Advanced Strategies (HDCS 6331)

Fall 2025
Course Time: Thursdays 5:30–8:30pm CST, Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4460505238
Instructor: Dr. John A. Sweeney
Office Hours: Time is a flat circle … will make time … just ask … two hours per week
Contact: Please use Canvas email; if urgent: jasweene@central.uh.edu

"Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth"
- Mike Tyson

"Narrative imposes on the events of the past, present and the future a particular structure that they in themselves do not have. In such way narrative always mediates our understanding across the three time dimensions, making choices, action and strategy possible."
- Milojevic and Inayatullah

"In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."
- Eisenhower

"I ask you to allow this book to constantly invite you to look at the world in the mirror to see what is real and not turn away. This is what sitting with" means and it is very different from strategies to fix or save the world that promise you validation, triumph, power, and pleasure. If you are really looking for strategies that can make you feel good, look good, and move forward, and if you know that this is what you need right now, do not read this book."
- Machado de Oliveira

Introduction

This course will present a wide array of theories and tools of strategy development, design, and delivery.

Strategy is all about choice.

Strategic thinking does not operate in a vacuum … it is always embedded within and situated by context.

To explore these dynamics, the course is organized in four modules:

- Post-Futuring … scenarios and implications are done … yay … now what?

- Visions & Preferred Futures … crafting a north star … why?

- Strategic Planning … making choices … what and when?

- Rubber meets the road … capabilities, partnerships, movements … who?

This course builds off strategic approaches and perspectives aligned with Framework Foresight, but it also delves into a range of methods and tools deeply rooted within Transformative Foresight, which aims to deepen foresight engagements by emphasizing the need to look inward … surfacing

assumptions, highlighting biases and blind spots, calling attention to power dynamics (internal and external), and rooting outcomes and outputs in narrative foresight framings.

This course has typically used a "pretend" client which teams "work" for. But, we will have three this semester:

+ Royal Dutch Shell (probably needs no explanation)

+ NATO (guessing the same applies here)

+ Zoe Coffee (international boutique family-owned distributor with ties to both Brasil and the UAE)

Students will be divided into teams and each team will be responsible for developing a strategy for their respective client based on existing foresight work.

Teams will interface with their client (TBD … inshallah … fingers crossed) and will have the opportunity to present their work directly to them (either via Zoom or recording or … serendipity could strike … let's not limit ourselves, ok?).

Objectives

The course objectives:

- Deep dive into the "influencing" side (i.e. visioning, designing, adapting) of the Framework

- Offer an integrated approach and options for strategy … from ideation to implementation

- Enhance familiarity with various, and nontraditional, strategy theories and tools

- Learn-by-doing via a group strategy project for a real world client

Books

<u>Required</u>

- Sun Tzu (Ames translation), *The Art of Warfare*

- McKeown, *The Strategy Book* (pdf available)

- Conway, *Foresight Infused Strategy*

- Machado de Oliveira, *Outgrowing Modernity: Navigating Complexity, Complicity, and Collapse with Accountability and Compassion*

Interaction

Classes are held virtually on Thursday evenings via the [Zoom](). If you can't make the virtual class, you can listen to an archived recording, but we are going to do a number of in-class sessions, so if you plan to miss a number of sessions, please communicate this to me … early and often!

The links to the recordings will be posted in the Zoom discussion forum in Canvas. Regular communication with the instructor should be through Canvas, but you can use regular email (just expect a slower response)

NOTE: I will occasionally offer "Team Time" blocks during class for the teams to coordinate assignments and next steps. Please keep in mind that *EACH INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHECKING IN WITH THEIR GROUP AND CONTRIBUTING.* If you can't make it to class, you need to check in with the team and see what the assignment is. The team is also responsible for then passing on what was covered in any group discussion in class. You might consider assigning a note-taker.

NOTE: please be sure to *download all materials you want to keep* as class materials are removed after the semester ends.

Activities and Assignments

<ins>AI Strategy Conversation</ins>

Consider this a bit of a choose-your-own-adventure exploration with AI. Using a set of prompts / framings, you will engage the AI / LLM of your choosing in a conversation on strategy … what it is … and is not! Your conversation should last one hour and the outcome (the assignment itself) should be 3-4 pages in length.

<ins>Compilation of in-class Strategy Assignments</ins>

During specific class sessions, we will utilize strategy methods and tools. Each session will have a group component and individual reflection. We will work collectively on Miro, and these will be submitted via Canvas.

<ins>Book Review</ins>

A template will be provided, and you may select one of the following (first come, first served) or propose an alternate text:

- Collins, Jim. *Good to Great* OR *Built to Last*
- Curtis, Rachel and Elizabeth City. *Strategy in Action*
- de Ruijter, Paul. Scenario- Based Strategy
- Dixit, Avinash. *The Art of Strategy*
- Freedman, Lawrence. *Strategy*
- Gaddis, John Lewis. *On Grand Strategy*
- Kaplan, Robert and David Norton. *The Strategy-Focused Organization*
- Kiechel, Walter. *Lords of Strategy*
- Kim, W. Chan and Renee A. Mauborgne. *Blue Ocean Strategy*
- Laffley & Martin, Playing to Win
- Montgomery, Cynthia. *The Strategist*
- Mui, Chunka and Paul Carroll. *Billion-Dollar Lessons*
- Porter, Michael. *Competitive Strategy* OR *Competitive Advantage*,
- Raynor, Michael. *The Strategy Paradox*
- Reeves, Martin et al. *Your Strategy Needs a Strategy*
- Schuhly et al, *Real Time Strategy: When Strategic Foresight Meets Artificial Intelligence*
- Rumelt, Richard. *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*
- Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why*
- Sloan, Julia. *Learning to Think Strategically*
- Stadler et al, *Open Strategy*

<u>Pitch / Class Presentation</u>

Based on a strategy framework of your team's choosing, you make your pitch to your client. You will present in class, and, if possible, in front of the client (TBC). There will not be a template for this, and groups will be given class time to work collectively. Additionally, there will be Team Time (as noted above).

Grading

AI Strategy Conversation	10%
Compilation of in-class Strategy Assignments	30%
Book Review	10%
Pitch/Class Presentation	50%

<u>Criteria</u>

Points	Category	Description
95	Excellent 100 for super- awesome!	Demonstrates exceptional mastery of concepts, expression, and application of course materials. No improvable items
90	Very Good	Only one or two minor improvable items.

85	Solid Competence	Demonstrates good ability to meet specifications of assignments and evaluation criteria. Only one major *or* more than two minor improvable items
80	Meets Minimum Expectations	Demonstrates adequate performance on assignments and meeting evaluation criteria. More than one major improvable item.
75	Below Expectations	Some value, but serious deficiencies

Late Assignments

- Assignments are given due dates in the schedule and in Canvas. Late assignments are deducted a one-time 10 point penalty and may be submitted any time thereafter with just that penalty. So, there is no good excuse not to submit an assignment!

AI Policy

I use AI in my professional work, and I expect that you are, at least, familiar with one of more of the "freely" AI platforms (i.e. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.)

As with the dawn of the Internet, AI is changing foresight.

While it is my preference that YOU complete the work required by the assignment, I think that it is critical to engage with these tools.

So, the use of AI is permitted. Guidelines for the use of AI tools in this class follow, however, if at any time, departmental, College of Engineering or University of Houston policy differs from what is written here, the institutional policy takes precedence. **It is YOUR responsibility** as a student who has chosen to use these tools to keep abreast of any changes at the department, school, or university level.

You must cite the use of any AI Tool used in an assignment including the name of the tool(s), date, and, if possible, the ratio of Human to AI contribution with description.

One option for this could be the HMC Icons: https://www.dubaifuture.ae/hmc

No technology is ever perfect or neutral, so always … always … use AI prudently.

Other policies

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 special accommodations, consult with Student Accessibility Center jdcenter@central.uh.edu or (713) 743-5400, and then discuss with me.

Incompletes: 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.

Last day to drop a course or withdraw with a 'W 'is **November 19, 2025.**