, 2026

Instructor and Course Information

Instructor: Greg Beckett

Method of delivery: In person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: 0.5 credit in any Social Science course and registration in third or fourth year.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

Course Description

This course explores how “the future” is imagined, constructed, and contested as a temporal category and a space of possibility. Drawing on anthropological theory, science fiction literature and film, and critical analysis of colonial history, we examine how ideas about the future are shaped by power, ideology, and cultural difference.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze cultural texts, including science fiction writing, film, and other imaginative narrative forms.
- Interpret cultural texts by drawing on historical, social, economics, political, or other factors related to production and distribution of these texts.
- Explain how ideas of the future have changed over time in relation to changing patterns of labour organization and in relation to the role of technology in society, ideas of time, work, and freedom, and ideas of cultural difference.
- Analyze and comment on representations of the future in relation to other aspects of social, economic, and political life by using key concepts in anthropological theory.
- Understand and apply anthropological approaches to studying cultural texts, popular culture, technology, and politics.
- Identify how the histories of capitalism, colonialism, and conquest have shaped ideas of the future and ideas of utopia and dystopia.

- Analyze anthropological concepts and cases and effectively communicate that analysis both orally (through participation in regular class discussions) and in written assignments.
- Work collaboratively with a group of peers to develop shared understandings of course materials.

Course Materials

Many of the readings for this course can be found in digital format through the "Course Readings" tool in the course site, at no cost to students. I will also include links to these PDFs on the weekly lesson pages in Brightspace.

Some weeks, you will also be asked to watch films before class, and we will treat these films as required class texts. I will post links for online sources for these films on the weekly lesson pages.

Required textbook:

Benjamin, Ruha. 2024. *Imagination, A Manifesto*. W.W. Norton. This required reading costs \$16.00 on Amazon. This book will also be on reserve at Weldon.

Capek, Karel. *Rossum's Universal Robots*. Claudia Novack, translated. Penguin Classics. This required reading costs \$19.00 on Amazon. I will also provide a link on Brightspace to a free version of the text online.

Dimaline, Cherie. 2017. *The Marrow Thieves*. DCB Press. This required reading costs \$19.95 on Amazon. This book is also widely available from public libraries (as ebook, audio book, etc.).

More, Thomas. 2003 [1515]. *Utopia*. Penguin Classics (preferred edition to use). This required reading costs \$16.00 on Amazon. I will also provide a link on Brightspace to a free version of the text online.

Students are welcome to purchase second-hand or earlier editions of these readings.

Evaluation

Student assessments for this course include the following:

Weekly Quizzes 10%

Utopia Project 25%

Analysis Project 25%

Final Project 40%

Quizzes (10%)

There will be weekly quizzes starting week 2, to be completed online in Brightspace before each class session. Weekly quizzes are meant to motivate you to complete all the reading before class and to give us all a starting point for discussion. There will be no make-up quizzes, but the lowest two quiz grades will be dropped.

Utopia Project (25%)

Working in groups (or individually, if you prefer) students will produce their own mini version of More's Utopia. You may focus on what someone from "elsewhere" would think of our own society, or write a description of a utopian society (drawing on More's book as a template for how to approach this). Several options for how to approach this project will be given closer to the assignment date, but may include a podcast, a dialogue, an essay, or a slideshow with voiceover. More info will be posted to Brightspace. Due in Week 6. The due date will include a flexible submission window.

Analysis Project (25%)

Students will complete a project that offers an analysis of two of the cultural texts (films or fiction pieces) and that draws on several of the theoretical course readings and concepts. Several options for how to approach this project will be given closer to the assignment date, but may include a group project (e.g., a podcast that analyses course films using concepts from our readings and lectures), an annotation project (that supplements an AI-generated answer with additional analytic insights from the course), or a more standard essay prompt. More info will be posted to Brightspace. Due in Week 10. The due date will include a flexible submission window.

Final Project (40%)

Students will complete a final project due during the final exam period (date TBD). The final project will explore key themes from the course material and apply key concepts and theories to the ethnographic cases (films). More information about format and ways to approach final projects will be given in class, but the final project will draw on some of the prompts given at the end of Ruha Benjamin's *Imagination, A Manifesto*.

Please consult Western's policy on [Academic Consideration](#).

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass This Course

The writing assignments in this course are designed to help you meet the course learning outcomes. They give you an opportunity to go back over the readings, deepen your understanding of them both in relation to the readings for other weeks and to the contextual information shared in the weekly lessons, gather evidence to support your analysis, and communicate that analysis. In order to pass this course, students must complete and pass all writing assignments.

Additional Statements

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#) policies in the Academic Calendar. Such items include accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, academic considerations, academic appeals, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and code of student conduct.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

You may use laptops, tablets, or other electric devices to take notes in class. You may not record class lectures or discussions. Phones or other devices, including smart watches, cannot be worn during exams or tests.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Any submitted assignments should be your own original work. Plagiarism or the use of generative-AI tools to produce student work is an academic offence. You may use generative-AI tools to

brainstorm ideas (although it would be better to talk to fellow students in the course or to come see me in office hours!), but you cannot use such tools to produce your assignments.

Statement on 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, in the [Scholastic Offenses policy](#).

All required written work 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](#).

Computer-marked multiple-choice texts 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.

Statement on 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. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. All students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Writing assignments should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work.

Support Services

For student support services please see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and [Academic Support and Engagement](#).

Statement on 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 experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the [GBSV survivor support webpage](#).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education

Students with disabilities work with the Accessible Education office which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see [Accessible Education](#) for information.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). 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.

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