ANTH 220: Human Futures

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10:05-11:30 TTh; CW 329

Course Overview

The future hasn't always been of such intense interest to societies. What, over the last century, has intensified this interest, and how does this interest map onto specific social concerns? In this course, we take a long view of concern about the future – as threat, opportunity, and crisis – to consider the moments in which specific futures have become salient for large numbers of people. In so doing, we focus on philosophy, social science, and literature (especially science fiction) as they operate in speculative idioms – or attempt to capture other people's speculative moments. This takes us through particular historical moments in the U.S. and North Atlantic (especially Western Europe) to think about forces like industrialization and deindustrialization, colonialism and decolonial movements, and modernization, development, and indigenous rights movements. Taken together, they help to show how concerns about the future enable and limit particular kinds of social formations, alliance building, and political organization.

The future as a concept has extreme elasticity – with a society, across societies, and as a thing in its self. As a result, we might reasonably ask: how do cultural expectations of the future shape scientific, political, and philosophical pursuits? To this end, this course takes a largely historical approach, situating the study of the future as a problem in the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries as new futures are being elaborated – and, in many cases, debilitated.

This course takes an interdisciplinary social science approach to the contemporary interest in the future, and, in so doing, draws on material from literature, anthropology, sociology, and history. In addition, it integrates a variety of important thinkers from many disciplines, as they have significantly shaped understandings of the future. Across this diverse literature, students will be exposed to a variety of methods that scholars and writers have employed to understand the relationship between the future and the social contexts in which that particular future becomes salient.

Students will be expected to develop writing projects that integrate approaches across the arts, sciences, and humanities, and which draw upon the historical and cross-cultural record. Students should complete the course with a significant piece of writing that builds upon their expertise developed in the course.

Learning Outcomes

Students in C courses will

1. Demonstrate understanding of course content through formal academic writing;
2. Construct effective prose that demonstrates critical thinking and advances sound conclusions, appropriate to the course and discipline; and
3. Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve their writing in both form and content.

Students in O courses will demonstrate

1. Proficiency in oral presentations.
2. The ability to improve oral presentations in response to critiques.
3. Skill in listening to and critiquing oral presentations.

Reading List:
Books are available at the campus bookstore. All other readings are available through myCourses. Films must be bought or rented and viewed at home prior to class.

Cuboniks, Laboria. The Xenofeminist Manifesto. New York: Verso, 2018.

Davis, Eleanor. The Hard Tomorrow. Montreal, Quebec: Drawn & Quarterly, 2019.

Dick, Philip K. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? New York: Del Ray, 1996.

Invisible Committee. Now. Robert Hurley, trans. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2017.

Jones, Stephen Graham. The Bird is Gone: A Manifesto. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History. New York: Henry Holt, 2014.

Laduke, Winona. All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 1999.

Lee, Tanith. Biting the Sun. New York: Spectra, 1999.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. The Communist Manifesto. New York: Verso, 1998 [1888].

Rucka, Greg and Michael Lark. Lazarus vol. 1. La Jolla, CA: Image, 2013.

Solanas, Valerie. SCUM Manifesto. New York: Verso, 2016.

Soleri, Paolo et al. Lean Linear City: Arterial Arcology. Mayer, AZ: Cosanti Press, 2012.

Wilson Gilmore, Ruth. Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

X, Malcolm. By Any Means Necessary. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992.

Yusoff, Kathryn. A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Films
Baichwal, Jennifer. Manufactured Landscapes. Zetigeist Films, 2007.

Grading & Assignments:

Reading Guides (30%) – Students are encouraged to complete at least 2 reading guides each week during weeks 2-15, and a total of 30 reading guides over the course of the semester (there are more readings [36] than required Reading Guides, so students have some latitude in which readings and films they submit Reading Guides for). Reading Guides must be turned in to the instructor at the beginning of class in which the reading or film is discussed. Late Reading Guides will not be accepted for credit. Reading Guides are included as Appendix A (for non-fiction), B (for fiction), C (podcasts), and D (films).

Oral Presentations (2 @ 10%) – Students will initially present on their identified paper topic (see below) and the resources they intend to draw on to address the identified problem. These presentations will be short (2 written pages, ~5 minutes) and students will receive written feedback from the instructor and peers. During the last week of class, students will give longer presentations (4-5 written pages, ~10 minutes) summarizing the argument of their final paper, the evidence that they have drawn upon, and the conclusions they have reached. Again, students will receive written feedback from the instructor and peers. In both cases, students will be graded on their effectiveness in communicating their ideas, the coherence of the presentation, and their ability to engage the audience. Presentations cannot be rescheduled; if you miss your presentation, you will receive a failing grade in the course.

15-Page Final Paper, broken into these components (50% total):

Identify a Problem (5%) – Based on the readings during the first month of class, identify a contemporary or historical "problem." This might be a problem you can identify in popular media, historical literature, modern politics, or everyday life. It should be a real problem, i.e. not something only in fiction, and there should be enough material about it to base a paper on it. In 300 words, what is the problem, and what are the solutions people have proposed? That is, who is it a problem for and what will remedy it? How does the problem relate to the course content?

Identify Resources (5%) – What kinds of research are you going to conduct to explore the history and actual or potential ramifications of the problem you have identified? We'll discuss a number of methods in course (ethnography, textual analysis, historiography), and you'll need to choose one or two to frame your research. You'll need to identify the resources that will lead to the successful completion of your research project: are there experts you can talk to? books and academic journals you can consult? archives that you can access? In 300 words, you'll need to discuss your proposed methods in completing your research project's data collection, what secondary and primary sources you can consult, and how these sources will inform your research.

Thesis & Argumentation (5%) – In a paragraph (~200 words), make an interpretive argument about your research findings. Are you making an historical argument? an ethnographic one? a cross-cultural one? How does the argument relate to the resources you will be drawing upon to make your argument? In another paragraph, discuss the contrary positions to your argument; that is, argue against yourself. What are the weaknesses in your argument? How might other people read the same evidence differently than you propose to? How have other people argued about similar evidence in the past?

First Five Pages (5%) – Write the first five pages of your research paper (~1500 words). In these pages, you should have a compelling introduction (provide an empirical description of your problem and its threats), as well as the statement of your thesis, and a discussion of your research methods. In addition, you should provide a map of your paper – what are the sections and how are they organized? how does each section relate to your argument? Discuss each section in a paragraph or more. What do you imagine your conclusion discussing?

Rough Draft (5%) – Building on your First Five Pages, you will complete a full rough draft of your paper. Each section needs to be fully written, including the presentation of evidence, your discussion and interpretation of the evidence, and an articulation of how the evidence relates to your overall argument and fits into the structure of the paper. You will also complete a draft of your conclusion, in which you will discuss the implications for the problem that you have identified and its potential solutions. Each section should be at least five pages long, and the conclusion should be at least two pages long. The Rough Draft will be read and commented upon by the instructor.

Final Rough Draft (5%) – The Final Rough Draft must incorporate the comments of the instructor from your Rough Draft and represents the final version of your paper. The paper should be complete for all intents and purposes, including completed introductions, sections, and conclusion, and full citations and bibliography.

Peer Reviews (2 @ 5% each) – First read this, on the 'elements of productive peer review': http://bit.ly/2htngrT. You will be randomly assigned two papers to read, and you are required to turn in a peer review for two of your peers. Each peer review should be 500-700 words long, and discuss the author's argument, use of evidence, persuasiveness, and coherence. Additionally, you may choose to identify issues in your peers' writing style. Late peer reviews will not be accepted for credit, but must be turned in to receive a grade for your final paper.

Final Paper & *Response to Peer Reviews* (10%) – In no less than 300 words, you should prepare a document that outlines how you have chosen to address (or not address) each of the concerns raised by the peer reviewers. Your Final Paper should incorporate these changes as well, and you should address how you have included the critiques into your paper.

Policies:

No exceptions to policies will be made for students who add the class late.

There is no extra credit available.

No late work will be accepted for credit.

Students taking the course Pass/Fail must earn a C to receive a Pass.

Workload: This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled lectures, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work each week during the semester. This includes things like: completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other tasks that must be completed to earn credit in the course.[1] Educational research shows that undergraduate students can read 1 page of academic writing in less than 3 minutes; 100 pages of reading should require about 300 minutes, or 5 hours. You may need to read some of the texts more than once to fully understand them. In most cases, you should expect to be reading about 100-125 pages per week (approximately 4-5 hours) in addition to other course requirements.

Disability-related Equal Access Accommodations: Students wishing to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify the instructor as soon as they are aware of their need for such arrangements. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are generally required. We encourage you to contact SSD at 607-777-2686 to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. The SSD website (www.binghamton.edu/ssd) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines. The office is located in UU-119.

Academic Integrity – Academic misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated. Evidence of academic misconduct – which is not limited to plagiarism and cheating – will result in an immediate failing grade in the course and actions as dictated by university policy regarding academic integrity for undergraduate students.[2]

Contacting Me: I only check my email between 2-4 PM on weekday afternoons and during my office hours. I will always respond to emails within 24 hours, except for emails received on Fridays, which will responded to on the following Monday. If you plan to stop by my office hours, please contact me ahead of time, either by email (mwolfmey@binghamton.edu) or in person before or after class.

1 http://www.binghamton.edu/academics/provost/documents/syllabus-credit-hours-0314.pdf

2 http://www.binghamton.edu:8080/exist9/rest/Bulletin2014-15/xq/2_academic_policies_and_procedures_all_students.xq?_xsl=/db/Bulletin2014-15/xsl/MasterCompose.xsl

Correspondence with instructor: Only correspondence that follows professional conventions of correspondence will be replied to by me. For example, your email should begin 'Dear Professor Wolf-Meyer,' and end with your signature. Beginning an email without a salutation, a 'Hey' or other informal forms of address will ensure your email will not be responded to. If the answer to your question is clearly stated in the syllabus or assignment guidelines, instructors may not respond to your email.

Style Matters: All written work should be double-spaced, 12 point font, in Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins on all sides, and page numbers. Citation should look like this: (Author Year: Page), e.g. (Wolf-Meyer 2009: 408). Failure to meet these standards will result in a reduced grade.

Letters of Recommendation: Before you ask me for a letter of recommendation, read this: http://bit.ly/2nwbeNG. My policy is to not provide students with a letter of recommendation before they complete a course with me. I also generally do not provide letters for students who have taken only one course from me (for reasons detailed in that link).

Week 1: What is the Future?
1.21.2020
Introduction to the Course; Syllabus overview

1.23.2020
Listen to John Luther Adams' "Become Ocean"

Butler, Tom. Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot. New York: Goff Books, 2015.

Wist, Allie. "What Dinner Might Look Like in a Future of Global Warming and Rising Sea Levels: Recipes for a Flooded Future." Saveur April 9, 2017.

Part One: The Future as Crisis

Week 2: Our Looming Apocalypse
1.28.2020
Kolbert, Elizabeth. The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History. New York: Henry Holt, 2014. **Prologue, Chapters 1-7**

1.30.2020
Kolbert, Elizabeth. The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History. New York: Henry Holt, 2014. **Chapters 8-13**

Week 3: Reconceptualizing Life After Nature
2.4.2020
Dick, Philip K. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? New York: Del Ray, 1996.

2.6.2020
Wolf-Meyer, Matthew. Theory for the World to Come. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Week 4: Industrialization and Automation
2.11. 2020
Identify a Problem Due
Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. The Communist Manifesto. New York: Verso, 1998 [1888].

Thompson, Edward Palmer. Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture. New York: New Press, 1993. **Selections**

2.13.2020
Brynjolfsson, Erik and Andrew McAfee. The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies. New York: WW Norton, 2016. **Selections**

Lee, Tanith. Biting the Sun. New York: Spectra, 1999. **Part One**

Week 5: Deindustrialization and Environmental Degradation
2.18.2020
Laduke, Winona. All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 1999. **Chapters 1-5**

2.20.2020
Popper, Deborah E. and Frank J. Popper. "The Great Plains: From Dust to Dust." Planning 53.12 (1987): 12-18.

Popper, Deborah E. and Frank J. Popper. "The Buffalo Commons: Metaphor as Method." Geographical Review 89.4 (1999): 491-510.

Week 6: Building, Planning, Infrastructures
2.25.2020
Identify Resources Due
Fuller, Buckminster. Nine Chains to the Moon. New York: Doubleday, 2000. **Selections**

Heckman, Davin. A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of a Perfect Day. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. **Selections**

Watch:
Baichwal, Jennifer. Manufactured Landscapes. Zetigeist Films, 2007.
Available on Amazon Prime

2.27.2020
Soleri, Paolo et al. Lean Linear City: Arterial Arcology. Mayer, AZ: Cosanti Press, 2012.

Week 7:
3.3.2020
Thesis & Outline Due
First Presentations

3.5.2020
No Class – Winter Break

Week 8: Prisons, Criminality, and Political Economy
3.10.2020
Wilson Gilmore, Ruth. Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. **Chapters 2-4**

3.12.2020
Wilson Gilmore, Ruth. Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. **Chapter 6**

Hughes, Caitlin and Alex Stevens. "A Resounding Success or a Disastrous Failure: Re-examining the Interpretation of Evidence on the Portuguese Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs." Drug and Alcohol Review 31 (2012): 101-113.

Week 9: Race & Revolution
3.17.2020
Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program (1966)

X, Malcolm. By Any Means Necessary. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992. **Chapters 3 & 5**

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The Case for Reparations." The Atlantic 313.5 (2014): 54-71.

3.19.2020
Yusoff, Kathryn. A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Week 10: Indigenous Freedom
3.24.2020
First Five Pages Due
American Indian Movement's Trail of Broken Treaties (1972)

Laduke, Winona. All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 1999. **Chapters 6-11**

3.26.2020
Jones, Stephen Graham. The Bird is Gone: A Manifesto. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003.

Week 11:
3.31.2020
Solanas, Valerie. SCUM Manifesto. New York: Verso, 2016.

4.2.2020
Cuboniks, Laboria. The Xenofeminist Manifesto. New York: Verso, 2018.

Week 12:
No Classes – Spring Break 4.7.2020-4.9.2020

Week 13: Education
4.14.2020
Rough Draft Due
la paperson. A Third University is Possible. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

4.16.2020
Dyke, Erin and Eli Meyerhoff. "An Experiment in 'Radical' Pedagogy and Study: On the Subtle Infiltrations of 'Normal' Education." Journal of Curriculum Theorizing 29.2 (2013): 267-280.

Harney, Stefano and Fred Moten. The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2013. **Chapter 4: "Debt & Study"**

Week 14: Politics
4.21.2020
Lalley, Stephen P. and E. Glen Weyl. "Quadratic Voting: How Mechanism Design can Radicalize Democracy." American Economic Association Papers and Proceedings 108 (2018): 33-37.

Mulligan, Thomas. "On the Compatibility of Epistocracy and Public Reason." Social Theory and Practice 41.3 (2015): 458-476.

Listen to:
To the Best of Our Knowledge's "Building a Better Ballot Box"

4.23.2020
Invisible Committee. Now. Robert Hurley, trans. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2017.

Week 15:
4.28.2020
Final Rough Draft Due
Davis, Eleanor. The Hard Tomorrow. Montreal, Quebec: Drawn & Quarterly, 2019.

Rucka, Greg and Michael Lark. Lazarus vol. 1. La Jolla, CA: Image, 2013.

4.30.2020
Peer Reviews Due in Class
Student Presentations

Week 16: Final Presentations
5.5.2020
Student Presentations

Final Exam Week
Final paper due on final exam date, to be determined in February

Appendix A: Reading Guide for Non-Fiction
For each reading, you will need to fill out this form. Bring copies of each reading guide to class to receive credit and ensure that you understand each reading.

1. Who is the author? What kind of disciplinary background are they coming from (e.g. anthropology, history, sociology, medicine)?

2. Who is the piece written for? How can you infer the audience?

3. What is the main argument and goal of the writing? -- to verify something? or challenge a theoretical claim? In other words, if you had to explain it in class, how would you summarize it?

4. Identify the author's thesis.

5. What are the key concepts used? Are concepts challenged or invented?

6. Who are the texts' friends and enemies? How are citations used?

7. What is the article, book, or chapters about, empirically? In other words, what is being studied as the object? Where are the events and people geographically situated? What is the scale of analysis? (e.g. nation, region, city, institution, person?) When did the study take place?

8. What methods were used in collecting data? (ethnography, interviews, statistics, textual analysis, archival research?) Does the data look at what people do, say, or think? How was the data analyzed? What assumptions -- of the author or his or her society -- shaped the inquiry? What core values are assumed? What data would strengthen the text?

9. Discuss a passage (citing page number) that inspired you or frustrated you. Then type out a paragraph or two (160-300 words) discussing that passage (citing page number) and describing how it resonated or clashed with other course content (which might be a discussion, a film, or another text).

10. If you take one thing away from the text, what would it be? In other words, if you're telling a friend about this article, what's the one nugget you would share to make start a conversation?

Appendix B: Fiction Reading Guide

For each fictional reading (novel, short story, graphic novel), you will need to fill out this form. Bring copies of each reading guide to class to receive credit and ensure that you understand each reading.

1. Who is the author? What kind of background are they coming from?

2. Who is it written for? How can you infer the audience?

3. What is the story about, empirically? In other words, who are the characters? What are their motivations? Where do they live and go to? When does the story take place? Are there particular technological or social features that make the story obviously 'futuristic'?

4. What's the big idea in the story? That is, what's the idea that the author is working with from which he or she extrapolates this story? How does the author use estrangement in the story to make characters, events, or technologies new or alien to the reader?

5. What inspirations can you identify for the text? That is, is the author obviously playing with ideas that you've encountered elsewhere (in the class or in your other reading)? Can you think of things that you've read, watched, or listened to that might be inspired by this text?

6. What is the author's embedded assumption about 'human nature'? What does the author think that humans are intrinsically motivated by, and how does the story reveal these ideas about human nature?

7. What theories about society and social arrangements is the author working with? How are things like gender, sexuality, class, race, disability, ethnicity, etc. used to highlight how society operates?

8. Discuss a passage (citing page number) that inspired you or frustrated you. Then type out a paragraph or two (160-300 words) discussing that passage (citing page number) and describing how it resonated or clashed with other course content (which might be a discussion, a film, or another text).

9. If you take one thing away from the text, what would it be? In other words, if you're telling a friend about this story, what's the one nugget you would share to make start a conversation?

Appendix C: Podcast Guide

For each podcast, you will need to fill out this form. Bring copies of each podcast guide to class to receive credit and ensure that you understand each podcast.

1. Who are the producers and hosts of the podcast? What kind of background are they coming from (e.g. podcastmaking, academia, journalism)?

2. Who is the podcast made for? How can you infer the audience?

3. What is the main argument and goal of the podcast? -- to demonstrate something? or tell a particular story? In other words, if you had to explain it in class, how would you summarize it? (If the podcast is comprised of multiple stories, you may need to answer this question repeatedly.)

4. Identify the podcast maker's intent. What is the big idea of the episode?

5. What are the key concepts used? Are concepts challenged or invented?

6. What is the podcast about, empirically? In other words, what is being studied as the object? Where are the events and people geographically situated? What is the scale of analysis? (e.g. nation, region, city, institution, person)? When did the events take place?

7. Discuss a scene from the podcast that inspired you or frustrated you. Then type out a paragraph or two (160-300 words) discussing that scene and describing how it resonated or clashed with other course content (which might be a discussion, another podcast, or a text).

8. If you take one thing away from the podcast, what would it be? In other words, if you're telling a friend about this podcast, what's the one nugget you would share to make start a conversation?

Appendix D: Film Viewing Guide

For each film, you will need to fill out this form. Bring copies of each viewing guide to class to receive credit and ensure that you understand each film.

1. Who is the director of the film? What kind of background are they coming from (e.g. filmmaking, anthropology, history)?

2. Who is the piece made for? How can you infer the audience?

3. What is the main argument and goal of the film? -- to demonstrate something? or tell a particular story? In other words, if you had to explain it in class, how would you summarize it?

4. Identify the filmmaker's intent. What is the big idea of the film?

5. What are the key concepts used? Are concepts challenged or invented?

6. What is the film about, empirically? In other words, what is being studied as the object? Where are the events and people geographically situated? What is the scale of analysis? (e.g. nation, region, city, institution, person)? When did the study take place?

7. Discuss a scene from the film that inspired you or frustrated you. Then type out a paragraph or two (160-300 words) discussing that scene and describing how it resonated or clashed with other course content (which might be a discussion, another film, or a text).

8. If you take one thing away from the film, what would it be? In other words, if you're telling a friend about this film, what's the one nugget you would share to make start a conversation?