

University of Notre Dame
Mendoza College of Business, FALL 2025
*Honors Futuring: Anticipating Change and Envisioning
Strategic Opportunities*
MGTO 40110 – 01; T/TH 3:30-4:45
Classroom: Mendoza L061
Course LMS Canvas: <https://canvas.nd.edu/courses/122839>



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GENERAL INFORMATION AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Course Description:** *Futuring* enables business managers to spot emerging opportunities and threats early and develop innovative responses to serve changing needs. The *Futuring* class provides students with the opportunity to learn specific skills and methodologies to make evidence-based decisions in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. It exposes students to quantitative and qualitative methodologies to identify trends, consider the implications of change, to plan for alternative futures, and to suggest strategies leading to preferred futures. *Futuring* challenges students to demonstrate critical, creative, and systems thinking skills to fully understand complex change and how business can drive positive outcomes across all stakeholder groups. The course is organized to lead students through three distinct stages of the *futuring* process:

- a) **Perspective:** Framing and Scanning for emergent trends and issues in business and society;
- b) **Foresight:** Trend Analysis and Forecasting to define expected and plausible alternative future scenarios; and
- c) **Insight:** Implications Assessment to identify emerging opportunities and threats and devise plans to create preferable outcomes.

Students are challenged to analyze emergent change in society today by exploring megatrends, global challenges, and issues related to a broad spectrum of categories including sustainability and demography. A framework is provided that includes a range of *futuring* tools and methods for forecasting future scenarios and analyzing implications of future change. The course is designed to facilitate critical, systems, and creative thinking. Students are challenged to demonstrate competency in using the *futuring* framework and core thinking skills via a semester-long team project on a topic of their choosing.

Business Honors Program. The *Futuring* course is ideally suited for Mendoza's Business Honors Program. It is a research-driven course built on the idea of self-directed learning. It aligns nicely with the intellectual curiosity of Business Honors students and challenges students to produce a document

¹ I want to be available as much as possible. I am happy to meet at alternative times in-person or via Zoom, just ask. You can always reach me via email to schedule a time. A default Zoom link we will use throughout the semester is available on Canvas.

of professional quality thought-leadership around a topic of their choosing. In the latter portion of the course there are opportunities for students to explore futures that may be more desirable, equitable, and morally just—hallmarks of BHP emphasis on developing ethical leaders. As is the case with all Mendoza courses, the pace is fast, but more so for this Honors offering. There will be additional topics and frameworks in comparison to the traditional offering, such as causal layered analysis and integrating virtues. There are modifications and adjustments to assignments, such as the inclusion of scholarly, peer-reviewed research. The intent is to keep the basic structure of Futuring course, but with an enhanced intellectual challenge for a deeper learning engagement.

Specific elements associated with the Honors course include:

- Extensive writing & team deliverables (typically in excess of 4,000 words per student), including Scope of Project Brief, Current Assessment, Foresight Forecast, and Final Project. These should be delivered at an exemplary level, demonstrating significant thought leadership and research.
- The Current Assessment assignment will include an additional section examining peer-reviewed, scholarly research on the selected topic area.
- There will be additional readings in the areas of causal layered analysis and the virtues of hope and curiosity.
- There will be an additional individual assignment incorporating application and reflection on the virtues of hope and curiosity applied to the project topic.

Integrating Virtues Together. Virtues and Vocations is a national forum to cultivate character in pre-professional and professional education. One of these initiatives is the Integrating Virtues Together program guided by the Institute for Social Concerns and the Office of the Provost. The intent is to integrate moral, intellectual, and civic virtues into pre-professional courses. Cultivating character is an essential part of personal and professional identity, and part of Notre Dame's mission to cultivate character for the common good. More generally, this aligns with the need for and recognition of character-based education,² which is integrated broadly into collegiate curricula and not siloed to the core curriculum. I will be piloting this initiative within our Business Honors Course. While there are many virtues that could be adopted, we will be prioritizing two: hope and curiosity. Hope as a virtue has a rich lineage in theology (desiring God's kingdom) and philosophy, but also more recently in psychology.³ A preliminary definition of hope encompasses a desired future state, agency to achieve this outcome, and the identification of pathways or routes to realize the desired state. Curiosity falls under the broader virtue of wisdom, and in contrast to many other virtues, it is not directly focused on the impact or welfare of others (e.g., compassion), but it does capture 'self-perfection' and human flourishing.⁴ Curiosity is often considered a dispositional trait associated with a strong desire to know or

² Brooks, David (2025, January 9) The Character-Building Tool Kit. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/09/opinion/character-building-education.html>

³ Snyder, C.R. (2003) The psychology of hope: You can get there from here. (2nd ed.) Free Press.

⁴ Baumgarten, E. (2001) Curiosity as a Moral Virtue. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*. 15(2): 169-84.

learn, to explore, and openness to new experiences and possibilities. The Futuring course with its attention to things that have not happened yet, multiplied by possibilities that could happen, makes the virtues of hope and curiosity exceptionally relevant. This will transpire within our course through the following activities.

- A personal assessment through the VIA Character Strengths Survey
- Readings on Hope and Curiosity
- A written reflection and application of hope and curiosity to student projects
- An in-class gamification exercise, *That Thing from the Future*, with the opportunity to build muscle memory and application around the virtues of hope and curiosity.

2. Required Readings:

- All readings are listed by class session in the schedule provided with this syllabus.
- All readings are posted on Canvas.

Optional Readings (on reserve in the Mahaffey Business Library or from me):

- Peter Diamandis & Steven Kotler, *Abundance: The Future is Better than You Think*
- Andy Hines & Peter Bishop, *Thinking About The Future, Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*
- Bob Johansen, *Get There Early – Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present*
- Edie Weiner & Arnold Brown, *FutureThink: How to Think Clearly in a Time of Change*
- Edward Cornish, *Futuring: The Exploration of the Future*

3. Course Objectives: Change comes in linear (continuous) and non-linear (disruptive) forms and creates opportunities for business to prosper by early identification of emerging market transitions and anticipation of their implications and potential solutions. The first step in defining such solutions is awareness of trends and signals of emergent change. Based on this awareness, evidence-based futuring can be leveraged to develop insights enabling leaders to plan for and create positive change in the future. Thus, the overall course objectives are:

- To demonstrate an awareness of important issues, trends and uncertainties affecting business and society, including issues related to sustainability.
- To develop a scanning core competency to frame, spot and interpret “weak signals” of future change and its implications.
- To develop a futuring skillset and mindset to frame and explore ambiguous questions regarding future change in a manner that yields actionable outcomes.
- To apply the methodologies and tools used by organizations to develop evidence-based projections of plausible future outcomes and assess emerging implications, opportunities and potential responses for business.
- To hone strategic thinking skills including critical/analytical thinking, systems thinking, creative thinking and visioning skills that are essential to address complex problems.
- To explore, cultivate, and apply relevant moral virtues.
- Produce a well-reasoned, professional quality futuring report that demonstrates proficiency in the objectives mentioned above.

4. **Class Delivery:** Futuring: Anticipating Change and Envisioning Strategic Opportunities is taught through a combination of classroom lectures, in-class workshops, classroom discussions, Socratic questioning, video illustrations, and guest lectures. The reading assignments and any assigned homework should be completed prior to class and you should be prepared to discuss the material covered in the readings on the date indicated on the syllabus.
5. **Course Materials:** There is no text book or course pack to purchase. Pre-reads, homework exercises, assignments, and other handouts will be provided through the Canvas LMS. Additional resources and materials (e.g. sample industry reports, data, articles, links to various important websites, etc.) will also be available on Canvas.
6. **Course Requirements:** To successfully complete the Futuring course, students must:
 - a. complete the assigned readings before each class;
 - b. attend class and substantively participate in classroom discussions;
 - c. complete the individual homework assignments;
 - d. complete the assigned tests;
 - e. complete all team deliverables for the Team Futuring Project as an active participant;
 - f. present project findings in class.
7. **Tests:** There will be 3 tests based on course material (readings, lecture, etc.) throughout the semester, including one optional test at the end of the semester. The 2 highest scores will count, and the lowest score will be dropped. All students must take the first two tests.
8. **Team Futuring Projects:** The class will be divided into teams of four to five students each. Each team will develop a futuring report and present their findings to the class. Please review the “Futuring Project Final Report Assignment” document (on Canvas at a later date) for details on deliverables, due dates and grading. Final grading will take into account individual contribution based on team peer evaluations (see the *Teammate Collaboration and Contribution Evaluation* Form in this syllabus as a sample), allowing for up to a two-letter grade difference in the final project grades. [In extreme situations the instructor reserves the right to impose a significantly harsher grade adjustment.] The actual *Teammate Collaboration and Contribution Evaluation* form will be completed online.
9. **Professor Contact:** Students are encouraged to contact me in person, via e-mail, or Zoom with any questions or to request assistance throughout the semester. Teams are encouraged to meet with me through the stages of the futuring project and there may be phases of the project where teams are required to meet with me. I have set some office hours but am happy to meet on other days and times by appointment.
10. **Class Attendance/Preparation/Participation:** The Futuring course is intended to be highly participatory and class participation accounts for 15% of your grade. Course requirements include attending class, being prepared for every class, and making meaningful contributions to our class discussions. Additionally, the instructor reserves the right to significantly lower a student’s course grade including the *award of a failing course grade* to any student who misses 9 or more class sessions, regardless of performance on other elements of the class.

Being prepared to participate in the class discussions is an important aspect of this course. You are responsible for having read the material and being able to contribute and articulate insightful comments and discussion points as a means of demonstrating your preparation and engagement for class. The participation grade will be based on both quality and quantity of verbal contributions to discussion. Attendance will be taken and considered as a component of class participation. Strong class attendance will typically offer satisfactory performance on this dimension. However, higher evaluations will require engagement and contributions to class discussions. The “best” class discussion will often transpire among the students (i.e., a student responding to, questioning, or building upon classmates' comments), not simply a series of dialogues between individual students and the professor. I particularly value comments that are thoughtful, provocative, and move the discussion forward in a meaningful manner. To do this effectively, you must be a good listener as well as communicator.

Items for class participation criteria include:

- Fully present (no cell phone texting, etc.)
- Adds value to discussion/debate with comments.
- Avoids leaving during class.
- Appears well-prepared and energetic for class assignments.
- Comments that can be substantiated with evidence from class readings (or other sources)
- Closed computers during class unless otherwise specified by instructor.⁵
- Effectively uses time during team workshops.
- Follows classroom etiquette (arrives on time, respectful of others, inclusive, listens well)
- Contributes to a positive learning environment and engages in professional behavior.

11. Grading: Your final grade will be calculated as follows:⁶

Homework (~12%)

One Future...of Question?	5 points
3 Project Topic Ideas	30 points
Scanning Posts (2 Rounds @ 25 points each)	50 points
Virtues Reflection & Application	30 points

Team Futuring Project: (~54%)

Scope of Project Brief	40 points
Current Assessment	90 points
Foresight Forecast	90 points
Final Futuring Report	220 points
Final Presentation	60 points

Tests: (~20%)

2 Tests @ 90 pts each	180 points
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Class Participation & Attendance (~15%) 135 points

Total Points: 930 points

⁵ Over time I have learned that electronic devices typically do more harm than good to the overall in-class learning environment. Internet technology expert Clay Shirky offers arguments for this perspective.

<https://tinyurl.com/qhwqyv4>

- 12. Policy on Late Assignments:** Individual and team assignments will be accepted late but incur a 10% penalty that increases by 10% for each additional day.
- 13. Honor Code:** Students are reminded that the Academic Code of Honor governs their performance in Futuring. The pledge to uphold the Academic Code of Honor includes an understanding that all submitted work, graded or ungraded — examinations, quizzes, draft copies, papers, homework assignments, extra credit work, and the like — must be your own. Any kind of academic dishonesty is a violation.

All members of the University community are expected to adhere to the following pledge:

As a member of the Notre Dame community, I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to learn and abide by principles of intellectual honesty and academic integrity, and therefore I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.

For more complete guidance, go to <http://honorcode.nd.edu/>.

Work on the team futuring project is collaborative. You are encouraged to discuss your work with your peers, faculty and other resources available to you so long as you properly cite any sources of information or ideas that you glean from those collaborative engagements. Ideas and expressions in your written submitted work that originate from another—either author or verbal communication—should have a formal citation.

The University provides faculty with the means to check for plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious honor code violation, and students must be vigilant in properly crediting their use of sources. Therefore, the governing rule for this class is “when in doubt, cite it”. I will make available “Citation Guides” on Canvas and through the “Futuring Library” link on Canvas.

Generative AI/ Chat GPT. Emerging technology developments such as generative AI tools can be meaningful productivity enhancements. However, their use is inconsistent with the learning elements for this class which is oriented to your original, independent thinking and writing. As such, use of generative AI tools including forms of ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Grammarly, Claude, Perplexity, and Chatsonic, among others, is prohibited for any class assignments unless otherwise informed by the instructor.

13. Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

I believe everyone has the right to take the course without undue hardship deriving from conditions such as physical or learning disabilities. Any student who has a documented accommodation and is registered with Accessibility Services should speak with me as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact [Accessibility Support](#). It is the policy and practice of The University of Notre Dame to provide reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented impairments.

14. Support for Student Mental Health at Notre Dame

Care and Wellness Consultants provide support and resources to students who are experiencing stressful or difficult situations that may be interfering with academic progress. The University Counseling Center offers cost-free and confidential psychological and psychiatric services from licensed professionals. University Health Services provides primary care, psychiatric services case management, and a pharmacy. And the McDonald Center for Student Well Being offers assistance for problems with sleep, stress, and substance use. These services maintain strict confidentiality. Seeking assistance is a courageous and smart thing you can do for yourself and those who care about you.

[Care and Wellness Consultants](#)

[University Counseling Center](#)

[McDonald Center for Student Well Being](#)

15. Inclusion⁷

Notre Dame's foundational faith calls us to affirm the inherent dignity in, and live in solidarity with, all women and men. Human beings are inescapably social, and the flourishing of each individual is possible only in a social context in which we each have responsibilities to others and others have reciprocal responsibilities to us. Instructor and participants will strive to build and maintain an inclusive environment both in and outside of the classroom. To encourage respectful critical inquiry and exchange of ideas we will embrace the following guidelines:

- Treat all participants with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion.
- Reasonable minds can differ on perspectives, opinions, and conclusions.
- Constructive disagreement sharpens thinking and reveals novel insights; it is encouraged and expected.
- All viewpoints are welcome, and all can be subjected to scrutiny and debate.
- Participants are not graded on opinions.

16. Flexibility and Adaptation

Traditionally, I follow the syllabus closely and use that as a reliable schedule for students with only minor alterations. I hope that is the case this semester as well. However, we have all experienced disruption and alteration associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic/endemic. There may be a similar situation that requires a change in scheduling, assignments, evaluations, locations, and form of delivery based on health concerns and University mandates. Again, I hope it is not the case, but we all need to be prepared for possible alterations.

⁷ Adapted from: <https://www.nd.edu/campus-life/inclusion/> & <https://heterodoxacademy.org/library/advice-on-syllabus-language/>

Teammate Collaboration and Contribution Evaluation

[This is a sample only, the actual peer evaluation will be completed online]

Team Project Title: _____

Your Name: _____

Please read the statements below and place the corresponding number in the box that best reflects your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement for each member of the team (including yourself).

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Weakly Agree 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

	Self:	Teammate Name:	Teammate Name:	Teammate Name:	Teammate Name:
Team member contributed effectively to the group effort.					
Team member assumed a fair share of the work and responsibilities.					
Team member listened to and respected other members' contributions.					
Please allocate a total of 100% between yourself and teammates indicating overall participation and contribution to the project. (For example, if there were 4 members to a team and all contributed equally, each would receive 25%)					

MGTO 40110 Futuring: Anticipating Change & Envisioning Strategic Opportunities - FALL 2025 Schedule

Module 1: Perspective: Emergent Change in Business and Society

Class 1	Tues	26-Aug		Introduction to Futuring
				Readings: None
Class 2	Thur	28-Aug		Environmental Scanning & Perspective
				Readings: FutureThink - pp. 1-21 Foresight: The Most Important Leadership Skill of the 21st Century
Class 3	Tues	2-Sep		Trend Awareness
				Readings: Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World - pp. 1-9 ONLY The Global Forces Inspiring a New Narrative of Progress by Greenberg, Hirt, and Smit
				Assignment: One Future of ... Question to share (bring hard copy to class and upload to Canvas assignment)
Class 4	Thur	4-Sep		Global Challenges and State of the Future
				Readings: "State of the Future - V.19.0" - Excerpt by The Millennium Project, Jerome Glenn Apocalypse Not Now by Jason Zweig Read one of the two items below: 1) Review one of "15 Global Challenges" Link on Canvas or 2) Review one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Link on Canvas
	Sun	7-Sep		Assignment: Project Topic Ideas Homework (Due by 9:00pm, upload to Canvas)
Class 5	Tues	9-Sep		Foresight Project Overview & Team Formation-
				Readings: "Future of Urban Water" or "FoodWeb2020" (skim one these as example Foresight Report) Futuring Project Final Report Assignment
Class 6	Thur	11-Sep		Project Framing Workshop -
				Readings: "Surviving Disruption" by M. Wessell and C. Christensen
Class 7	Tues	16-Sep		Dynamics of Change
				Readings: IBM Watson Case Study Top 10 Emerging Technologies of 2023 (read 2 that capture attention; glance at others)
Class 8	Thur	18-Sep		Introduction to Background Research
				Readings: Map the System excerpt from Thinking About the Future by Andy Hines and Peter Bishop
	Sun	21-Sep		Assignment: Scope of Project Brief (Due by 9:00pm, upload Canvas)
Class 9	Tues	23-Sep		Systems Analysis Workshop -
				Readings: None Scope of Project Brief Elevator Speeches in Class
Class 10	Thur	25-Sep		Historical/ Timeline Analysis Workshop
				Readings: None
	Fri	26-Sep		Assignment: Scanning Post Round 1 (Due by 9:00pm, Canvas Discussions)
Class 11	Tues	30-Sep		Current Assessment Workshop -
				Readings: None

Schedule Subject to Change. Revisions will be posted on Canvas

MGTO 40110 Futuring: Anticipating Change & Envisioning Strategic Opportunities - FALL 2025 Schedule

Module 2: Foresight - Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Alternative Future Scenarios

Class 12	Thur	2-Oct		Evidence Based Foresight - Trend Analysis and Forecasting Methods
				Readings: "Evidence-Based Management" by Jeffery Pfeffer and Robert Sutton (HBR) "Framework Forecasting: Managing Uncertainty and Influencing the Future" by Peter Bishop
	Sun	5-Oct		Assignment: Current Assessment (Due by 9:00pm, upload Canvas)
Class 13	Tues	7-Oct		Finding Evidence - MEET IN MAHAFFEY BUSINESS LIBRARY
				Readings: None
Class 14	Thur	9-Oct		Trend Analysis Baseline Forecasting Workshop -
				Readings: None
Class 15	Tues	14-Oct		Test #1
				Readings: None
Class 16	Thur	16-Oct		Pitchbook Workshop
				Readings: None
FALL MID-TERM BREAK				
Class 17	Tues	28-Oct		Introduction to Scenarios
				Readings: <u>Future Savvy</u> Ch. 9: Alternative Futures-How It's Better to Be Vaguely Right than Exactly Wrong by Adam Gordon "The Use and Abuse of Scenarios" by Charles Roxburgh
Class 18	Thur	30-Oct		Scenario Development Methods
				Readings: Chapter 1 of <u>20/20 Foresight</u> by Hugh Courtney (pp. 1-10 Only) "Overcoming Obstacles to Scenario Planning" by Erdman, Sichel, and Yeung
	Fri	31-Oct		Assignment: Scanning Post Round 2 (Due by 9:00pm, Canvas Discussions)
Class 19	Tues	4-Nov		Scenario Development Workshop -
				Readings: "Why 'That's Crazy' Is Critical To Good Strategic Foresight" by Frank Spencer "Writing Scenarios" by Jamais Cascio
Class 20	Thur	6-Nov		Scenario Development Workshop
				Readings: None
	Sun	9-Nov		Assignment: Foresight Forecast (Due by 9:00pm, upload Canvas Assignment)

Schedule Subject to Change. Revisions will be posted on Canvas

MGTO 40110 Futuring: Anticipating Change & Envisioning Strategic Opportunities - FALL 2025 Schedule

Module 3: Insight: Implications Assessment, Response Strategies and Planning

Class 21	Tues	11-Nov		Implications Assessment Workshop Using Futures Wheels & "Headlines" Elevator Speech
				Readings: None
Class 22	Thur	13-Nov		Innovation-Based Strategic Response
				Readings: Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope (excerpt) by Bill Sharpe
Class 23	Tues	18-Nov		Integrating Virtues Together: Hope & Curiosity and That Thing From the Future
				Assignment Due one hour prior to class: 1) complete the VIA Character Strengths Survey (link below & on canvas) and 2) submit virtues reflection and application assignment to Canvas. https://www.viacharacter.org/
				Readings: One of the articles from Virtues and Vocations magazine on hope: link below & on Canvas https://socialconcerns.nd.edu/research/virtues/magazine-home-summer-2023/ Curiosiiia (chapter excerpt) from How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci by Michale Gelb
Class 24	Thur	20-Nov		Test #2
				Readings: None
Class 25	Tues	25-Nov		Presentation Information and Workshop
				Readings: None
	Thur	27-Nov		THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS SESSION
Class 26	Tue	2-Dec		Toward the Future Wrap-Up and Workshop -
				Readings: None
Class 27	Thur	4-Dec		Instructor's Choice and Open Workshop
				Readings: None
	Sun	7-Dec		Assignment: Final Futuring Report Due: 2 Hard Copies and upload to Canvas Assignment (due 11:00pm)
Class 28	Tue	9-Dec		Final Presentations In Class
Class 29	Thur	11-Dec		Final Presentations In Class
				Optional Test #3 (Due by 11:59pm)

Schedule Subject to Change. Revisions will be posted on Canvas