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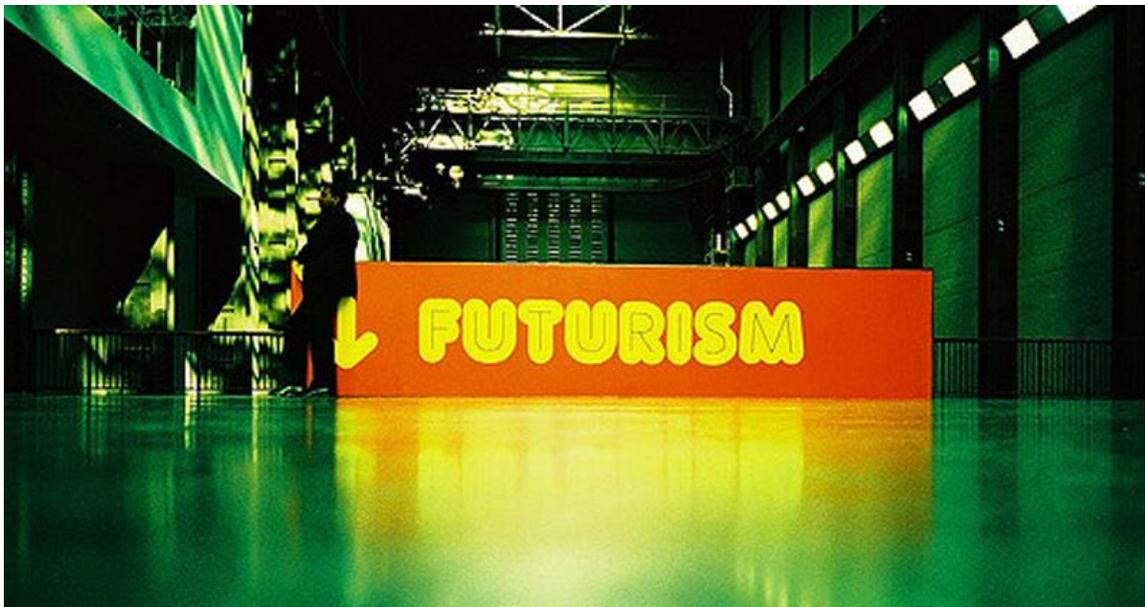
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES  
SUMMER 2016  
TIME AND LOCATION: TUESDAYS, 5:15 P, TO 8:15 PM, ROOM C215

## HISTORY OF THE FUTURE BLHV 463-40

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### *Overview*

What will happen next? Human beings have been asking themselves this question for as long as we know. For many this was a question to be pondered and answered by prophets and the supernatural. Others consulted the stars and nature looking for patterns that might provide a window to the unknown. Since the Enlightenment many have looked to the sciences. Whole industries have been created to predict the future. These are intimately tied to economics and intelligence fields and involve the management of risk. Modern popular culture has also played a role as well by depicting the future in mass media. How often have humans been “right” about the future? Where have the best predictions and forecasts come? What role does our view of the future affect our behavior in the present? These topics and more will be covered in this three-part course. The first portion of the course deals with how humans have viewed the future throughout history. The second focuses modern methods on how one might forecast the future using historical narratives, trend and data analysis, as well as markets. In this section students will use history as a laboratory and explore counter-factual what-ifs a bit of “social science fiction.” The final section of the class will focus on current views of the future and what “futurists” today (including the students) think about the “shape of things to come.”



### *Faculty*

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### ***Learning Objectives***

After completing this course a student should be able to:

1. Understand how human beings have viewed the future throughout recorded history
2. Analytically compare how views of the future have differed by culture and within cultures over time
3. Understand the role of religion and prophets in the human understanding of the future
4. Understand the role of science (real & fiction) in the human understanding of the future
5. Understand the balance of fear and hope in human conceptions of the future
6. Understand how human views of the future have affected their attitudes and behavior in their present
7. Understand the role of modern popular culture (science fiction, comics, movies) in the human understanding of the future
8. Demonstrate knowledge of notable futurist works
9. Demonstrate an ability to forecast a counter-factual, “what-if?” historical scenario
10. Demonstrate an ability to utilize social science and history to forecast a short-range futurist prediction

### ***Textbooks (required for purchase)***

1) *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century*

George Friedman

Publisher: Anchor; 1 Reprint edition (January 26, 2010)

ISBN-10: 0767923057

ISBN-13: 978-0767923057

2) *Physics of the Future: How Science Will Shape Human Destiny and Our Daily Lives by the Year 2100*

Michio Kaku

Publisher: Doubleday (March 15, 2011)

ISBN-10: 0385530803

ISBN-13: 978-0385530804

3) *Everything Is Obvious: \*Once You Know the Answer*

Duncan J. Watts

Publisher: Crown Business (March 29, 2011)

ISBN-10: 0385531680

ISBN-13: 978-0385531689

There are other free, open-source, online readings that will be utilized in the course. Information to access these will be provided by the instructor.

### ***Grading***

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- 93% to 100% = A, 90% to 92% = A-
- 87% to 89% = B+, 83% to 86% = B, 80% to 82% = B-
- 77% to 79% = C+, 73% to 76% = C, 70% to 72% = C-
- 67% to 69% = D+, 60% to 66% = D, Below 60% = F

Grades will be based on a combination of assignments, an exam, and a project:

In most weeks there will be in-class exercises or assignments linked to the content of the course. A few of these may require some additional work outside of class. Most are done as individual work; however some will also be done within a group. The first graded assignment is completed in the second week. In total, assignments represent **30%** of your overall grade. An in-class exam will be given during the semester to gauge your grasp of the course material representing **20%** of the course grade. The examination is open-book and open-note.

The centerpiece of the course is a futurist/forecasting project. These can be done individually (single-investigator) or in groups (i.e., co-investigators). The topic and methods used will be determined by you or your group in consultation with your professor. Each project will be summarized in a written paper describing your vision of the future. Throughout the semester we will be discussing and developing these projects together as a class. Results will be presented at the end of the semester in an informal presentation session. In-class participation will account for **10%** of your grade. Following the last class each project will be summarized in a final written paper (including any feedback or changes derived from in-class discussion). The paper should consist of a minimum of 2,400 words. Citations should be APA style. The written research note is worth **40%** of your grade.

### ***Disabilities***

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

### ***Turnitin.com***

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

### ***Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity***

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

### ***Georgetown Honor System***

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and*

to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

### **Plagiarism**

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of F for the course.

### **Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances**

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is very important. If you are going to be missing a class please let the instructor know ahead of time. You are responsible for obtaining course material missed during any absence.

### **Course Schedule**

#### Class and topic

- **May 24:** Introduction to the course and to “the future”
- **May 31:** Classic prophecy: Oracles and the apocalypse; Mayans and the “End of the World”; Saint Augustine; Joachim Of Fiore
- **June 7:** In the wake of the plague; Alchemy; Nostradamus; Against the Gods: Enlightenment and the management of risk; Pascal’s Wager; Condorcet
- **June 14:** Utopias and Dystopias; Marx and the history of the future; Charles Darwin; Herbert Spencer
- **June 21:** Today from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries; Jules Verne; H.G. Wells; Edward Bellamy;
- **June 28:** What if? Using history as a laboratory to predict futures

#### Primary readings & films, assignments

- Watts, Preface  
Film excerpt: *Back to the Future II*
- Watts, Chs. 1-2;  
Short essay/timeline: Tracing the life of a prophecy
- Watts, Chs. 3-4;  
Group project: Playing the Futures Market
- Friedman Chs. 1-4;  
Short essay: What would Marx say now?
- Friedman Chs. 5-9; *The Shape of Things to Come* by H.G. Wells (provided by the instructor); Film excerpts: *2001: A Space Odyssey, 2010*
- Friedman 10-13 and Epilogue;  
“What if?” scenario (readings provided by the instructor); group projects on a given scenario

- **July 5:** Modern prediction markets? Can gambling tell us the future? The Quants Watts, Chs. 5-6; “What if?” scenario group projects continued
- **July 12:** The “scandal” of prediction: Success and failure in modern science “Crisis Prediction” by Peter Wiles; “Cycles in American National Electoral Politics, 1854–2006: Statistical Evidence and an Explanatory Model” by Samuel Merrill, Bernard Grofman, and Thomas L. Brunell (both readings provided by the instructor) Film excerpt: *An Inconvenient Truth*
- **July 19:** Exam; The nuts and bolts of applied forecasting using Excel and SPSS. Exam Watts, Chs. 7-8; Final project topic selection
- **July 26:** The role of science fiction and popular culture in forecasting Watts, Chs. 9-10; “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury (provided by the instructor). Film clip montage: *The Time Machine, Soylent Green, Planet of the Apes, Blade Runner, 1984, The Matrix, The Terminator, Mad Max, Bicentennial Man*
- **August 2:** In the news: forecasts, 9/11 and the 2008 recession, 2012 & 2014 Elections Kaku Chs. 1-3 Project work
- **August 9:** Rip Van Winkle: a short-lens view (15 years) back and forward; case studies: What happens after “peak oil”?; The long-view: Into the 22<sup>nd</sup> century Kaku Chs. 4-9; *Global Trends 2025: The National Intelligence Council's 2025 Project* (provided by the instructor).
- **August 16:** Project presentations Papers due August 24 (electronic submissions suggested).