

George Washington University | School of Business

SYLLABUS– March 2021

SMPP 6218 BUSINESS & SOCIETY: STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Faculty: Thomas Debass | debass@gwu.edu | @debass

3.0 Credits March 13-20, 2021

Live Online: Introductions and context setting (live) March 13 at 10:00am-2:00pm & March 14 at 10:00am-2:00pm (tent.)

Live Online lectures: Mornings of March 17-20 9:00am-12:00pm (tent.)

Live Online Guest Speakers: Afternoons of March 17-20 1:00pm-5:00pm (tent.)

Pre-Course Required Reading: Amy Webb, *The Signals Are Talking*.

Course Description

"The future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed," – William Gibson

"The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself, but to act with yesterday's logic." – Peter Drucker

Unprecedented technological advancement as well as external shocks (as manifested by the COVID19 pandemic) have accelerated the velocity of *change* and is complicating the relationship between business and society. There has never been a greater need for strategic foresight and long-term futures thinking. This course, "Business & Society: Strategic Foresight," will offer a set of novel methods, tools and practices that enable organizations or individuals to renew their competitive advantage, enter new business fields, and build robust scenario-driven strategies. Foresight synthesizes insights from a wide variety of fields including economics, engineering, sociology, politics, data science, systems theory, art, and design.

This blended course integrates case analysis and trend examination conducted in online lectures, discussions with guest speakers over a 4-day period. The course will focus on five case studies of the future of education, healthcare, mobility, finance, and food. The course will feature guest speakers who are thought leaders in various industries that are shaping the future of business and society.

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- Develop a deep understanding of how organizations invent the future.
- Identify a trend as it emerges from the fringe and to track that trend along its potential trajectories to the mainstream.
- Determine the timing of a trend and how it relates to other industries and sources of change within modern society.
- Create a strategy to take action on a trend, and to pressure-test that strategy to ensure that you have mapped the trend correctly.
- Develop recommendations and action plans for the "shared future of x" for any individual, organization, industry, nation, region, etc.

About Faculty:

Thomas Debass serves as Managing Director of the Office of Global Partnerships at the U.S. Department of State. Thomas has played a leading role in promoting and institutionalizing the role of public private partnerships as a tool for advancing foreign policy and development objectives. He regularly gives lectures and talks about the intersection of policy, business, and society. Prior to joining the State Department, he was Lead Economist with the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and a senior technical advisor with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Thomas is a graduate of Virginia Tech with MA in Applied Economics and BA in Economics. He also has an Executive Certificate in International Business Management from Georgetown University, Certificate in Executive Leadership from UC-Berkeley, as well as a Certificate in Futures Thinking and Strategic Foresight from Institute for the Future. Thomas is a 2020 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal Finalist.

Course Material and Resources

The course includes a reading list and discussions by the professor, and speakers. Time is spent with the professor debriefing each talk and speaker to connect the discussions to the theory and practice development in the first (online) portion of the course. This course requires the use of the materials below. Additional course materials will be provided via blackboard including information on each visit and speaker. The professor may need to make discretionary changes to the assigned readings to accommodate the schedules of the speakers/visits and in order to meet course objectives.

Required Reading:

The Signals Are Talking, Amy Webb.

Required Reading: Articles

How To Do Strategic Planning Like A Futurist

<https://hbr.org/2019/07/how-to-do-strategic-planning-like-a-futurist>

5 Principles for Thinking Like a Futurist

<https://er.educause.edu/-/media/files/articles/2019/3/er191102.pdf>

Think Like a Futurist to Be Prepared for the Totally Unexpected

https://www.wsj.com/articles/think-like-a-futurist-to-be-prepared-for-the-totally-unexpected-1483272006?utm_content=buffer60561&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

The Next Big Thing: Resilience

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/09/28/the-next-big-thing-resilience/>

The role of corporate foresight in exploring new markets evidence from 3 case studies in the BOP markets

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2017.1337887>

Foresight as a Strategic Long-Term Planning Tool for Developing Countries

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/Foresight.html>

Hazards of Prophecy

http://www.sfcenter.ku.edu/Sci-Tech-Society/stored/futurists_hazards_of_prophecy.pdf

Why we need to pick up Alvin Toffler's Torch (Author of Future Shock)

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/technology/why-we-need-to-pick-up-alvin-tofflers-torch.html?_r=0

GROUP PROJECT READINGS:

Future of Education

The Coming Disruption: Scott Galloway predicts a handful of elite cyborg universities will soon monopolize higher education

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/05/scott-galloway-future-of-college.html?fbclid=IwAR3jRWkMzY2PeQGZjc-y4dN7T5uUKZFUPeMBNvt9axigSYLIdJtZVIQohE>

Future of Healthcare

The Medical Futurist: 10 ways technology is changing healthcare

<https://medicalfuturist.com/ten-ways-technology-changing-healthcare/>

Forces of change: The future of health

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/forces-of-change-health-care.html>

The future of virtual health

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/future-of-virtual-health.html>

Future of Space

SpaceX is making human space travel a routine form of commerce

https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/06/04/spacex-is-making-human-space-travel-a-routine-form-of-commerce?utm_campaign=the-economist-today&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=2020-06-05&utm_content=article-link-6

Future of Food

The future of food: what we'll eat in 2028

<https://www.sciencefocus.com/future-technology/the-future-of-food-what-well-eat-in-2028/>

5 Innovations changing the future of food

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinnovationteam/2019/10/01/5-innovations-changing-the-future-of-food/#7ab93fc06173>

Future of Energy

What Will Our 2040 Energy Future Look Like?

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2019/07/02/what-will-our-2040-energy-future-look-like/#33aba4a04433>

In an accelerated energy transition, can US utilities fast-track transformation?

https://www.ey.com/en_us/power-utilities/in-an-accelerated-energy-transition-can-us-utilities-fast-track-transformation?WT.mc_id=10790160&AA.tsrc=paidsearch

RESOURCES:

Websites:

www.iftf.org

<https://futuretodayinstitute.com/>

www.futurism.com

www.su.org

Twitter: Follow

@AmyWebb

@FTI

@Futurism

@IFTF

@FutureTenseNow

Podcasts: Listen

The Future of Everything: <https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/wsj-the-future-of-everything>

Flash Forward: <https://www.flashforwardpod.com/>

The Secret History of The Future: <https://slate.com/podcasts/the-secret-history-of-the-future>

Future Tense: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/>

If Then: <https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then>

Grading Criteria & Requirements

The Faculty of the School of Business decided to implement a rigorous grade distribution format with limited numbers of students receiving high grades. The MBA Faculty Task Force recommends that the grade distribution of the class has an average of 3.2 and 3.4 and no more than 20% of the class receives a grade of A.

Grades for this course will be curved. That is, the points that you obtain for the course will be added up and sorted from high to low. Students who accumulated the most points will get an A. The cut-off points for A-, B+, B, B-, etc., will be determined in accordance with the MBA Faculty Task Force recommendations. In particular, no more than 20% of the class will receive an A, and the average grade of the class will range between 3.2 and 3.4.

There is no extra credit in this course. Late work will not be accepted.

Course Assignments and Due Dates**1) Participation (online) - 20% grade - Due Date: Each class**

Active participation during site visits, guest speakers, and class discussion is mandatory and will provide much of the learning in this course. It will be important to prepare for the discussions as well as the guest speakers in order to ask insightful questions. In order to get the most out of a case discussion, everyone must be ready, attentive, and participating.

Class participation will be based on the professor's perceptions of your contribution to the course. It is a non-negotiable grade. It is the student's responsibility to do their best to manage impressions of fellow class members. The student is free to query the professor at any time about his/her class participation quality and request suggestions/feedback for improvement.

Each class will assume that you have done all the readings, are prepared to discuss with your peers, and apply the materials during class learning activities. In order to receive a better grade, you must participate. Participation is graded based on attendance, your willingness to participate, demonstration of having prepared for class, and thoughtfulness of class participation. Participation grades are undercut by unprofessional behavior such as arriving late, doing other work in class, using a computer or phone to conduct personal business, etc.

2) Reflection Memo (*individual*) 30% grade - **Due Date: Each Class**

Students will submit a short reflection memo following each guest speakers (one per day). Each memo should demonstrate your insights gained from the speaker and should include a reference to the readings and cases we have covered in class. The essay will be graded based on the following:

- What surprised you about the speaker or the topic?
- How did the speaker link back to any of the cases or readings we have already covered?
- How did the speaker connect to any of the other speakers we have had?
- What questions did today open up for you around strategic foresight and future thinking?

3) Peer Review (from your team mates)- 5% of grade - **Due Date: March 20, 2021**

All students are responsible for being responsive to fellow team members' communication, participating in group activities, contributing to the research and writing or designing of the group deliverables, and for turning in group assignments to Blackboard. The Peer Grade reflects a student's participation in group assignments.

4) Group Project – 45% of grade - **Due Date: March 20, 2021**

The final project will be to prepare an analysis of the future of X and prototype of the preferred future. The project can be performed with 3-5 students. The report will be 2-4 pages long accompanied by a multimedia rendering of the possible or plausible future of X (e.g. postcard, poster, animation, or video). Students' ability to apply course content to real-world situations will be tested and they must fully understand the company, industry, forces within the industry that can affect its future trajectory. All data must be sourced and cited.

Proposed Course Structure

Readings and assignments can be found on Blackboard. **Please refer to Blackboard for the most up-to-date schedule.** Business attire required unless otherwise noted. Class and meeting attendance is required; final meetings to be determined once schedules are confirmed.

Date	Instructions
Prior to onsite	<p>To start, please complete the following tasks as soon as possible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fill the required pre-course survey here: https://forms.gle/hdh7izUDuKWeHorX6 2. Post your bio and photo on the discussion tab 3. Post your cell on the discussion tab

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Please email me if you have any graphic design experience 5. Sign up for a group (by topic) - groups are 3-5 students <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Connect with each other and assign a group liaison to communicate with me b. Begin researching your blog topic c. As a group, sign up for a Live Session with the professor to discuss your blog topic and approach 6. Read the assigned readings before coming to class on June 10th. 7. Participate - Log into our Live Session on Saturday, March 13, 2021 at 1:00pm-2:30 pm to be introduced to the course. I will outline expectations, take questions, assign group assignments, etc. 8. Participate - Please log into our Live Session on Sunday, March 14, 2021 at 1:00pm-2:30 pm to be introduced to the shared future (group) project workshop. I will give a masterclass on the intersection of design and future thinking to help you start thinking about your “shared future of x” project. 9. Attend the lectures and guest speakers (March 17-20).
Online Dates	<p>Please refer to the separate class itinerary for the 3/17-6/20, 2021 schedule (Forthcoming).</p> <p>Assume a full day of classes or meetings each day. Evenings should be reserved for group work. You must be on time for all meetings and classes.</p>
March 20, 2021	Wrap up and FINAL GROUP Project Presentations

Course Policies

Portable Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Many use laptops to help them take notes or reference the Internet as it relates to in-class discussion. However, no student is expected to be surfing the web, checking email, sending text messages, or working on other class assignments. Out of respect for the instructor and fellow classmates it is expected that you will use your laptops and other electronics judiciously. Bear in mind that cold-calling is fair game at any point during class. Participation grades will be impacted for any student who is unable to respond or who provides a far less than satisfactory response.

Professional Conduct

All students enrolled in Business and Society programs are representing the George Washington University and are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Students who fail to do so will receive a written warning and be subject to removal from class sessions and/or the project team.

Academic Integrity

The professor will strictly abide by the academic integrity policies as stated at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html#definition>. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of

information. **ANY ASSIGNMENT INCLUDING PLAIGERIZED MATERIAL (see Academic Integrity Code for definition) WILL RECEIVE AN F. NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.**

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted. Note that 5 minutes late constitutes a late assignment. Students are expected to make arrangements to hand in assignments prior to the deadline. If you anticipate a course absence the day an assignment is due, you should plan to complete the work ahead of time, turning in the assignment early via email. Alternative methods of assignment submission should be sought prior to the class period. Failure to turn in assignments before class will result in a zero for the assignment.

Final Grades

Final grades will reflect the student's total points earned in the course. Students will be able to track progress in the Blackboard gradebook. All grades are final. There will be no extra credit offered in this course.

Grading Disputes

If a mistake occurs in grading, students are requested to submit a written request for a grade change outlining what is believed to be the error in grading. I will respond back to you as soon as possible in writing.

Attendance

Attendance and participation in both live online lectures, group discussions, and live guest speakers are mandatory and will be evaluated strictly on an individual basis. To receive a high grade in participation, you must come to class prepared and must contribute frequently and with high-quality, substantive comments.

Student Support

Disability Support Services

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202.994.8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>

Classroom Emergency Preparedness and Response Information

Please consult the following link for GWU emergency procedures at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/upd/> as well as reference the important numbers below.

GW Campus Police (Emergency)
Foggy Bottom – 202.994.6111

GW Campus Police (Non-Emergency)
Foggy Bottom – 202.994.6110

Communication from the University

GW Campus Advisories is the University's principle method used for communicating incident-related information, including class cancellations, to the GW community. Visit www.CampusAdvisories.gwu.edu to sign up for Alert DC (text message alerts) and download GW Alert (desktop notifications). In addition, the University posts recorded messages on the GW Info line 202.994.5050.

Modifications to the Syllabus

This syllabus represents the best possible plan at this time. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions to any item on this syllabus, including, but not limited to, any class policy, the course outline and schedule, examination schedule, grading policy, required assessments, etc. Changes will be announced on Blackboard.