

## Psychology of Futures (FORE 6397)

College of Engineering

Foresight

University of Houston

Summer 2024 // Thursdays 5:30 – 8:30 CT Course FORE

6397 // Jun 6th–Jul 25th Instructor: Juli Rush

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Office hours: By appointment

### Description

Welcome to Psychology of Futures. Despite being titled ‘psychology’, this class is about more than just psychology. The title is an attempt to encapsulate the essence of the class: *how do our brain processes, mental functions, behaviors, and emotions play into how we interact with the rest of the world, both consciously and unconsciously, as we utilize the past, remain in the present, and influence the future?* Ambitious for a truncated summer course, but a beginning.

In Foresight and Futures work there are many elegant frameworks that use logic and data to help process and navigate toward the future. There are also skills and tools available for sensemaking that lean on aspects outside of the traditional. This course aims to assist foresight practitioners, social innovators + influencers, and those interested in deepening their relationships with the neuro/psycho/bio of futures through both broad strokes and deep dives of understandings and tools that inform possibility-making.

This class is grounded in a holistic and meta-disciplinary approach which pulls from both current and historical psychology, neuroscience, biology, sociology, thanatology, religion, philosophy, poetry, art and more. By looking from many varied perspectives, the hope is that students feel informed and empowered when researching, influencing, and enrolling others in futures work.

Students will leave this course with a deeper connection to Self, Other + System, foresight facilitation and enrollment, and a greater knowledgebase of human understanding. By leaning into areas of social emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and grief practices combined with the historical movement, theoretical studies, and real-world examples mentioned before, students can better identify the leverage and pressure points to enact powerful action in the world.

### Approach

This course is intentionally different than some of the other courses within the University of Houston program. There are a few that ask for self-reflection and provide activities which touch upon some of the subjects such as facilitation and storytelling, for example. Some of the classes also reference new methodologies and ways of doing futures which go beyond the norm. This class pushes into the realm of the human psyche and as such, digs deep into self-awareness and areas that may cause some initial discomfort. The hope is that with intentional curating of the classes, this investigation is done in a generative way that lends itself to new learning and opens up doors to new ways of practicing foresight.

To accomplish these goals, classes will be a blend of instructional lecture, small group break outs, class discussions and activities. Homework consists of discussion posts, assigned readings, and a final project with presentation.

## Learning Outcomes

Overall, this course aims to:

- (a) Provide a broad overview of the historical and current understandings from the overarching umbrella of psychology, especially how it pertains to foresight and futures practice.
- (b) Develop an appreciation and literacy of futures skills and tools for facilitation and enrollment in possibility-making and futures-influencing.
- (c) Enrich our understanding of our Selves and the humans we work with as we interact with the future, hopefully by deepening our self-awareness and compassion, empathy, and emotional capacity for others.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe at a high level both historical and current theories and work in the area of psychology as covered by the class
2. Apply skills and tools from class to better facilitation and personal futures work
3. Evaluate and recommend interventions for generative disruption into systems
4. Design additional tools and applications for addressing the psychological side of foresight and futures building

## Required Texts and Supplies

Readings will be provided electronically via Canvas.

## Schedule and Workload Expectations

There are 7 classes in the summer mini course schedule, starting on June 6th and concluding on July 25th. Expect to spend around 10 hours per week including preparation for classes, reading, and assignment completion. There will be no group work beyond in-class discussions and activities.

## A Note on this Syllabus

This outline is a living document, reflecting an evolving process designed to respond to emerging constraints and affordances. Some elements may change as we go.

## Course Overview

Below is an outline of the arc of the course and topics covered week by week.

6/6/23	1	Thursday	<b>Introduction + Overview</b>
6/13/23	2	Thursday	<b>Self</b>
6/20/23	3	Thursday	<b>Other</b>

6/27/23	4	Thursday	<b>System</b>
7/4/23	NA	Thursday	<b>Independence Day - No Class</b>
7/11/23	5	Thursday	<b>Guest Speaker</b>
7/18/23	6	Thursday	<b>Facilitation</b>
7/25/23	7	Thursday	<b>Final Share Out</b>

## Schedule

### **Week One: Introduction & Overview** | June 6th

*The Main Questions: What kind of adventure will this class be, what is the groundwork for our exploration, and who might we be at the end of this class?*

### **Week Two: Self** | June 13th

*The Main Questions: How do we establish essential Self, how does the Self consider the future, and what does the Self need to interact well with Other+System?*

### **Week Three: Other** | June 20th

*The Main Questions: How do we respond, support, and challenge - especially when we do work regard the future – the Others we facilitate, work with, and love?*

### **Week Four: System** | June 27<sup>th</sup>

*The Main Questions: How do we build antifragility and how might we inject disruption to influence more hygienic systems?*

### **Week 5: Guest Speaker** | July 11th

*The Main Questions: How does trauma-informed care help create space for possibility-making and positive generative work?*

### **Week 6: Facilitation** | July 18th

*The Main Questions: How does all of this culminate in better facilitation, whether it be one-on-one with a friend or colleague, in your teams at work, or as you do foresight work with businesses and orgs.*

### **Week 7: Presentations** | July 25th

*The Main Questions: What stories might we share from our learning and how might we move differently toward the future because of it?*

## Recommended Texts

If we had all the time in the world, there are a few relevant texts that won't really be covered in this class but consider reading in the future. See Canvas for the full list.

## Assessment

- 15% Weekly Notebooking
- 15% Engagement and participation in class 15%
- Weekly Discussion Posts
- 15% Weekly Discussion Comments
- 40% Notebooking Final Reflection + Presentation

## Assessment Details

### Weekly Notebooking

*Due Date: Weekly the Monday Following Class (Jun 12, Jun 19, Jun 26, Jul 3, Jul 17, Jul 24, Jul 31)*

This individual assignment is due weekly. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure a regular cadence of reflective practice as part of the learning experience. Weekly submission should be at least one page but can certainly be longer. Not everyone is responsive to journaling or doing a 'dear diary', but the weekly notebooking reflection submission should be an intentional time set aside for reflection. Suggestions for your notebook are: poetry, drawing/doodling/watercoloring, stream-of-conscious writing, quotes you find inspiring, bullet or interstitial journaling, or mindfulness practices. The weekly notebooking should respond to the Weekly Prompt Questions provided by the instructor.

### Engagement and Participation in Class

Criteria	Description
Informed Class Contributions	Engagement in full-class and break out discussions that draw upon readings, previous discussions and exercises.
Ask Beautiful Questions	A beautiful question is one that is authentic and ideally opens up new areas of inquiry and curiosity. Curiosity is key. Often, the question we don't ask, the "stupid question" is the beautiful question.
Positive Energy	How you show up to class dictates much of how you experience the class. Being on screen when able allows others to interact with you in a deeper way. Being attentive and engaged also helps not only you feel known and seen, but also others in this class experience with you. We all have rough days and will discuss how to 'hold space' for others. Part of the practice is articulating when this occurs and also digging deep to expand capacity when able.
Generosity	Building on the ideas of others, gently pushing for clarity when necessary, sharing thoughts and insights, and offering benefit of the doubt and assuming positive intent are all great ways to human in this class.

This class will be highly interactive. Outlets for demonstrating participation include engaging in full class discussion, smaller group breakout discussions, posting and responding to Canvas discussions. Reading the assigned articles is necessary for full class engagement and helps deepen understanding of the content. The instructor will track examples of active engagement and participation.

### **Notebooking Final Reflection + Presentation**

*Due Date: July 31st*

In the final class you will present a draft version of your final portfolio and lead a brief crit session with your fellow classmates including questions and concerns that you may have in order to make a final refinement of the portfolio. The portfolio should succinctly show your end- to-end process for your individual and collective story, from beginning narrative, through each of the “milestone” iterations, through to a final restoried future, as well as commentary for each stage and evolution of the process (this commentary can and should be inspired and culled from your weekly reflective memoing, but also build upon the memoing in the sense of a reflective commentary that encapsulates not just the in-process but the in-retrospect elements of process consideration).

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
Clear Throughline	Easy to follow from beginning narrative through to final product. Clarity includes the comprehensive and labeled iterations of what methods were employed, the challenges that came with each, and the summary output.
Aesthetic of Presentation	Whether a textual narrative, visual postcards, storyboarding, or other representations, the final portfolio should be of professional quality.
Conclusion and Lessons Learned	A final summation that includes what has been learned and possible next steps.

### **Re-submission**

The larger group assignments will include several “crits” throughout the semester, to provide feedback, etc. While this does not constitute “re-submission” there will be regular deliverables for the group assignment and there will be opportunities to “course correct” where appropriate. For the weekly reflections, this is really for individuals to reflect on what they are encountering and experiencing in class. Honest reflections are critical. So re-submissions are allowed, but expectation is within the first few weeks, folks “get” the concept and re-submissions should really be necessary.

### **Lateness**

If you submit an assignment late, you will only be eligible for 90% of your original grade. That is the only penalty, so even a very late assignment should absolutely be turned in – in other words, there is no good

reason to not turn in every assignment. This will not only ensure you've spent the time reading, discussing, and reflecting, but will also ensure you have a rich repository of your evolving thoughts, feelings, and impressions at the end of course.

*A grade of Incomplete is given only in special circumstances at discretion of the instructor.*

### **Community Agreements (adapted from AORTA: Anti-Oppression Resource & Training Alliance)**

Some guiding principles for class engagement can be helpful in providing a generative learning environment for all. Some considerations on how best to support your own, and each other's, learning journey:

- **No One Knows Everything; Together We Know a Lot:** This agreement asks that we all practice being humble, and look for what we have to learn from each person in the room. It asks us to share what we know, as well as our questions, so that others may learn from us.
- **We Can't Be Articulate All the Time:** We want everyone to feel comfortable participating, even if you don't feel you have the perfect words to express your thoughts.
- **Move Up, Move Up:** If you're someone who tends to not speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more. If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more.
- **Embrace Curiosity:** Allow space for play, curiosity, and creative thinking.
- **Acknowledge the Difference Between Intent and Impact:** The ask in this community agreement is that we each do the work to acknowledge that our intent and the impact of our actions are two different things, and to take responsibility for any negative impact we have. (This can be as simple as apologizing.)
- **Be Aware of Time:** Please arrive punctually and return on time from breaks, etc.

### **Interaction**

The course is conducted online. All content, daily interactions, and assignments are housed on the Canvas website ([canvas.uh.edu](https://canvas.uh.edu)). Students should visit Canvas regularly to see the weekly topics, readings, posts, and what the assignments are. The instructor will also regularly use email communication to advise of any updates/changes, and respond to questions.

### **Housekeeping**

Classes The UH futures program offers a unique blend of different modes of interaction for each course depending on the student's location and needs. The official course is conducted on the website Canvas but we will be using Zoom for the classroom experience.

But since one does not live by the internet alone, we also have personal modes of interaction. The one with the highest bandwidth is, of course, is attending virtual class on Monday evenings via Zoom. Those who cannot attend the class in either of these ways can also listen to a recording of the class and post any comments on the Archive Comments discussion board on the Home Page. The objective of the class

time is to enhance and deepen the learning from each week's lesson through discussion and activities. Those who do attend report that they learn more when they do so.

We also record the class for students who have a regular conflict with class time (work or other responsibilities). Finally, the website itself has an easy-to-use discussion tool that allows people to post and reply to any of the material posted. Use it in addition to or instead of the other modes of interaction. Even if you can't read all the posts, you are encouraged to 1) respond to posts that are addressed to you and 2) routinely check for posts by the instructor.

Communication with the instructor can be 1) in class, 2) through regular email 3) through Canvas, or 4) by Zoom.

**DROPPING THE COURSE:** The last day to drop the course without a grade is July 2.

**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.

**Academic honesty policy:** All students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UH catalog and the student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism, that is, using research without citations, or using a created production without crediting the source, 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, author must be included with the web material used.