

Political Science 405Z

Seminar: Assessing Global Futures

Spring, 2008

Professor: Dennis Pirages, WRI – B215
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Hours: Mon., Wed. 2:15 -3:30; Tues. 2:00 – 3:30 and by appointment

Required Books:

Cornish, *Futuring: The Exploration of the Future*

Teich, *Technology and the Future*

Pirages and Cousins, *From Resource Scarcity to Ecological Security*

Hughes and Hillebrand, *Exploring and Shaping International Futures*

Course Overview: This research seminar is designed for students interested in futures studies and who have some background in international relations or globalization studies. This exploration of global futures takes place in three parts. The first part of the course uses a lecture-discussion format and focuses on futures studies, futures perspectives, futures methodologies, and develops a theoretical framework for assessing global futures. The second part of the course involves team efforts to explore trends and relationships that are shaping global futures. Since this is a seminar, your participation in these discussions and presentations is critical. Finally, in the last part of the course these trends are used to assess likely futures for the country or region of your choice. Remember, you must be present in order to participate. You must do the assigned readings to do well. And you must take your written and presentation assignments seriously. In addition to the mid-term examination, each participant will be responsible for a 1,000 word briefing paper and supporting materials to be finished during the second part of the course, and a 4,000 word final paper.

Requirements:

Mid-term Examination - 35%

Class Participation - 20%

Briefing Assignment - 15%

Final Paper - 30%

Jan. 22: Seminar overview - A brief introduction to futures studies - One future or many futures? The current acceleration of history - A need for anticipatory thinking.

Jan. 29: The origins and evolution of futures studies - Key thinkers, ideas, and concepts - Patterns of change in human history - Two kinds of evolution - Three revolutions in human affairs - Globalization and the emerging global city.

Assignment: Cornish, Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Feb. 5: Futures studies and the social sciences - From description and explanation to prediction – designing preferred futures - An evolutionary perspective - Primary and secondary forecasting - Social revolutions and dominant social paradigms - Three drivers of change - Technological innovation - Demographic shifts - The constraints of nature - Governance and the future.

Assignment: Cornish, Chaps. 5, 10, 11, 12.

Feb. 12: Methods of exploring the future - Forecasting and policy-making - Barriers to successful forecasting - Why we Amised Iraq@ - Trend extrapolation - curve fitting - group techniques - causal modeling - forecasting and backcasting - Quantitative and qualitative models - The IFS model.

Assignment: Cornish, Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Feb. 19: Three perspectives on the future - Fatalism, optimism, utopianism - Persisting debate on progress or regress - Cornucopians vs. Neo-Malthusians - Herman Kahn and the Club of Rome - Linear vs. Cyclical views of progress - A golden age or a new dark age?

Assignment: Cornish, Chaps.13, 15; Teich, Chaps. 1-7, 10-14.

Feb. 26: A theoretical model for exploring global futures - Drivers of change in historical perspective - From population bomb to population bust - Changing perceptions of resource scarcity - Changing patterns of technological innovation - Globalization and the clash of social paradigms – The limits of computer models.

Assignment: Pirages and Cousins, Chaps. 1, 12; Hughes and Hillebrand, Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12.

March 4: Mid-term Examination.

March 11: Team presentation : Assessing the political and economic impacts of current and future demographic trends - Patterns of population growth - Stabilization and decline - Theory of demographic transition - Contemporary migration patterns - Impact of differential growth - Refugees - Demographic change in the United States - Policy responses to demographic pressures.

Assignment: Pirages and Cousins, Chaps. 2, 3; Hughes and Hillebrand, Chapt. 5.

March 25: Team presentation: The political economy of current and future patterns of resource consumption and availability - Worldwide energy demand and supply - Non-fuel minerals - World water availability - Food production and consumption.

Assignment: Pirages and Cousins, Chapt. 4, 5, 6, 7; Hughes and Hillebrand, Chapt. 7, 8.

April 1: Team presentation: The future of the global environment - Global warming - The future of the oceans - Deforestation - Bioinvasion - The coming plagues? - Policy responses to global change.

Assignment: Pirages and Cousins, Chapt. 8, 9, 10, 11; Teich, Chapt. 22, 23; Hughes and Hillebrand, Chapt. 9.

April 8: Team presentation: Issues in technological innovation - Computers - Telecommunications - The Internet - Surveillance Technologies - Managing innovation in telecommunications and surveillance technologies.

Assignment: Teich, Chapt. 15-18, 24 - 29.

April 15: Team presentation: Issues in technological innovation - Biomedical technologies - stem cell research - genetic engineering - nanotechnology - technology and future global economic competition - Technological innovation and warfare.

Assignment: Teich, Chapt. 19-21.

April 22-
May 6:

The world in 2030 – Forecasting future prospects for countries and regions.