

Intro (FORE 6311)

Spring 2024

Instructor: John A. Sweeney

Time: Monday, 5:30-8:30pm CST

Location: [Zoom](#)

Contact: jasweeney@uh.edu; johnasweeney@gmail.com, @aloha_futures (Telegram)

Office Hours: By appointment

Prerequisites: None, although an unceasing sense of curiosity won't hurt!

"In as far as futures studies involves systematic and disciplined, empirical and rational exploration of future possibilities, futures studies is a science. But experimentation is not a possibility in futures studies; so, in that sense, futures studies is not a science. In as far as future studies involves foresight, prospective analysis, creation of visions and images, future studies is an art. It is the art of anticipation based on the science of exploration." - Zia Sardar

Overview

This course provides an introduction to futures studies (hereafter futures) and foresight...as both an art and science. Centered around key concepts and activities, the course provides an overview of frameworks, tools, methods, as well as the contextual and historical foundations of the field and key practices. Ultimately, the course aims to provide a foundation for one's own journey into and through the field.

Participation in this course necessitates active engagement during online sessions and the timely completion of all assignments.

Learning Objectives

Students in this course will demonstrate an/the:

- + Understanding of the key concepts of futures and foresight
- + Awareness of the contextual and historical foundations of the field and key practices
- + Capacity to build a practice of horizon scanning
- + Ability to assess images of the future and emerging issues

Required Texts

All readings will be made available through Blackboard. It is expected that everyone will have completed all assigned readings before our meeting and, most importantly, prepared either questions and/or a short response to be shared during our class discussions and/or on Blackboard.

Learning Journey

Many, if not most, questions related to the course flow and structure can be answered by the syllabus. Befriend it, but also feel free to ask any and all questions if things are unclear. Given the uncertainty of our present moment, we may shift the schedule to accommodate ongoing events, so there may be some "emergence" to confront. We will navigate this complexity together. Below, you will find the core elements of the course.

Discussions

As noted on the Course Schedule, some weeks have “D,” which designates a Discussion posting to be completed on Blackboard.

Assignments

Images of the Future Analysis

At the heart of futures and foresight are images (or imaginings) of the future, which can come in various forms. From data models to science fiction, images of the future have a profound effect on how we think and feel about what might lie ahead. This assignment centers on analyzing key elements of an image of the future. There is a template for this assignment.

Scanning Library Assignment

Over the duration of the course, everyone will start a horizon scanning practice, and we will discuss scanning throughout the semester. Over the past decade, I have setup and supported horizon scanning units in organizations such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, INTERPOL, and the European Commission. And, I love scanning! We will scan using a [shared Diigo library](#).

Emerging Issues PechaKucha

The ability to analyze signals (both strong and weak) is an essential practice in the futures and foresight field. Emerging Issues Analysis builds on the foundational work of Graham T.T. Monitor and uses the S-curve. There is a template for this assignment based on the [PechaKucha](#) presentation model.

FuturePod Reflections

While there are many podcasts covering “futures,” few have Select two [FuturePod](#) interviews and complete the template. Everyone will share one of his/her reflections during weeks 12-15.

Final Essay

The assignment blends both critical and reflective writing styles and builds on earlier assignments. Overall, the final essay is an opportunity for you to share what you have learned as well as reflect on perennial questions within the field of futures and foresight. A template with guiding questions will be provided for this assignment.

Grading

Discussions	30%
Image of the future Analysis Assignment	10%
Scanning Library Assignment	10%
Emerging Issues PechaKucha Assignment	10%
FuturePod Reflections	15%
Final Essay	25%

Interaction

The course is conducted virtually on Zoom, and if you have any issues attending course sessions, please let me know as soon as possible. All class sessions will be recorded, so you can catch up as needed. All course materials are housed on Blackboard (www.uh.edu/blackboard).

Academic honesty policy All UH students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UH catalog. Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production (such as other people's words) without quotations or citations, will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. Internet sources must be credited according to the sites recommended citation guideline if available. If no citation guideline is provided by the web source, then the date, URL site owner, and author must be included with the web material used.

Disabilities: If you have a disability and need a special accommodation consult first with the Coordinator of Health Disabilities Services, Bayou 1402, telephone 283-2627, and then discuss the accommodation with me.

Incomplete: A grade of "I" is given only in cases of documented emergency or special circumstances late in the semester, provided that the student has been making satisfactory progress. An Incomplete Grade Contract must be completed.

Withdrawals: Last day to withdraw drop or with a "W" for Spring 2023 is April 19, 2023.

FORE 6311: Introduction to Futures Studies and Foresight

Schedule Spring 2024

Contact: jasweeney@uh.edu, johnasweeney@gmail.com, @aloha_futures (Telegram)

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4460505238>

Miro:

Please note that the schedule and requirements sometimes (and should even be expected to) change as the semester unfolds. The “official” requirements are on the intro page each week on Blackboard. The first column contains the date for class each week. The second column contains weekly topics and themes. Key content readings are listed as well. Other required or recommended readings will be included on Blackboard as things develop, new topics emerge, and discussions evolve. It is my expectation that you complete all readings/viewings before our class as the primary focus of each seminar will be the assigned content. The fourth column contains what will be submitted each. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due on midnight of the day before the next class (Monday the following week). (A) is an assignment posting, and (P) refers to presentations.

Week and Date	Topic	Discussions / Framings / Readings (subject to change) <i>(Readings to be reviewed before class)</i>	Submission <i>(due before the start of the next class)</i>
Week 1 Jan 22	Introductions / Polak Game / Bias Wheel	Readings: <i>Dator</i> , “What Futures Studies Is and Is Not”; <i>Slaughter</i> , “Futures Concepts”	(D) Introductions
Week 2 Jan 29	Images of the Future	Readings: <i>Hayward and Candy</i> , “Polak Game”	(A) Image of the Future analysis
Week 3 Feb 5	Futures Fallacies / Bias Wheel	Readings: <i>Milojevic</i> , “Futures Fallacies;” <i>Schultz</i> , “Crazy Futures”	(D) Fallacies / Biases
Week 4 Feb 12	Transformative vs. Strategic Futures & Foresight	Readings: <i>Sweeney</i> , “Aperture: An Approach for Transformative Futures & Foresight”	(D) MindTime analysis
Week 5 Feb 19	Forces: Novelty, Continuity, Change	Readings: TBD	(D) Forces
Week 6 Feb 26	Frameworks: STEEP, STEEPED, PESTLE, Verge, etc.	Readings: TBD	(D) Framework approaches
Week 7 Mar 4	Scanning	Readings: <i>Choo</i> , “Art of Scanning;” <i>Hitunen</i> , “Where to Look for Weak Signals”	(A) Scanning Library (due Exam Week)
Week 8 Mar 11	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break

Week and Date	Topic	Discussions / Framings / Readings (subject to change) <i>(Readings to be reviewed before class)</i>	Submission <i>(due before the start of the next class)</i>
Week 9 Mar 18	Trends	Readings: TBD	(A) Scanning (continues until week 15) (D) Trends
Week 10 Mar 25	Emerging Issues Analysis	Readings: Dator, "Emerging Issues Analysis;" Monitor, "22-Step Change Model"	(A) Emerging Issues Pecha Kucha
Week 11 Apr 1	Drivers	Readings: Inayatullah, "Futures Triangle;" TBD	(D) Driver analysis
Week 12 Apr 8	Scenarios	Readings: Spaniol / Rowland, "Defining Scenario;" Curry, "Critical History"	(A) 2x2 Matrix
Week 13 Apr 15	Alternative Futures	Readings: Dator, "Alternative Futures;" Bishop, Hines, Collins, "Overview of Current Scenario Techniques"	(D) Archetype analysis
Week 14 Apr 22	Visioning	Readings: Schultz, ""Visioning Methods Inventory"	(D) Vision reflection
Week 15 Apr 29	Participatory Futures	Readings: Ramos et al. "Our Futures"	(D) Our Futures game reflection
Exam Week May 1-7	Podcast Reflections & Final Essay Assignments due by May 7th		