

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## TREND SPOTTING AND FUTURE THINKING

Skills course

Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship

### Course Director:

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rapid advancements in technology, together with increasing socio-political unrest, the challenges of climate change and a pandemic in full force, generate increasingly dynamic, complex and uncertain competitive environments.

Entrepreneur or not, it is an advantage to understand where tomorrow is headed and how we can impact the future. This course seeks to introduce the students to the concept trends, trendspotting and future thinking, building a critical perspective of what we can do “now” to impact our “tomorrows”. By understanding how different trends build interdependencies in a bigger system, student’s will be prompted to shift perspective from hindsight to foresight.

This year we will explore with PostNord as partner the Future of postal services in a challenging transition into a truly sustainable future influenced by technological advancement, a shifting competitive landscape, changes in policies and governance.

## INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

After this course you should perceive trendspotting as a clear, understandable and approachable tool in new business creation and development and be able to:

- explain the concepts of trends, trendspotting and future thinking
- investigate the human fascination with the concept of the future and outline pitfalls in future thinking
- investigate and further develop the different ways in which future thinking can be mastered

- explore and discuss different types of trends from macro and megatrends to fashionable fads and microtrends
- reveal and further develop reliable sources for trendspotting.

## **STRUCTURE**

This course runs on Mondays and Wednesdays for seven weeks, from 17:30 - 20:00 at Konstfack, University of Arts, Crafts and Design at Telefonplan. All lectures will be in person unless stated otherwise. For sessions conducted online, you are expected to have the cameras on at all times and engage actively in the sessions. If you don't have the camera on and/or are not participating in the sessions, we will assume you are not present and therefore will be considered missing. Please see below under Attendance the penalties for missing classes.

Sessions will mostly be constructed of both lectures and group work. A more detailed schedule will be made available in the first week of the course. We know that the timing of the course can be challenging as you usually might be having dinner around that time of day. Please bring a little something to eat and drink with you for the break, so we can keep the energy level up.

## **COURSE SETUP**

This seven-week course is composed of 4 modules:

### **1. Understanding Future Thinking**

We will begin with an introduction talk and class exercises, which illustrate the broader context in which we can place future thinking and trend spotting. We look at utopian and dystopian fictions and other past images of the future and the role they served in society. We will discuss the Who, Why and How of future studies in today's world and the pitfalls of working with futures. You will be taught tools for mapping consequences of current changes and look at possibilities of trans-disciplinary dialogue around them.

### **2. Spotting Trends**

You will get introduced to several ways of working with trends practiced by our guest lecturers and the core team. Through exercises and assignments, you will focus on identifying and spotting trends and how to interpret the impact they can have on our future landscape. As spotting trends is something that can only be practiced by doing, this part of the course makes you aware of a different way of looking at your surroundings (online and offline) by noticing anomalies in pieces of information. One of the group assignments relates directly to trend spotting and will be introduced to you by the company United Minds.

### **3. Building Future Scenarios**

Here we start to combine the knowledge gained in phase 1 and 2 of the course, moving from a strategic approach to long term innovation scapes. Various guests will contribute with different

perspectives and points of view. Future scenarios are created by the informed imagination. Informed by trends, drivers, and signals of change, to make scenarios realistic and plausible. Imagination: to create a space in the mind for meaning and possibility. You will train your creative intelligence by responding to the “What if....?” question. Through guided in-class workshops we will look extensively into clustering and extrapolating our spotted signals and trends into the future and we will speculate about various possible outcomes. Groups will explore a selected research topic and work on multiple future scenarios.

#### **4. Representing and Presenting Futures**

We always try to bring the future into the present by making it tangible, and therefore possible for someone else to interact and engage with. In this phase of the process we open up an understanding of the role of experience design, speculative design, cultural probes and how these have a role of questioning assumptions and gaining new types of insights. We will dive into various ways of reaching and engaging an audience with your future scenarios. You will be given tools for building narratives, storyboards and the materialisation of a chosen future scenario. For your personal assignment we will focus on creative writing, for the group assignment we look into ways of representing your future as a provocation, which can be rendered in different ways (e.g. experience, film, etc). You will be asked to take a standpoint with your future scenario, identify stakeholders, choose your target audience and to discuss the way in which you are planning to gain valuable insights from your feedback so that this could be used for nearer term business strategies or function as a catalyst for change.

### **COURSE PHILOSOPHY**

This course is yours.

You will be provided with many methods and tools for working with futures, which we invite you to not only try out, but also to optimise, to hack, to be critical upon and make your own.

This course is about starting a thought process that goes beyond “business as usual”. When working with futures you will notice that it is a field you can shape towards your own interests and that it is applicable to various fields, cultural backgrounds and situations. Make sure you clarify what you are passionate about so you can focus your efforts towards something that you think is great.

This is a skills course, which means that you are asked to be present, take part in the dialogues and debates in class, and actively engage in all the exercises and assignments.

Your input and ideas are extremely valuable to the course and to your classmates, who are very likely to come from a different field of study.

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

There will be three assignments throughout the course, two group assignments and one individual assignment (divided in two parts). We will make sure that plenty of time for group work will be incorporated into the schedule and partially done in collaborative workshops led by Bettina, Fernanda and guest contributors.

All of the assignments will be introduced in more detail in class. The assignments take up different percentages of your final grade.

### **Assignment #1 - Future of X (50%)**

The complete Assignment #1 makes up 50% of your final grade. It consists of two parts with the following weights:

Part 1.1 – Scenario Thinking Future of “X” (30 points)

Part 1.2 – Narrative Future of X (20 points)

### **Assignment #2 - Trends in Practice in collaboration with United Minds (25%)**

### **Assignment #3 - Probing the Future (25%)**

Your final grade will be based on the above assignments, attendance and class participation.

## **GROUP WORK**

Assignment #1 is individual. Assignment #2 and Assignment #3 are group assignments. In order to guarantee cross disciplinarity, we will curate the groups for you. All groups will consist of five or six students. In choosing the groups we will choose diversity as the main criteria. In this course the most important diversity factors are:

1. Different universities
2. Different skills
3. Countries of origin
4. Gender

## **FEEDBACK**

We will inform you with each assignment in what way you can expect feedback from us. Furthermore, as we think peer reviewing is another good way of getting feedback on your work, we will schedule in moments for this. Make use of your peers beyond sessions, share and compare with trusted members of your personal and professional circles.

## **QUESTIONS**

As we are with many students, we encourage you to bring up your questions during our class meetings whenever possible. Often others will have the same question and can benefit from the answer. If there are questions that really can't wait until class you can send an email.

For questions about the course structure, the content of the course, assignments, readings, lectures, deadlines, grading, or attendance issues you can direct them to [info@bettinaschwalm.com](mailto:info@bettinaschwalm.com)

For questions regarding the course web, course registration and groups contact the course

Assistant [hannah.thines@sses.se](mailto:hannah.thines@sses.se)

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is compulsory and we keep an attendance list for you to sign every class. If you miss more than two classes, you will lose 10 points from your final course grade for each of the classes you miss after that.

Please let us know in advance if something prevents you from attending the class, please e-mail the course assistant [hannah.thines@sses.se](mailto:hannah.thines@sses.se) . If you inform us and present a plausible reason to miss class, then we will not consider it as an absence. It is your own responsibility to update yourself on what you missed, please ask your group and extended classmates. If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving class early, please inform the course assistant about this too.

Again, when participating online you are expected to have the camera turned on at all times and engage actively in the sessions. If you don't have the camera on and/or are not participating in the sessions, we will assume you are not present and therefore will be considered missing.

## **GRADING SCALE**

E sufficient (50-59), D satisfactory (60-69), C good (70-79), B very good (80-89), A excellent (90-100), Non-passing grades are: F (0-49, further work required). Maximum 100 points. The final letter is your grade, which will be communicated to your university.

If you are a student from KI, Konstfack or admitted after fall 2016 at Handelshögskolan you are listed to another scale of grading. Your grades will be transferred accordingly in line with regulations at your home university.

## **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Late Assignments may be subject to a 1-letter grade reduction and will only be accepted up to 1 week after the original assignment was due. No late assignments will be accepted for oral presentations.

## **COURSE LITERATURE**

### **REQUIRED PRIMARY READINGS**

Day, George S. & Schoemaker, Paul J.H. (2005) Scanning the Periphery. Harvard Business Review, November 83(11), 135-148.

Eno, B. (1995), The Big Here and the Long Now, Essay.  
(<http://longnow.org/essays/big-here-long-now/>)

Eveleth, R. (2015), Why aren't there more woman Futurists?. The Atlantic.

Manu, A. (2006) The imagination challenge: Strategic Foresight and Innovation in the global Economy. Chapter 1. What if your could speak?

Saffo, Paul (2007) Six Rules for Effective Forecasting. Harvard Business Review, July-August 85(7-8).

Wilkinson, Angela & Kupers, Roland (2013) Living in the Futures. Harvard Business Review, May 91(5), 119-127.

## **OPTIONAL SECONDARY READINGS**

Dunne, A., Raby, F. (2013). Speculative Everything. Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming. MIT Press Books.

Raymond, M. (2019). The Trend Forecasters Handbook. Laurence King Publishers.

Schwartzman, M. (2018). See yourself X. Human Futures Expanded. Black Dog Press.

Tetlock, P., & Gardner, D. (2015). Superforecasting: The art and science of prediction. Random House.

Taleb, N. N. (2012). Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder. Random House Incorporated.

W.I.R.E. Web for interdisciplinary Research & Expertise (2014). The Future is ours. Scenarios for the Future of Everyday Life. Neue Züricher Zeitung Publishing.

*Please note this is a preliminary reading list given the nature and content of this course. We will update shortly before the course with specific reading material regarding this year's course theme and latest publications and scholarly articles.*

## **ABOUT THE COURSE DIRECTOR**

Bettina Schwalm is an Experience designer deeply rooted in an interdisciplinary approach. She is a researcher, writer, lecturer and Speculative Design consultant in various contexts in industry. She lectures on experience design, design strategy and future thinking as well as writing strategies. She has been affiliated with her research to ArkDes (SE) and KTH School of Architecture (SE) in the department of critical studies and gender theory as well as SSES (SE) and Konstfack (SE). Since 2013 she has worked with partner Daniel Daam Rossi and Team in the collaborative research and design practice Radical Norms. With speculative design practices, future artefacts, design probes and immersive experiences she challenges current developments and their potential future implication on society, governments and a very personal level. She consults as design strategist on innovation, research and insights as well as eco-centred work in various contexts of interest globally. Her latest collaborative work [signsofchange.io](http://signsofchange.io) was granted Vinnova funding in the field of Speculative Design and Future artefacts. See also [bettinaschwalm.com](http://bettinaschwalm.com).

## **ABOUT THE COURSE CO-DIRECTOR**

Fernanda Torre is the CEO of Next Agents, an agency working at the intersection of sustainability and innovation. Torre is a Visiting Teacher affiliated to the House of Innovation at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) and is Design Industry Leader at Hyper Island in the AI Business Consultant and Business Developer programs.

Torre is the vice-president of Innovationsledarna (Association for Innovation Management Professionals in Sweden) and a Swedish Expert in the technical committee for the development of an ISO standard on Innovation Management.

Torre is founding member of the Speculative Futures Chapter in Stockholm and researches in a Vinnova funded project 4Boards.ai, aiming to support corporate boards in governing AI towards innovation and sustainability. With a background in Graphic Design (Red Dot Design award 2014 with Gabor Palotai) and Experience Design (Beam me up, Scotty! award in Helsinki design fair 2013), Torre has made her way into innovation management (Stora Enso Innovation Award for Intelligent Packaging 2016).

Torre has an MBA from SSE, awarded with the President's List for outstanding academic achievement, an MFA in Experience Design from Konstfack and a Bachelor in Arts in Graphic Design from Porto University.