

## Colonnade Proposal for Connections: Local to Global

Contact Person: Nathan Phelps, Honors College, 745-3447, [nathan.phelps@wku.edu](mailto:nathan.phelps@wku.edu)

### 1. What course does the department plan to offer in Connections?

ICSR 380: *Trends Shaping Our Future: Local and Global Perspectives*

### 2. How will the course meet the specific learning objectives of the Local to Global subcategory?

The world is changing rapidly and the implications are portentous. ICSR 380 examines a series of interconnected trends that are likely to shape the future (e.g., urbanization, resource consumption, the changing security landscape) and examines these developments on both a local and global scale.

ICSR 380 will address the following learning outcomes:

#### 1. Analyze issues on local and global scales.

Each of the trends explored in the course is examined from both local and global perspectives. This analytical approach encourages students to understand global phenomena on a local scale and local trends within a global context. For example, demographic trends like aging are examined by looking at state and local data derived from the US Census Bureau, and by looking at global data produced by the United Nations Population Division.

#### 2. Examine the local and global interrelationships of one or more issues.

The relationship between local and global phenomena is a central feature of ICSR 380. For example, issues like economic integration are considered from both a global perspective (e.g., the causes and consequences of global markets for labor and resources), and the impact that these developments have in specific localities. An example would be the role that global economic integration plays in shaping the automotive industry here in Warren County, KY. Workers here in Bowling Green are connected to the world through the global supply chain of multinational corporations like General Motors—a company that produces vehicles in 37 countries under 13 separate brand names including Opel and Baojun.

#### 3. Evaluate the consequences of decision-making on local and global scales.

The alternating scales of analysis employed in the course helps students develop an awareness of the complex interrelationships between local and global phenomena, and as a result, to understand the implications of these complex dynamics for both local and global decision-makers. ICSR 380 focuses on both probable and preferable outcomes and this draws attention to the role that decision-makers play in shaping the future. Students are required to carefully consider the implications of proposed actions and whether these might produce preferable or undesirable consequences when viewed from both a local and a global perspective. For example, when assessing the local benefits and costs of regulating genetically modified foods, they would also have to consider how these policies might affect international commodity prices, overall yield, and global

trade agreements. Thus, they would have to consider how decisions reflect and impact the local and global foods system(s).

3. This course contributes to the learning outcomes in the Connections category in that it is designed to explicitly connect subjects that traditionally fall into separate disciplinary categories. For example, the course begins with an examination of demographic trends (e.g. aging, urbanization, migration) and resource issues (e.g. food, water, energy, sustainability) that would usually be examined in courses focused on geography, public health, or environmental sciences. It connects these trends to technological developments related to communication, transportation, medicine, and the workplace (e.g. robotics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, nanotechnology, manufacturing, the internet of things). It further connects these topics by exploring the implications of these developments on security, privacy, conflict, and identity. The idea is that by thinking about possible, probable, and preferable futures on local and global scales, students will see how specific disciplinary content, including their major, contributes to our understanding the big picture focus of the course: the future.
4. The only prerequisite for this course is junior standing or 21 hours earned in WKU Colonnade Program coursework.
5. Syllabus statement of learning outcomes:

Students who complete this course should be able to:

- identify and understand key trends shaping the next several decades
  - make significant connections between these trends by integrating knowledge from different academic disciplines
  - analyze trends on both local and global scales
  - evaluate probable and preferred future outcomes based on these emerging trends
  - use established academic futurist methodologies
  - use terminology and skills associated with the Foundation for Critical Thinking to frame discussions and analysis
  - perform academic research and communicate this research orally and in well-written essays
  - demonstrate the problem-solving skills necessary to become effective leaders and citizens in a globally integrated world
6. Students will be required to write a research paper as a part of this course. This paper will be assessed to determine whether students demonstrate the following:
    - Does the paper demonstrate convincing links between key trends examined in the course, on both a local and a global scale? The goal will be that at least 70% of submitted papers will demonstrate these links.
    - Does the paper analyze issues within a framework that highlights the connections between global and local phenomena? The goal will be that at least 70% of submitted papers will demonstrate these connections.

- Does the paper reflect an understanding of the consequences of decision-making on both a local and a global scale? The goal will be that at least 70% of submitted papers will demonstrate this understanding.
7. ICSR 380 provides a summative experience for students to develop their skills in argumentation and use of evidence. For example, students are required to write weekly papers that evaluate a wide range of empirical data. These data are derived from sources like the United Nations Population Division or surveys from the Pew Center. These sources provide “evidence” about the world and what is happening today. Students are then required to apply futurist methodologies (e.g., trend extrapolation, scenarios) to these data in order to assess what is likely to occur in the future. Because the course looks specifically at the notion of preferability, students are required to develop arguments about why they believe certain outcomes are preferable and what kinds of actions could be taken to increase the likelihood of these preferred outcomes. Together, these activities provide a rich opportunity for students to develop their skills in argumentation and in the use of evidence to support their conclusions.
  8. Two sections of this course will be offered each semester. More sections can be offered immediately if demand warrants it.
  9. A sample syllabus follows.

**ICSR 380**  
**Trends Shaping Our Future: Local and Global Perspectives**

Instructor:  
Office:  
Office phone:  
E-mail:  
Office hours:

**Special Note:**

WKU provides equal opportunities for all students to learn. The university complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course are encouraged to contact the Office for Students Disability Services, DSU 2123. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

**Course Description:**

This course involves thinking about our world as it is now and what it might be like in the future. We will examine the implications of a series of trends that are likely to play a role in transforming the world over the next thirty to forty years from both a local and a global perspective. These trends include: population/demographic developments; resource use and management issues; climate change; technological developments (especially in computation, artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology/pharmacology); the expansion of access to information (and the effect of these changes on interpersonal relations and on the creation of knowledge); global economic integration; conflict and security concerns (including causes and resolutions, and weapons/methods); the evolving nature of decision-making processes and organizations.

We will explore these trends through common readings, web-based materials, individual research, group activities, field trips, and daily class discussion. Overall, students will gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of our current challenges, an informed understanding of our most probable futures, and a clearer sense of their own vision of a preferable future.

The entire class will engage in a broad analysis of all of the trends and work on a common class project; however, each student will also have the opportunity to think about these trends from their own unique perspective. This will result in a research paper that will reflect an understanding of how local and global phenomena are related and how decision-making at local and global scales interact and help shape the future.

Using and developing *critical thinking skills* will be at the center of everything we do in this course. We will be using the terminology and model developed by the Foundation for Critical Thinking to frame all of our discussions. The main goal is to learn to think deeply about these issues by exploring them from many different perspectives. You will be asked to develop your ability to produce different types of questions (about implications, assumptions, etc.) as we explore these issues together. It is my hope that by the end of the course, you will feel that you are better at developing questions to guide your thinking about any topic you wish to consider. Think of this class as an opportunity to develop

both the skills you will need, and an understanding of the issues you will face, over the next 20-40 years.

In summary, students who complete this course should be able to:

- identify and understand key trends shaping the next several decades
- make significant connections between these trends by integrating knowledge from different academic disciplines
- analyze trends on both local and global scales
- evaluate probable and preferred future outcomes based on these emerging trends
- use established academic futurist methodologies
- use terminology and skills associated with the Foundation for Critical Thinking to frame discussions and analysis
- perform academic research and communicate this research orally and in well-written essays
- demonstrate the problem-solving skills necessary to become effective leaders and citizens in a globally integrated world

**Required Reading Materials:**

*Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think*, (2012) by Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler

*Annual Editions: Global Issues* (29<sup>th</sup> Edition), edited by Robert M. Jackson

And a freebie I'll give you in class: *Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools*, by Richard Paul and Linda Elder

However, we will also supplement our analyses with material from an array of books, journals, and web-based sources. These will be linked through our Blackboard site, so you will need to access this site regularly throughout the semester.

**Course Requirements:**

All students will be required to attend class every day, be informed participants in all class discussions, take quizzes, write a series of brief papers that address the readings, contribute to a class project, and conduct independent research for an individual final research paper.

**Final Grades:**

Weekly papers or quizzes (some may be oral) will constitute 60% of your final grade, 20% will come from your final paper and presentation, and 20% will come from your class participation (which includes our class project). There will be no makeup quizzes or late papers, but the lowest quiz/weekly paper grade will be dropped. All assignments will be discussed in detail in class and posted on Blackboard.

**Tentative course calendar:**

Week One: Why study the future? Explore the “Seven Revolutions” Model and the mechanisms of change in the past and present. The “futurist perspective.”

Reading:

Week Two: Demographic changes and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Reading:

Week Three: Demography cont. and Global Resource Management

Reading:

Week Four: Global Resources cont.

Reading:

Week Five: Technological Trends

Reading:

Week Six: Technology Trends continued

Reading:

Week Seven: The Information Age

Reading:

Week Eight: Education in the Information Age

Week Nine: Global Economic Integration

Reading:

Week Ten: Economic integration cont.

Reading:

Week Eleven: Conflict and Security Concerns

Reading:

Week Twelve: Conflict/Security cont.

Reading:

Week Thirteen: Issues of Governance and decision-making

Reading:

Week Fourteen: Analyzing these trends through different “lenses”

Week Fifteen: Individual/group presentations

Week Sixteen: Final projects/wrap-up

**“One of the biggest flaws in the common conception of the future is that the future is something that happens to us, not something we create”**

**-Michael Anissimov**

**“We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done”**

**-Alan Turing, 1950**

**“Technological Progress is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal”**

**Albert Einstein, 1917**

**“No exponential is forever . . . but we can delay “forever””**

**-Gordon E. Moore, 2004**

**“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy”**

**-William Shakespeare, *Hamlet***

**Human history “is more and more a race between education and catastrophe”**

**-H.G. Wells**

**“The future enters into us in order to transform itself in us long before it happens”**

**-Rainer Maria Rilke**

**“The further backward you look, the further forward you see”**

**-Winston Churchill**