

Syllabus: FORE6319: Pro Seminar in Foresight **DRAFT**

Spring 2025

Course Time: Thursday 5:30-8:30 pm US Central Time (Jan 16 - May 6, 2025)

Course Location: Zoom

Instructor: Mina McBride

Email: ypmcbride@uh.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

***Getting ready for launch by
exploring the field, honing skills, and personal planning***

The Pro Seminar in Foresight is typically the last or almost the last course that most students take in the foresight program.

- Its primary objective is to help students make the transition from student to professional. Even those who will not become full-time futures professionals still need to begin practicing their old careers in new ways.
- A secondary objective is to cover topics that have not been discussed sufficiently in the regular curriculum, such as professional values/ethics and professional skills, e.g., presentation, publication, and consulting.

Seminar is one of the most complex, but most interesting courses. A lot of the work is done in the virtual classroom (presentations, discussion, etc.) via Zoom. Please ensure that you have a place with a strong Internet connection and that you have a headset with microphone, and if possible, a webcam so that we can see one another.

It is expected that assignments will be submitted on time. Late assignments will receive a one-time 10-point penalty. Feedback will be provided at the time of submission, and assignments can be re-submitted once (When resubmitting, **please make corrections in a different color font**).

The class is organized into three modules:

1. a field module, reviewing the futures field and its issues one last time
2. a skills module, learning and/or reinforcing a set of professional skills
3. a personal module, preparing for professional practice

Required Texts

There are three books for this class (all can be purchased online)

1. Field Module:
 1. Any book about futures field, its theories, or methods (not about the future itself—trends, etc.) that we have not used as a text. You will report on it to the rest of the class. An UH Futures *Bibliography* is in Canvas discussion forum to

provide some suggestions. In Week 2, you will have a discussion post asking for you to propose your book. Make sure that I reply and approve the book before you purchase it. For accessibility, some book selections are available in audio and large text formats.

2. Skills Module: I am *suggesting* one of the books below, but if you have a consulting book you'd like to read, send me a message in Canvas and ask for approval (I almost always give it!)
 1. Peter Block, ***Flawless Consulting***
 2. Alan Weiss, ***Million Dollar Consulting***
 3. David Maister et al, ***The Trusted Advisor***
 4. Mahan Khalsa, ***Let's Get Real or Let's Not Play: The Demise of Dysfunctional Selling and the Advent of Helping Clients Succeed***
 5. Daniel Pink, ***To Sell is Human***

3. Personal Module:
 1. Verne Wheelright, ***It's Your Future...Make it a Good One!***

Activities

See separate "Schedule" document.

Grading

Most weeks have at least one assignment. They are typically due the next week, but deadlines are extended for assignments that require some time, such as interviewing. Feedback with a grade is provided at that time -- assignments may be revised and submitted once after that.

Please make revisions in a different color font.

The last day of class is **Thursday May 1st** and the final day that assignments will be accepted is **Thursday May 6nd** at 5pm CST.

The final grade is an average of assignments (85%) and discussion posts (15%). Late assignments are 10 points off for being a week or late more. The penalty for late assignments doesn't increase, so there is no [good] excuse for failing to turn in an assignment.

Each assignment is weighted equally. The assignments are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Futurists in History | 8. Foresight field framework |
| 2. Book review | 9. Consulting proposal |
| 3. Informational interviews | 10. Blog publication |
| 4. Digital Tools for Futurists | 11. Stump speech |
| 5. Digital Platform Q&A | 12. Personal strategic plan |
| 6. Futurist in the media | 13. Topical presentation |
| 7. FuturePod | 14. Marketing plan |

Weekly activities and assignments (most, but not all) are due at the end of each week—i.e., midnight Wednesday before Thursday’s class.

Grading Criteria

- 90-100 points **A Far Exceeds Expectations:** Demonstrates exceptional mastery of concepts, expression, and application of course materials.
- 80-89 points **B Solid Competence:** Demonstrate ability to meet specifications of assignments and evaluation criteria.
- 70-79 points **C Minimally Met Expectations:** Demonstrates marginal performance on assignments and meeting evaluation criteria.
- 65-69 points **D Serious Deficits in Competence:** Unacceptable performance on assignments and meeting evaluation criteria.
- <65 points **F Failure to Meet Expectations:** Inadequate effort on assignments and meeting evaluation criteria.

AI Policy: While it is the preference of the instructor that all work be completed by the registered student submitting an assignment, use of AI tools are 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 differ 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 the ratio of Human to AI contribution with description. Over time, this information will help inform the value of AI work to futurists.

Example:

ChatGPT+, February 23, 2024, 35% Human through prompt development, response verification, and revision of text/65% AI generated response.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT USING LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

- **Fabrication.** AI can lie and produce plausible sounding but incorrect information. Don’t trust anything it says at face value. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check with another source. **You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool(s) and the presence of such an error will result in an automatic, permanent 10-point grade deduction.** It works best for topics you understand and can verify. Larger LLMs (like GPT-4) fabricate less, but all AIs fabricate to some degree.
- **AI bias.** AI can carry biases, stemming from its training data or human intervention. These biases vary across LLMs and can range from gender and racial biases to biases against particular viewpoints, approaches, or political affiliations. Each LLM has the potential for its own set of biases, and those biases can be subtle. You will need to

critically consider answers and be aware of the potential for these sorts of biases.

- **Privacy concerns.** When data is entered into the AI, it can be used for future training. While ChatGPT offers a privacy mode that claims not to use input there for future AI training, the current state of privacy remains unclear for many models, and the legal implications are often uncertain. Do not share anything with AI that you want to keep private.

From: [Harvard Business Publishing-Education](#), Sept 2023

Interaction

The course is conducted online. Classes are held on Thursday evenings via Zoom or you can listen to an archived recording of the class. The expectation for a Seminar class is that students will actively participate, most often by leading a class discussion of assigned readings.

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: Students who require individualized accommodations for this course must inform the professor and follow university procedures 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.

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.

Withdrawals: Last day to withdraw drop or with a "W" for Spring 2024 is **Wednesday April 16th.**