Example Syllabus
Welcome to the Future
FIS 111

Prof. Jamey Wetmore
Wetmore@asu.edu 480-727-0750
Office: Interdisciplinary B, Room 366
Office Hours: MTWHF 0:00-0:00 or by appointment

Great Minds Think Ahead…

Course description: This class will explore the ways in which the future inspires, shapes, and motivates the present. It will illustrate how “possible futures” are used by people and institutions to advance agendas, shape conversations, and sell products. It will examine how science, technology, and other forces are mobilized to create change. And it will empower students to play a role in shaping our collective future.

Course objectives and learning outcomes: This class will help students envision futures as well as understand their influence, origins, and histories. Students will get practice developing and justifying their own futures as well as analyzing futures created by others. At the end of the course students will have a basic understanding of how sociotechnical systems are developed and impact the world, recognize the equity and justice issues inherent in such constructions, and develop a sense of citizenship to play a role in developing and promoting futures that reflect the common good.

Course Requirements:

Participation To successfully complete this course you must complete a series of assignments and exams. But most importantly, this course is based not simply on the reading you do, but on discussion and shared experiences. Thus it is imperative that you not only attend all of the lectures and activities, but that you also engage and participate in them well. To encourage your engagement you will need to prepare two questions for each class. These questions should be written to help facilitate discussion on the day’s topic. They should be grounded in the readings and/or assignment for the day and help you to explore an angle or an interest you have in the topic. A significant part of your overall grade (25%) will be based on your participation.

Initial Predictions Assignment By the end of the first full week of classes you’ll need complete your first set of predictions about the future. You will need to write two pages (double spaced) and predict four things that will happen by the end of the semester: 1. Predict a new product/technology that will be announced; 2. Predict something about your personal life that will change (please do not provide names or specific personal details!); 3. Predict the week that you think you’ll like the best in this course and why; and 4. Predict a major world political change or event. For each entry write a small explanation of why you think these events might happen. (10%)

Advertising the Future Assignment In the second week you’ll submit to blackboard a powerpoint slide that includes an advertisement that portends to predict or advance a specific future. On the slide you should also answer three questions: 1. Is the future realistic? (why or why not?) 2. What is the goal of the advertisement’s creator? And 3. What broader implications might this future have that aren’t mentioned in the advertisement? (5%)
Article Presentation  At the beginning of the semester all students will be assigned a week during which they will provide a short two-page reading for the entire class. This is your chance to lead a discussion on a topic related to the course that you find particularly interesting or even troubling. You should use this opportunity to bring up a technology, field of science, or social issue that you are particularly interested in. The two pages you ask the class to read may be excerpted from a larger document, just make sure that you clearly cite the source of the material. Depending on the time available, students will be asked to present these readings to small groups or the class as a whole. (10%)

First Exam  This short essay question exam will cover information conveyed and discussed in the first half of the course and will count as 15% of the overall course grade.

Governance Analysis  For this assignment you will need to choose a governance document. This document might be either a policy report written by a government or NGO. This two page paper will be an analysis of the report with special attention paid to how the document addresses the future as a political tool. (10%)

Final Prediction Assignment  This assignment gives you the chance to go back and examine the predictions you made at the beginning of the semester. Again you need to write two double spaced pages, but you should reflect on the predictions you made several months earlier. In the two pages you need to answer the following questions: 1. How did you do? (i.e. how accurate were your predictions?); 2. What assumptions did you make in your initial predictions do you now question? 3. Did these predictions help you to prepare for the future? Did you take any steps to make your predictions come true?; and 4. Did your predictions have any negative impacts on your life? (10%)

Second Exam  This short essay question exam will cover information conveyed and discussed in the second half of the course and will count as 15% of the overall course grade.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial Predictions Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising the Future Assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance Analysis</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Predictions Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Barrett students interested in adding an honors contract to the class should contact the instructor in the first week of classes.

Course Calendar:

**Week 1: The Future and our collective imagination**
Introduction to the class and World’s Fairs
GM’s 1939 Futurama [https://archive.org/details/ToNewHor1940](https://archive.org/details/ToNewHor1940)

☁️ Initial Predictions Assignment Due ☁️
Week 2: The future in our everyday life
Advertisements and Corporations

Advertising the Future Assignment Due

Week 3: How do we get there from here? Theories of innovation and change
Robert L. Heilbroner, “Do Machines Make History?”

Week 4: How do we make decisions about the future? Risk, Uncertainty, and Decision making
Charles Perrow, “Normal Accident at Three Mile Island”
Andrew Maynard, “A Research Strategy for Addressing Risk”

Week 5: Who’s Future? Equity and the Future
The Future is Here, it’s just not evenly distributed:
Take a tour of Bill Gate’s house!

Week 6: Science Fiction: a tool to think about and inspire our futures
EM Forster – “The Machine Stops” (short story)
Andrew Nicole (Director), Gattaca 1997 (movie)

Week 7: The Future as a Business
David Nye, “Should ‘the Market’ Select Technologies?”
William Raspberry, “Insurance is a Product – and a Gamble”

First Exam

Week 8: Governance and the Future
Environmental Protection Agency, “Future Climate Change”
Center for the Future of Arizona (website)

Week 9: Users and Hackers: The power of small groups to change the world
Makerspace Ted Talks x 3
David Kushner, “The Masked Avengers”

Governance Analysis Due

Week 10: The Power of Hopeful and Dystopian Futures
Samuel C. Florman, “Technology and the Tragic View”
Ray Kurzweil, “Promise and Peril”

Week 11: Prediction vs. Anticipation
Philip E. Tetlock and Dan Gardner, “An Optimistic Skeptic” and “Illusions of Knowledge”
Gerard Nahum, “Predicting the Future: what we all Strive to do”

Week 12: Scenario Building and Planning
Edward Cornish, “Futuring Methods”
David Staley, “A History of the Future”

Week 13: Video Games as a way of engaging the Future
Students will be polled early in the semester for their favorite online videogames that relate to the future. The professor will choose 2-3 and the assignment for the day will be to play at least one of those games and be ready to discuss the experience.

Final Predictions Assignment Due

Week 14: Looking Ahead
David E. Nye, “Not Just One Future”
Freeman Dyson, “Leaping into the Grand Unknown,” and “The Case for Far-Out Possibilities”

Second Exam During Finals Week

Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0-92.4</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5-97.9</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98.0-100</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0-82.4</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.5-87.4</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5-89.9</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70.0-77.4</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.5-79.9</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60.0-69.9</td>
<td>Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>XE</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>Failure due to Academic Dishonesty</td>
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[Note: in order to receive University Distribution requirement credit you must earn at least a “C.”]

Incompletes: A mark of "I" (incomplete) can be given by the instructor when you are otherwise doing acceptable work but are unable to complete the course because of illness or other conditions beyond your control. You are required to arrange with the instructor for the completion of the course requirements. The arrangement must be recorded using the form at http://students.asu.edu/forms/incomplete-grade-request. Students should be proactive and discuss this with their instructor and TA before the end of the semester. Students who do not complete this form before the end of the semester cannot be given an incomplete and will be awarded a grade based on the work they have completed.

Late Assignments: notice that you will miss a class or have to turn in an assignment late could help your cause.

Grade Appeals: ASU has formal and informal channels to appeal a grade. If you wish to appeal any grading decisions, please see: http://catalog.asu.edu/appeal

Student Standards: Students are required to read and act in accordance with university and Arizona Board of Regents policies, including: The ABOR Code of Conduct: Arizona Board of Regents Policies 5-301 through 5-308: http://www.azregents.edu/policymanual/default.aspx

Professionalism in the Classroom: are asked to contribute to a collegial atmosphere where ideas can be exchanged, discussed, and debated freely by avoiding disruptions through their own behavior and the distractions of their technology. Disruptive, threatening or violent behavior will be dealt with according to
the policies in the Student Services Manual, SSM 104–02. Students wishing to record lectures electronically must first get permission from the instructor.

It is impossible to learn from your fellow students when you or they are not there. As such attendance is required in this course. Should you have to miss a class, contact your instructor as far in advance as possible. Depending on the nature of the absence the instructor may elect to deduct points from your overall grade. Absences can be excused for religious observances or practices that are in accord with ACD 304–04 or university sanctioned events/activities that are in accord with ACD 304–02.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XF), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity.

If you fail to meet the standards of academic integrity in any of the criteria listed on the university policy website, sanctions will be imposed by the instructor, school, and/or dean. Academic dishonesty includes borrowing ideas without proper citation, copying others’ work (including information posted on the internet), and failing to turn in your own work for group projects. Please be aware that if you follow an argument closely, even if it is not directly quoted, you must provide a citation to the publication, including the author, date, and page number. If you directly quote a source, you must use quotation marks and provide the same sort of citation for each quoted sentence or phrase. You may discuss assignments with other students, however, all writing that you turn in must be done independently. If you have any doubt about whether the form of cooperation you contemplate is acceptable, ask the TA or the instructor in advance of turning in an assignment. Please be aware that the work of all students submitted electronically can be scanned using SafeAssignment, which compares them against everything posted on the internet, online article/paper databases, newspapers and magazines, and papers submitted by other students. Turning in an assignment (all or in part) that you completed for a previous class is considered self-plagiarism and falls under these guidelines. Any infractions of self-plagiarism are subject to the same penalties as copying someone else’s work without proper citations. Students who have taken this class previously and would like to use the work from previous assignments should contact the instructor for permission to do so.

**Prohibition of Commercial Note Taking Services:** In accordance with ACD 304-06 Commercial Note Taking Services, written permission must be secured from the official instructor of the class in order to sell the instructor’s oral communication in the form of notes. Notes must have the note taker’s name as well as the instructor’s name, the course number, and the date.

**Student Support and Disability Accommodations:** In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, professional disability specialists and support staff at the Disability Resource Center (DRC) facilitate a comprehensive range of academic support services and accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Qualified students with disabilities may be eligible to receive academic support services and accommodations. Eligibility is based on qualifying disability documentation and assessment of individual need. Students who believe they have a current and essential need for disability accommodations are responsible for requesting accommodations and providing qualifying documentation to the DRC. Every effort is made to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Qualified students who wish to request an accommodation for a disability should contact their campus DRC at: http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/. If you are a student in need of special arrangements we will do all we can to help, based on the recommendations of
these services. For the sake of equity for all students, we cannot make any accommodations without formal guidance from these services.

**Sexual Violence and Harassment:** Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at [http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students](http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students).

**Drop and Add Dates/Withdrawals:** Please refer to the academic calendar on the deadlines to drop/withdraw from this course. Consult with your advisor and notify your instructor if you are going to drop/withdraw this course. If you are considering a withdrawal, review the following policies: Withdrawal from Classes, Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal.

**Email Communications**
All email communication for this class will be done through your ASU email account and the blackboard site. You should be in the habit of checking your ASU email regularly as you will not only receive important information about your class(es), but other important university updates and information. You are solely responsible for reading and responding if necessary to any information communicated via email. For help with your email go to: [http://help.asu.edu/sims/selfhelp/SelfHelpHome.seam?dept_pk=822](http://help.asu.edu/sims/selfhelp/SelfHelpHome.seam?dept_pk=822) and file a help desk ticket by clicking on “My Help Center.”

**Campus Resources:** As an ASU student you have access to many resources on campus. This includes tutoring, academic success coaching, counseling services, financial aid, disability resources, career and internship help and many opportunities to get involved in student clubs and organizations.

- Tutoring: [https://tutoring.asu.edu/tutoring](https://tutoring.asu.edu/tutoring)
- Counseling Services: [http://students.asu.edu/counseling](http://students.asu.edu/counseling)
- Financial Aid: [http://students.asu.edu/financialaid](http://students.asu.edu/financialaid)
- Major/Career Exploration: [https://cls.asu.edu/majorexploration](https://cls.asu.edu/majorexploration)
- Career Services: [http://students.asu.edu/career](http://students.asu.edu/career)

This syllabus is subject to change. It is your responsibility to read e-mail updates from the instructor as well as check the blackboard site for alterations made as events occur.