

Syllabus

Course Number: TECH 6311

Course Title: Introduction to Futures Studies

Semester: Fall 2011

Course Time/Location: Cameron 229, Monday 5:30-8:30 pm US Central Time

Website: Begin at <http://uh.edu/webct/>

Instructor: Terry Grim / Co-instructor: Dr. Peter Bishop

Suite: Cameron 211

Office Hours: M, 3:30 – 5:30 pm and by appt. – also available via email and phone

Email: tegrim@central.uh.edu or tegrim@gmail.com (preferred)

Phone: 281-474-7027 (work / home) 832-549-0378 (cell)

Prerequisites: None

Overview

This course explores the field of futures studies. It surveys the origins, founders, and history of the futures studies movement; examines the methods and techniques of the field; covers basic assumptions and theories; and reviews some of the most important trends and issues shaping the future.

Objectives

The objectives of the course are for students to:

- become familiar with the critical concepts in futures studies
- be capable of greater foresight about emerging issues, trends, impacts, and their implications
- develop communication skills to engage in effective dialogs on the future with the goal of influencing the future
- be familiar with other futures tools and with exploring the implications of change.
- Become excited about the field of futures

Required Texts

Futures courses require a lot of reading. The type of reading for this course, however, is for overall comprehension and understanding, not for facts and details. Therefore, you can and should read these in a way that gives you an overall picture and allows you to extract for yourself the most important terms and ideas. You should not read for every detail.

The required texts are:

- Bell, Wendell. *Foundations of Futures Studies, Vol. 1*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003 (Paperback). ISBN 0-765805-39-1. (http://www.amazon.com/Foundations-Futures-Studies-Purposes-Knowledge/dp/0765805391/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218929919&sr=1-2)
- Hines, Andy and Peter Bishop. *Thinking about the Future*. Social Technologies, 2006 (Paperback). ISBN-13:978-0-9789317-0-4. (http://www.amazon.com/Thinking-Future-Guidelines-Strategic-Foresight/dp/097893170X/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218929802&sr=8-1)

- Schwartz, Peter. The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World. ISBN-0-385-26732-0 http://www.amazon.com/Art-Long-View-Planning-Uncertain/dp/0385267320/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1249915056&sr=8-1

Required Software

All students, on and off campus, work on the UH learning platform called WebCT. If you are registered for this course, you are automatically enrolled in the WebCT version of this course. You get access to WebCT initially by going to <https://learn.uh.edu/webct/entryPage.dowebct> and looking up your login information. You can also test your browser (recommended) from that screen. After you login, you will see the courses you can access. Click on Introduction to Futures Studies, and you're in.

For those students who cannot or choose not to come to class, you can still participate in the class through a UH system called Horizon WIMBA, a Voice-Over-IP system that also displays the classroom computer screen and has other features.

In addition to the browser, you will need a Word-compatible word processor to be able to read and upload material. You will also need file-compression software using the zip format (e.g., WinZip) for downloading some files and uploading your final portfolio.

Schedule

(Note: the date is the date that the class meets. For each class there is pre-reading, in-class material, and post-class assignments. All assignments are due the Sunday night-12:00 midnight before the Monday class).

Week 1: Orientation (Aug 22)

- Become familiar with course objectives, expectations, and procedures
- Become familiar with the learning platform (WebCT)
- Introduce yourself to your classmates
- Describe your orientation to the future at the moment.

Week 2: Introduction to Future Studies (August 29)

- Become acquainted with key concepts, terms, and perspectives of the futures field.
- Introduce some of the publications and organizations in the field and discuss futures skills

Week 3: Futures Studies as a Field (Sept 5) **THERE is no class – but still reading and assignments!!**

- Identify the major events and founders in the history of future studies

Week 4: Identifying and Monitoring Change (Sept 12)

- See change as resulting from trends, events, issues and images
- Pick up the weak signals of coming change through environmental scanning
- Setting up a good scanning system

Week 5: Systems Perspective (Sept. 19)

- Describe the use of systems models and global modeling
- See how change results from a system of interrelated influences

Week 6: Social Change (Sept 26)

- Review the major theories of social change

- Apply those theories to actual changes going on today
- Draw out the implications of those changes for the future

Week 7: The Expected Future (Oct 3)

- Identify how current changes might touch off other changes in the future
- Identify which groups may be helped and which groups might be hurt by changes we see today

Week 8: Imagining Difference, Part 1 and Part 2 Lectures (Oct. 10)

- Identify different images of the future present in our society today
- Review examples of scenarios.
- Explore a set of scenario-building techniques and narrative approaches
- Delve briefly into one scenario world

Week 9: Imagining Difference, Part 2 No Class Homework for Part 2 (Oct 18)

- Learn to use different scenario techniques
- Reflect on the scenario as a tool for understanding the future.

Week 10: Leadership (Oct 24)

- Explore the nature of transformational change in futures studies.
- Understand the role of leadership in creating transformational change
- Evaluate your own capacity or inclination for leadership

Week 11: Envisioning Preferred Futures (Oct 31)

- Identify preferred futures as visions
- Identify the possible components of a community or business visioning process.

Week 12: Planning for Change (Nov 7)

- Fit strategic planning into the whole futures enterprise.
- Learn the theories and controversies around strategic planning.
- Review and practice some the tools that strategic planners use.

Week 13: Creating Change (Nov 14)

- Analyze and understand the change experience
- Learn the principles around successfully change processes
- Begin assembling the draft portfolio

Week 14: Critiquing the Field (Nov 21)

- Analyze the field (or lack thereof) and its direction(s).
- Raise critical questions about the future and futures studies.
- Analyze and evaluate the course.

Week 15: Draft Portfolios Due (on or before Monday Dec. 5) (returned within 72 hours)

Week 16: Final Portfolios Due (on or before Dec 12)

Activities, assignments and reflections

Most activities involve reading (books or web material), conducting exercises with that material, discussing the week's material and posting the results on the website. All results will be posted to the Assignments Page or to the Discussion Board under the Week and Title listed in the Overview. Each activity is reviewed, and some feedback may result, in which case it may be revised before the end of the semester. Students are also encouraged to review others' material and comment or ask questions about it.

The week begins and ends at midnight on the night before the class meeting (i.e., Sunday night) so material can be prepared for the class meeting. All assignments are due at that time.

Assignments may be turned in late, but they are assessed a 10% penalty for each week they are late. All of those scores are combined into an overall Timeliness score that weights the final grade at the end of the semester.

Class meetings are held at 5:30 pm (US Central Time) in Room 229 Cameron Hall. Those online can participate in the class via audio chat on the Internet. Most of the class is oriented toward the following week's material--in effect, doing together what will be done online that week, such as discussing the material and doing the exercises. Therefore, those participating in the class will also get more from the class if they at least review the readings and activities for the week ahead before coming to or remotely participating in the class. While class participation is not required, those who do participate (in person or online) report that they get more out of the course and do better on the assignments. Overall, the assignments should not take any more than 10 hours each week (including participating in class), and many weeks less. Please contact the instructor if you find yourself having to spend more than 10 hours a week on a regular basis.

At the conclusion of the course, each student submits the three major assignments (the scanning journal a scenario product and a personal futures strategy) and one assignment from each week that he/she believes represents his or her best work that week and/or the activity in which he or she has learned the most. Students submit these files (zipped together) as a portfolio of their work along with an essay that describes what they learned throughout the semester. An optional draft portfolio is due Midnight, Monday, December 5. The draft portfolio receives feedback within 72 hours, in preparation for the submission of the final portfolio which is due Midnight, Monday, December 12. The grades for the material are included in the draft and final portfolios.

Grading

The final grade will be a combination of the number and timeliness of your submissions and the quality of the submissions in your portfolio according to the following allocation –

Scanning journal	15%
Persuasive essay	10%
Personal Futures Strategy	5%
Weekly submissions (total)	50%
Participation - class and blog	15%
Learning essay (optional)	5%

Submissions are assessed on a five-point scale according to the following criteria –

- 5 = outstanding submission, shows considerable insight and/or proficiency
- 4 = good submission, shows more insight and/or proficiency than required
- 3 = acceptable submission, shows insight and/proficiency required
- 2 = poor submission, shows less insight/proficiency than required
- 1 = failed submission, shows no insight/proficiency

Timeliness is the percent of time that a submission or reflection was submitted on time, with each submission and reflection losing 10% for each week it is late. The total timeliness score is multiplied by the average quality score to arrive at the final quality score.

Contact the professor by email (on WebCT or at tegrim@gmail.com) or by phone (281/474-7027) if you have any questions or difficulties. Or Dr. Peter Bishop at pbishop@central.uh.edu .

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 a special accommodation consult first with the Coordinator of Health Disabilities Services,

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: Refer to class schedule for dates to withdraw without evaluation from a course.