

## FORE 6311: Introduction to Foresight

Fall 2025 // Mondays 5:30 – 8:30 CT

Course no. 6311 // August 25 – December 1

Instructor: Adam Cowart // [adcowart@central.uh.edu](mailto:adcowart@central.uh.edu)

Office hours: By appointment

Zoom Link for Virtual Classes: <https://zoom.us/j/6069425375?pwd=bQf8GWZaaWDDiq7XF5KLLJBx32USBw.1>

Class Resources: Canvas

Please note that the schedule and requirements sometimes change as the semester progresses. The “official” requirements are within each module on Canvas.

**Weekly Readings:** will be listed at the end of each preceding class and also posted in the modules on Canvas. Please do as much of the reading as you can prior to each class.

**Assignment Submissions:** if any are due, they are due by midnight (CT) the night prior to class.

**Discussion Posts:** similar to any assignment submissions, they should be done by midnight (FT) the night before each class.

Class date	Topics
<b>Module 1: About Futurists</b>	
Module 1 <b>August 25</b> Intro to course Learning objectives	The Main Questions: What kind of adventure will this class be, what is the groundwork for our exploration?
September 1 (Labour Day)	No Class
Module 2 <b>September 8</b> Self	The Main Questions: How do we establish Self, how does the Self consider the future, and how does the Self interact with Other + System?
Module 3 <b>September 15</b> Others & System	The Main Questions: How do we respond, support, and challenge - especially when we do work with futures – the Others we facilitate, work with, and care for?
Module 4 <b>September 22</b> The Futurists and Their Organizations	The Main Questions: Who are my futures colleagues? Who are the notable futurists from the past and present? Who are the organizations we should be aware of as we begin this journey?
Module 5 <b>September 29</b> Good Futures Projects	The Main Questions: What does good futures work look like? Where can we find quality foresight projects and work out in the world?
<b>Module 2: About Foresight Work</b>	
Module 6 <b>October 6</b> Futures Psychology	The Main Questions: How do we think and feel about the future? What is happening with trauma-informed futures and how might we better facilitate foresight work in that context?

Module 7 <b>October 13</b> <b>Futurists Approaches &amp; Tools</b>	The Main Questions: What are the prominent tools or approaches we might come across, both from the past and newer to the field?
Module 8 <b>October 20</b> <b>The Houston Way Part One: Curriculum Overview</b>	The Main Questions: What are the foundations of the UH program and who are the people involved? How might we get more involved in the program's activities?
Module 9 <b>October 27</b> <b>The Houston Way Part Two: Framework Foresight</b>	The Main Questions: What does a good UH Framework project look like? What are some recently awarded projects from our UH students?
<b>Module 3: About Seeing the Future</b>	
Module 10 <b>November 3</b> <b>Scanning: The Foundational Skill</b>	The Main Questions: What are the newest tools around scanning and the types of scanning to be done in foresight? How do we build a good scanning practice?
Module 11 <b>November 10</b> <b>Images of the Future: Past, Present, Future</b>	The Main Questions: Where do we see the future in the world and how do we help others see the future?
Module 12 <b>November 17</b> <b>Preferred Futures and Client-based Futures</b>	The Main Questions: How might we best position ourselves in assisting others with their preferred futures and what are the current ethics around the foresight field?
Module 13 <b>November 24</b> <b>Activating the Future</b>	The Main Questions: How do we handle the challenges of implementing foresight through facilitation and how do we help others activate the future?
Module 14 <b>December 1</b> <b>Back to the Future</b>	Final deadline for all submissions

### Assessment

- 30% Weekly Discussion Posts
- 20% Weekly Discussion Comments
- 50% Assignment Submissions

### Required Texts and Supplies

Readings will be provided electronically via Canvas.

Highly recommended to get *Thinking About the Future, second edition, Andy Hines and Peter Bishop*. You will need this book anyway, so might as well get it and we will make some references to content in it throughout.

### Class Workload

There are 14 classes in the spring course schedule, starting on August 25 and concluding on December 1. Expect to spend around 10 per week including preparation for classes, reading, and assignment completion. There will be no group work beyond in-class discussions and activities.

**Assignments**

1. Letter to Yourself – Due September 7, 2025
2. Personal Values Survey – Due September 14, 2025
3. FuturePod Essay #1 – Due September 28, 2025
4. FuturePod Essay #2 – Due October 19, 2025
5. Scanning Entries – Due November 9, 2025
6. FuturePod Essay #3 – Due November 23, 2025

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

- **Explore the Landscape of Futures Studies:** Students will gain a foundational understanding of the field of futures and foresight, including its key concepts, notable practitioners, and prominent organizations.
- **Develop Foundational Foresight Skills:** Students will learn and practice core skills such as scanning to identify emerging trends and signals of change, as well as techniques for framing future-oriented questions.
- **Understand Different Futures Methodologies:** Students will be exposed to various approaches and tools used in foresight work, including those specific to the University of Houston's "Framework Foresight" model.
- **Examine the Human Dimension of Futures Work:** Students will explore the psychological aspects of thinking about the future, including trauma-informed approaches and the role of personal values and emotional context in foresight practice.
- **Apply Foresight in Practical Contexts:** Students will apply course concepts through assignments that require them to analyze real-world projects and build a personal scanning practice.
- **Cultivate Interactive and Collaborative Skills:** Students will engage in collaborative dialogue, practicing active listening, asking authentic questions, and demonstrating generosity and positive energy in class discussions.

**Engagement and Participation in Class**

This class will be highly interactive. Outlets for demonstrating participation include engaging in full class discussion, smaller group breakout discussions, posting and responding to Canvas discussions. Reading the assigned articles is necessary for full class engagement and helps deepen understanding of the content. The instructor will track examples of active engagement and participation.

Criteria	Description
Informed Class Contributions	Engagement in full-class and break out discussions that draw upon readings, previous discussions and exercises.
Ask Beautiful Questions	A beautiful question is one that is authentic and ideally opens up new areas of inquiry and curiosity. Curiosity is key. Often, the question we don't ask, the "stupid question" is the beautiful question.
Positive Energy	How you show up to class dictates much of how you experience the class. Being on screen when able allows others to interact with you in a deeper way. Being attentive and engaged also helps not only you feel known and seen, but also others in this class experience with you. We all have rough days and will discuss how to 'hold space' for others. Part of the practice is articulating when this occurs and also digging deep to expand capacity when able.
Generosity	Building on the ideas of others, gently pushing for clarity when necessary, sharing thoughts and insights, and offering benefit of the doubt and assuming positive intent are all great ways to human in this class.

## **Lateness**

If you submit an assignment late, you will only be eligible for 90% of your original grade. That is the only penalty, so even a very late assignment should absolutely be turned in – in other words, there is no good reason to not turn in every assignment. This will not only ensure you've spent the time reading, discussing, and reflecting, but will also ensure you have a rich repository of your evolving thoughts, feelings, and impressions at the end of course. A grade of Incomplete is given only in special circumstances at discretion of the instructor.

## **Community Agreements (adapted from AORTA: Anti-Oppression Resource & Training Alliance)**

Some guiding principles for class engagement can be helpful in providing a generative learning environment for all. Some considerations on how best to support your own, and each other's, learning journey:

No One Knows Everything; Together We Know a Lot: This agreement asks that we all practice being humble, and look for what we have to learn from each person in the room. It asks us to share what we know, as well as our questions, so that others may learn from us.

We Can't Be Articulate All the Time: We want everyone to feel comfortable participating, even if you don't feel you have the perfect words to express your thoughts.

Move Up, Move Up: If you're someone who tends to not speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more. If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more.

Embrace Curiosity: Allow space for play, curiosity, and creative thinking.

Acknowledge the Difference Between Intent and Impact: The ask in this community agreement is that we each do the work to acknowledge that our intent and the impact of our actions are two different things, and to take responsibility for any negative impact we have. (This can be as simple as apologizing.)

Be Aware of Time: Please arrive punctually and return on time from breaks, etc.

## **Interaction**

The course is conducted online. All content, daily interactions, and assignments are housed on the Canvas website (canvas.uh.edu). Students should visit Canvas regularly to see the weekly topics, readings, posts, and what the assignments are. The instructor will also regularly use email communication to advise of any updates/changes, and respond to questions.

## **Housekeeping**

Classes The UH futures program offers a unique blend of different modes of interaction for each course depending on the student's location and needs. The official course is conducted on the website Canvas but we will be using Zoom for the classroom experience. But since one does not live by the internet alone, we also have personal modes of interaction. The one with the highest bandwidth is, of course, is attending virtual class on Monday evenings via Zoom. Those who cannot attend the class in either of these ways can also listen to a recording of the class. The objective of the class time is to enhance and deepen the learning from each week's lesson through discussion and activities. Those who do attend report that they learn more when they do so.

We also record the class for students who have a regular conflict with class time (work or other responsibilities). Finally, the website itself has an easy-to-use discussion tool that allows people to post and reply to any of the material posted. Use it in addition to or instead of the other modes of interaction. Even if you can't read all the posts, you are encouraged to 1) respond to posts that are addressed to you and 2) routinely check for posts by the instructor.

Communication with the instructor can be 1) in class, 2) through regular email 3) through Canvas, or 4) by Zoom.

**DROPPING THE COURSE: The last day to drop the course without a grade is Wednesday, September 10, 2025.**

**Disabilities:** Students who require individualized accommodations for this course must inform the professor in order that appropriate arrangements can be made. For information about services provided by The Center for Students with Disabilities, please call 713-743-5480.

**Academic honesty policy:** All students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UH catalog and the student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism, that is, using research without citations, or using a created production without crediting the source, 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, author must be included with the web material used.