GLOBAL CHALLENGES

IE University
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Academic year: 19-20
Degree course: THIRD
Semester: 1º
Category: COMPULSORY
Number of credits: 6.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES
There are no specific prerequisites for this course, but a certain level of criticism and argumentation is expected.
SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Anything we do has an impact, on either a small or a large scale. As the butterfly effect suggests; the flapping of the wings of a butterfly can influence a tornado in a complex weather model. Global challenges are large scale confrontations that affect the global community such as politics, environment, economics, and society. However, each large effect may have a small cause. The goal of this course is to have the students acquire a broad vision of all the different forces that are shaping our world, departing from the individual. Through the lens of design, these challenges are often seen as problems that need solving, this course instead will offer lateral thinking as a methodology to perceive these ongoing events as a context to create strategies and foresee opportunities.
OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

Objectives:
To envision innovation in a critical manner.
Analyze in a critical and creative way the contemporary challenges and the cultural and social complexity of the international society.
To achieve knowledge about the forces that are shaping the world.
To be able to create strategies and develop speculative narratives.
To use lateral thinking when approaching problems or challenges.
Communicate ideas and concepts in the most effective way.
Achieve a diagonal way to look at things, in order to then take a distance from ‘vertical logic’ and understand challenges as opportunities.

Skills:
Critical thinking & lateral thinking.
To be able to gather and interpret relevant data to make judgments that include a reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.
Scenario writing & world building.
To create coherent narratives and envisioning different plots and chains of events.
To consciously look for the causality of things.
METHODOLOGY
The course consists of a blend of lecture-based and discussion seminars and the engagement with practical activities, group work, and in-class discussions and assignments. Each seminar will start with a theoretical lecture followed by conversation and practical activities. Students are expected to have read the texts that the teacher will talk about before each session, and they are asked to prepare research, presentations, and scenarios in their individual study hours that they will share with the class. Students will be encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas in relation to the issues presented in each seminar.

The class sessions will rely on a combination of the below course formats:
Lectures, Discussion Sessions, Student Presentations and Student Debates.
Students will dedicate their individual study hours to:
Individual Research, Preparation of Assignments and Tasks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching methodology</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>20.0 %</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>16.67 %</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>23.33 %</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>23.33 %</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other individual studying</td>
<td>16.67 %</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>150 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAM

SESSIONS 1 - 2
In this introductory seminar, we will discuss the ways in which humans understand their physical environment by analyzing the individual as context. How do we like things? How are our thoughts shaped? How language influences this? The introduction of one of the key concepts: ‘supernormal stimuli’ during the lecture, will lead to the practical assignment in which we will identify, classify and oppose super stimuli through both Standard Average European (SAE) and Non-SAE perspectives.
The structure, the main topics and the goals of the course along with other practical aspects in relation to the evaluation system and the functioning of the class will be discussed.
R.A.: Supernormal stimulation

SESSIONS 3 - 4
This seminar will offer different types of innovation, departing from the question of what innovation in itself actually implies? The innovations will be addressed and explained through the lens of future global forces as Patrick Dixon remarked in the book Future of (Almost) Everything: (Fast, Urban, Tribal, Universal, Radical, Ethical).
In the practical assignment, we will analyze signals and counter-signals related to innovation and classify the signals within the proposed future global forces format.

SESSIONS 5 - 6
GLOBAL - Economies of Meaning #1
While in the previous sessions, we discussed the forces that are driving change, in this seminar, we will analyze their impacts on society. Instead of focusing on the correlation of events, we will dive into their causality. We will also question how these phenomena are approached and understood outside of the SAE languages (Standard Average European).
In the practical part of the class, we will start a catalog of innovations through signals and counter-signals related to ‘Economies of Meaning’ (addressed in the theoretical seminar) and we will come up with applications of those innovations into different fields.

SESSIONS 7 - 8
GLOBAL - Decentralization #2
At the beginning of the second seminar related to ‘Global trends’, we will firstly discuss the innovation proposals created in the previous class by means of presentations. Afterward, we will dive back into the theory of decentralization through the context of Blockchain technologies and how this concept relates to the gig economy, self-generated resources, the revolution of trust and eventually ideas of ownership.
Following this session, we will return to a similar course format as the last seminar; the students will investigate signals and counter-signals related to the topic of decentralization (discussed in the theory seminar), identify different innovations to add to the innovation catalog and come up with applications of those innovations in different fields.
R.A.: What is Blockchain? » Explained Simple

SESSIONS 9 - 10

22th August 2019
GLOBAL - Augmented Humans #3
At the beginning of the third seminar related to ‘Global Trends’, we will firstly discuss the innovation proposals created in the previous class by means of presentations. Afterward, we will arrive at the theory in relation to human augmentation in the context of the age of the spiritual machines. We will discuss human augmentation through the differences between transhumanism and posthumanism and will analyze the symbiosis between human and machine through (for example) artificial enhancements and brain hacking.

Following this session, we will return to a similar course format as the last seminar; the students will investigate signals and counter signals related to the topic of human augmentation (discussed in the theory seminar), identify different innovations to add to the innovation catalog and come up with applications of those innovations in different fields.


SESSIONS 11 - 12
GLOBAL - Multidimensional #4
At the beginning of the session, the students will show their innovation proposal of the last class before going back to the theory. In the theory part of the session, we will discuss the creation of other realities and mixed realities, through the context of Hikikomori and online persona.

As a practical assignment, the students are asked to investigate signals and counter-signals related to other realities. They are asked to identify the different innovations related to the topic and come up with applications of those innovations in different fields, especially looking back to previously Economies of Meaning, Augmented Humans and Decentralization.

Students must read/watch at least one of the following material.
R.A.: There’s a terrifying trend on the internet that could be used to ruin your reputation, and no one knows how to stop it.
Video: Matrix Saga
Video: Hikikomori Loveless: What causes young Japanese hermits to give up on real life
Other: Sword Art Online (Optional)

SESSIONS 13 - 14
GLOBAL - Uncanny #5
At the beginning of the session, the students will show their innovation proposal of the last class before going back to the theory. For this session, we will discuss the theories around bioexistencialism in the context of full-automation, algorithmic assistance, genderless AI’s, dirty jobs. Mostly through the lens of their impacts worldwide and their relation to the uncanny valley.

The students are asked to find signals and counter-signals related to existentialism, identify the different innovations and reflect on the possible applications of those innovations in different fields.
Students must read/watch before the class at least one of the following materials.
R.A.: The Technological Sublime of Non-Human Spaces: A Review of Liam Young’s "Machines Landscapes"
Video: I Am Mother

SESSIONS 15 - 16
GLOBAL - Old Youngsters #6
At the beginning of the session, the students will show their innovation proposal of the last class before going back to the theory. Old Youngsters will be the theory discussed afterward. Questioning whether we can afford to live longer, we will investigate the context of eternal youth, senior influencers, and replay.

The students are asked to find signals and counter-signals related to the topic, identify the different innovations and reflect on the possible applications of those innovations in different fields.

**R.A.: Scientists unveil a giant leap for anti-aging.**

**R.A.: Why My Husband and I Took Up “Swinging” With Other Senior Citizens**

**SESSIONS 17 - 18**

**GLOBAL - Lazy Users #7**

At the beginning of the session, the students will show their innovation proposal of the last class before going back to the theory. During the session we will discuss ideas of subtle commodities; remote and voice-controlled algorithms, apps and smart devices in the home.

The students are asked to find signals and counter-signals related to the topic, identify the different innovations and reflect on the possible applications of those innovations in different fields.

**R.A.: Honeywell, I’m Home! The Internet of Things and the New Domestic Landscape**

**SESSIONS 19 - 20**

Creating Scenarios #1

We will introduce the last and most practical part of the course in this session. We will work through all the forces mentioned before, to eventually move into scenario building - scenarios to speculate and think with.

During this session, the assignment and final deliverables, related to scenario building, will be introduced. Afterward the students will work on the assignment in collaborative and individual efforts. In this part, the participation of all the students will be most important.

**SESSIONS 21 - 22**

Creating Scenarios #2

At the beginning of the session, the scenario proposals created in the previous session will be discussed with the rest of the group by the students, through means of a presentation.

As a group, we will collectively review and debate their logics and implications. In this session, we will continue tackling previously explored topics together as a group, with the new additions and research by the students.

**M.D.: Alternate History Hub**

**SESSIONS 23 - 24**

Creating Scenarios #3

At the beginning of the session, the scenario proposals created in the previous session will be discussed with the rest of the group by the students, through means of a presentation.

As a group, we will collectively review and debate their logics and implications. In this session, we will continue tackling previously explored topics together as a group, with the new additions and research by the students. We will collectively shuffle scenarios and distribute wild cards. The students should start thinking about the graphic proposal.

**SESSIONS 25 - 26**

22th August 2019
Creating Scenarios #4
At the beginning of the session, the scenario proposals created in the previous session will be discussed with the rest of the group by the students, through means of a presentation. As a group, we will collectively review and debate their logics and implications. In this session, we will continue tackling previously explored topics together as a group, with the new additions and research by the students.

SESSIONS 27 - 28
Creating Scenarios #5
At the beginning of the session, the scenario proposals created in the previous session will be discussed with the rest of the group by the students, through means of a presentation. As a group, we will collectively review and debate their logics and implications. In this session, we will continue tackling previously explored topics together as a group, with the new additions and research by the students. As a group, we will also discuss and walk through all the steps to be taken before the final presentation.

SESSIONS 29 - 30
Final Presentation
In-class presentations. Details for the final deliverables and presentation will be discussed during the introduction of the assignment in session 19 - 20.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
RECOMMENDED:

LINKS OF INTEREST:
"Internet Historian". Youtube, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR1D15p_vdP3HkrH8wqjQRw
## EVALUATION CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>Interventions and comments during the lectures and debates are highly encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Every week the students will have to research by their own and few of them will have to make a brief presentation about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workgroups</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>This refers to the practical part at every second part of the sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Work</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>Grupal presentation of the final project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>Project's deliverables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PROFESSOR BIO
Professor: **JOEL BLANCO MARTÍNEZ**  
E-mail: jblancom@faculty.ie.edu

Joel is an inactive member of Pokemon's generation, junk food expert, and designer. His work usually begins with theory and research before being materialized into carefree projects. It approaches notions of semantics, philosophy, and performance, using a visual and material language that interpolates between the popular aesthetic and the avant-garde. He helps organizations to envision a brave new world, where the norms of pasts and presents society no longer exist, and many of today's problems have disappeared simultaneously.

Joel is a Product Designer, with a *Contextual Design*, MA degree from Design Academy Eindhoven, where he has lived and worked for the last few years.

**OTHER INFORMATION**  
Email: jblancom@faculty.ie.edu  
Office hours will be held weekly under appointment.
CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1. **Be on time**: Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as “Absent”. Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2. **If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart.** It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3. **Do not leave the room during the lecture:** Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as “Absent”. Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4. **Do not engage in side conversation.** As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class. If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

5. **Use your laptop for course-related purposes only.** The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

6. **No cellular phones:** IE University implements a “Phone-free Classroom” policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7. **Escalation policy: 1/3/5.** Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as “Absent.” IE University implements an “escalation policy”: The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.