

## Syllabus Futures Research (TECH 6531) Fall 2010

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

Instructor: Andy Hines

Office Hours: by appointment

Prerequisites: Introduction to Futures Studies (or concurrent)

### Overview

Futures Research is a survey course about the methods and tools that professional futurists use to help people anticipate the future. It is a core course in the futures program. It covers methods and tools used by forecasters in general as well as by professional futurists. It also covers the techniques that futurists use more than others do to forecast the future, particularly creating scenarios of the future.

### Objectives

The student will understand and become familiar with:

- Research and scanning
- Framework forecasting
- Alternative Futures (Scenarios)
- Alternative Perspectives on methodology: Integral perspective, Critical thinking, Causal Layered Analysis, and creativity

### Texts

1. Jerry Glenn & Ted Gordon, *Futures Research Methodology V3.0*, CD, Washington DC, Millennium Project (best single compilation of methods). Available at <http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/FRM-V3.html>

2. There is a requirement to do a synopsis of one scenario book from the list below:

- Fahey, Liam & Randall, Robert (eds.). *Learning from the future: Competitive foresight scenarios*. 1998.
- Georgantzas, Nicholas C. & Acar, William. *Scenario-driven planning*. 1995.
- Kahane, Adam. *Solving tough problems: An open way of talking, listening, and creating new realities*. 2004.
- Lindgren, Mats & Bandhold, Hans. *Scenario planning: The link between future and strategy*. 2003.
- ManyWorlds. *Grasping the future: Comparing scenario planning to other forecasting techniques*. 2001.
- Ogilvy, Jay. *Creating better futures: Scenario planning as a tool for a better tomorrow*. 2002.
- Ringland, Gill. *Scenario planning: Managing for the future*. 1998 OR *Scenarios in public policy*. 2002.
- Van Der Heijden, Kees. *Scenarios: The art of strategic conversation*. 1996 OR *The sixth sense: Accelerating organisational learning with scenarios*. 2002.



Recommended your collection (order online – not available in UH bookstore)

- Andy Hines & Peter Bishop (eds.), *Thinking About the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*. 2006. (reference guide that you should have from Intro)
- Michael Ray, *Creativity in Business* (lots of handy exercises)
- Bill Ralston & Ian Wilson, *The Scenario Planning Handbook* (really useful, step-by-step instructions on “how-to”)

## **Schedule**

### INTRO

Week 1 (Aug 24) Intro and Methods Overview

### Module 1. Forecasting

Week 2 (Aug 31) Primary Research

Week 3 (Sept 7) Secondary Research

Week 4 (Sept 14) Environmental Scanning & Monitoring

Week 5 (Sept 21) Baseline Forecasting

### Module 2. Alternative Futures (Scenarios)

Week 6 (Sept 28) Scenario Theory

Week 7 (Oct 5) Scenario Methods

Week 8 (Oct 12) Scenario Cases

Week 9 (Oct 19) Scenario Presentations

### Module 3. Other Methods

Week 10 (Oct 26) Cross Impact Matrix, Futures Wheel, & Technology Assessment

### Module 4. Alternative Perspectives on Methodology

Week 11 (Nov 2) Critical Thinking

Week 12 (Nov 9) Integral Futures

Week 13 (Nov 16) Causal Layered Analysis

Week 14 (Nov 23) THANKSGIVING

Week 15 (Nov 30) Creativity

## **Activities and Assignments**

Most activities involve reading (books or web material), conducting exercises with that material and posting the results under the Unit, Week and Title as listed in the Activities Sheet. The instructor reviews posts and provides feedback where appropriate. Students are strongly 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., midnight Monday) so material can be discussed at the class meeting. All assignments are due at that time, e.g., the Week 1 Assignment is due the night before the Week 2

class. Each class typically reviews the assignments of the week before, and involves a lecture, discussion or exercise in reference to the current week's topic, and some guidance regarding the assignment due the following week.

Class meetings will be held on Tuesdays at 5:30 pm in Room 229 Cameron Hall. Those online can participate in the class via audio chat on the Internet. 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.

## Grading

Most weeks have at least one portfolio product. They are typically due the next week, but deadlines are extended for assignments that require some additional time. Feedback with a grade is provided at that time (there is no draft portfolio in this class). Assignments may be revised and submitted as many times as the student wishes.

All portfolio assignments are combined into a Final Portfolio and are due by **Monday December 7th**. Student **must clearly indicate** any revisions made from the weekly submission by explaining in a cover note which assignments have been revised, and by putting those revisions within the assignments in italics.

The final grade is an average of the portfolio products (80%) plus a timeliness grade (20%) based on how often weekly activities and assignments are submitted on time.

Each portfolio assignment is weighted equally, as is the Learning Essay, which receives an automatic A and which is read only after the grades are submitted. The portfolio assignments are:

Each portfolio assignment is weighted equally, as is the Learning Essay, which receives an automatic A and which is read only after the grades are submitted. The portfolio assignments are:

1. Primary research – Interview/Questionnaire report
2. Secondary research -- Information assignment & Prototype framework
3. Scanning -- Scanning journal
4. Baseline forecast – Analytical paper describing the expected future and its implications
5. Alternative scenario – creative description or presentation of an alternative scenario
6. Scenario book review – synopsis of scenario book of our choice
7. Futures Wheel – implications in your domain
8. Critical thinking -- Letter to the editor
9. Integral Futures Analysis – Analyzing impacts of move to a preferred future
10. CLA report – Description of the causal, worldview and mythical levels of the domain

Learning essay – What you learned in this course, referring to the portfolio products as evidence.

*(This product is an automatic A, if it is well written. The instructor reads the essay only after awarding the grade.)*

### **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.

**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 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:** Refer to class schedule for dates to withdraw without evaluation from a course. Last day to drop a course or withdraw with a 'W' for **Fall 2010** is **Nov 3rd**.