

PAPM 4000A
International Studies Capstone Seminar

Strategic Foresight & the Future of Geopolitics

Fall 2026

Class Time: Mondays, 11:35 to 2:25

First Class: September 14, 2026

Location: Loeb Building (see Brightspace for room details)

Instructor: Professor Alex S. Wilner

Office: 5106 Richcraft Hall

Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 6199

Office Hours: Every Friday, 9:30-11:25; after class every Monday; or by appointment

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1. Bio – Prof Wilner

Dr. Alex Wilner is an Associate Professor at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA), founding director of the Cybersecurity Collaborative Specialization, and director of the Infrastructure Protection and International Security (IPIS) graduate program, at Carleton University. He is also Co-director of [Triple Helix](#), a DND funded MINDS Network focusing on the nexus between emerging technology and defence, headquartered at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute (CGAI), and Co-director of the [Canadian Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence](#) (3CE), a SSHRC Partnership Grant network based at NPSIA.

He is a leading scholar of contemporary deterrence theory and practice. His books include *Deterrence by Denial: Theory and Practice* (eds., Cambria Press, 2021), *Deterring Rational Fanatics* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), and *Deterring Terrorism: Theory and Practice* (eds., Stanford University Press, 2012). Since joining NPSIA, his broader scholarship on deterrence theory has been awarded over \$9M (CAD) in external research funding. Besides his academic scholarship, since 2017 Prof Wilner has trained over 1500 Canadian public servants in strategic foresight, having provided over 50 multi-day training workshops to numerous government departments, including CSIS, DND/CAF, Ontario Provincial Police, Global Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Standards Council of Canada. Before joining Carleton in 2015, Wilner was a public servant, working at Policy Horizons Canada, the government's central foresight laboratory.

2. Course Description

The objective of this experientially- and experimentally-driven seminar is to introduce students to the methods and approaches used to explore, assess, and contemplate emerging and future trends in geopolitics, security, and conflict. *Strategic foresight* is not an attempt to predict the future. Rather, it provides tools that allow us to better appreciate the range of possible and plausible future scenarios and security environments Canadians might eventually face. Strategic foresight allows decision-makers to systematically contemplate a plethora of future challenges and opportunities while improving their appreciation for how complex political and strategic issues might evolve. The course will explore, examine, and make use of a variety of tools and methods for thinking creatively about the future of geopolitics, intelligence, diplomacy, cybersecurity, and related topics like warfare, terrorism and crime, domestic and international security. On completing this course, students will have broadened their understanding of how to use and engage strategic foresight, horizons scanning, influence diagrams, systems mapping, scenario planning, and assumptions testing for exploring emerging security dynamics. Success in this seminar will be largely dependent on active student participation during in-class training and exercise sessions. Prior knowledge of strategic foresight is not required, though students are encouraged to keep pace of international developments.

The course will be taught using a combination of 1.5-3hr weekly seminars and live exercises, guest lectures, and student-led presentations. Several in-class exercises will make use of Mural, an online collaborative and brainstorming platform: **students will need an internet-connected device with them in class to participate in these exercises. A laptop or tablet is ideal; a phone can work in a pinch. Please ensure you bring one of these devices to every class.**

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand how strategic foresight relates to security studies, strategic surprise, and policy development in Canada and abroad;
- Be able to conduct independent and group-based foresight exercises using a variety of different tools and approaches;
- Have sharpened their written, oral, research, analytical, and presentation skills in individual and team settings.

Students are expected to:

- Have read the required readings and be prepared to discuss their contents in class;
- Keep abreast of national and international security developments on a daily basis;
- Participate fully in the breakout and in-class training and exercise sessions; and
- Follow normal class etiquette (i.e. no cellphone use, side-bar conversations, constructive discussion, *etc.*).

3. Course Structure and Class Format

This is an academic course taught at the undergraduate level but taught in the style of a graduate seminar. Students should expect to participate in seminar-style discussions, lead

group and individual presentations, and actively participate in professor-guided training exercises. Students are also expected to participate in group research, meetings, and presentations. A typical class will incorporate different learning strategies.

- Classes may begin with a brief *Weekly Update* – an informal discussion of national and international security developments that took place over the previous week. The *Weekly Update* will give students an opportunity to share news stories with the class and relate the content to class materials, exercises, scanning material, and foresight projects.
- Most classes will include a 30-to-45-minute lecture provided by Prof Wilner, detailing a specific foresight tool or technique. Lectures will be followed by a 60-to-90 minute exercise during which students will put a new tool or technique to use. Students will do so together, with guidance from Prof Wilner, using our in-class [Mural](#) (same link for every class).
- Guest lectures will be periodically provided by current or former practitioners of foresight from the Government of Canada and beyond. Information on guests, topics, and dates can be found below.
- Oral presentations by students, live class exercises, and class discussion. Student-driven content will provide peer review and comment.

The course will follow this *approximate* program of activities:

Class	Date	Topic or Activity	Assignments	Notes
W1	Sept. 14	Introduction to Strategic Foresight & Assumptions Exercise		<i>In-class Mural</i>
W2	Sept. 21	<i>Cluster Prep Session #1</i>		<i>Asynchronous exercise</i>
W3	Sept. 28	Domain Mapping Exercise		<i>Book Selection; In-class Mural</i>
W4	Oct. 5	Scanning to Analysis: Weak Signals & Influence Diagrams		<i>Student Presentation</i>
	Oct. 12	<i>Statutory Holiday</i>	<i>Scanning Submission</i>	<i>No Class</i>
W5	Oct. 19	Guest Lecture with Jennifer O'Rourke		<i>In-class Mural</i>
	Oct. 26	<i>Reading Week</i>	<i>Early Bird Book Review Submission</i>	<i>No Class</i>
W6	Nov. 2	Foresight Analysis Part 2 – Cross Impact Analysis	<i>Book Review Submission</i>	<i>In-class Mural</i>
W7	Nov. 9	Scenario Planning Exercise		<i>In-class Mural</i>
W8	Nov. 16	<i>Cluster Prep Session #2</i>		<i>No Class</i>
W9	Nov. 23	Foresight & Canadian Public Policy		
W10	Nov. 30	<i>Strategic Foresight Studio One</i>		<i>Cluster Presentations</i>
W11	Dec. 7	<i>Strategic Foresight Studio Two</i>	<i>Final Report Submission</i>	<i>Cluster Presentations</i>

4. Evaluation and Assignments

I. Scanning Submission 20%

Due Date: Oct 12

Each student will submit a **two-page (single spaced) written assessment** of a Weak Signal – understood as events, developments, issues, or facts that might signify or represent “symptoms of change” – concerning their Cluster’s *future of geopolitics* topic (see Week 4’s material). The report will be assessed for the way in which it: (a) summarizes the weak signal; (b) creatively identifies the weak signal’s relationship with current and future security environments; and (c) meets delivery requirements (the quality of your prose, etc).

Tell me: what is changing & why is that change important to the future of geopolitics?

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- (1) develop and test students’ ability to identify, explore, and present weak signals;
- (2) offer the class a preliminary *scan* of the *future of Geopolitics*;
- (3) generate class discussions, insights, and questions concerning the cluster foresight projects (see below for details).

The mark will be allocated based on the following criteria:

<i>Written Evaluation – 20%</i>		
/10.0	QUALITY	The quality of your report, clear and logical structure, effective summary of the weak signal, free of mistakes, jargon, etc.
/10.0	ORIGINALITY	Report offers an effective summary of how the weak signal relates to expected and alternative futures (i.e. what is changing; why is the change important?). Weak signal is informative and original.

II. Book Series (20%)

Due Date: Early Brid Submission, Oct 26; Final Submission deadlines Nov 2

Students will write a 1,750-word book review. Students will select a book from the list provided below during **Week 3 (September 28)**. Books can only be selected once.

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- (1) test students’ analytical capabilities;
- (2) ensure students immerse themselves in at least one approach, genre, or subtheme within strategic foresight;
- (3) hone student writing skills;
- (4) support longform reading and concentration skills.

The mark will be allocated by the instructor based on the following criteria:

Evaluation		
/4	PRESENTATION	The extent to which the review tells a cohesive story; the title, introduction and conclusion accurately reflect the major points in the review; structure of the paper is logical; graphs, figures, photos, tables, etc. (if used) are clear, appropriately formatted and necessary to the argument or discussion
/12	COMPLETENESS	The extent to which the review is supported by arguments and facts; clear line of logic and solid reasoning. The extent to which the book's suggestions, findings, or narrative are dealt with in a complete fashion; entirety of book is reviewed
/4	QUALITY OF EXPRESSION	Precise language; avoids ambiguous terms and jargon; free of grammatical errors, typos, and misspellings

Students are to pick one book. While most of these books are available through CU library services, those that are not available may need to be purchased or otherwise personally acquired by students.

Books on *Studying and Thinking about the Future*

- Gary Klein, *Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights*, (Public Affairs, 2013).
- Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View*, (Doublday, 1991/1996).
- Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Doublday1967).
- Bertrand de Jouvenal, *The Art of Conjecture* (Basic Books, 1967)
- Mats Lindgren and Hans Bandhold, *Scenario planning: The link between future and strategy*, (Palgrave 2003).
- Jay Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures: Scenario planning as a tool for a better tomorrow*, (Oxford 2002).
- Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner, *Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction*, (Crown 2015).
- Fred Polak, *The Image of the Future*, (Jossey-Bass, 1973).
- Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—But Some Don't*, (Penguin, 2012)
- Pero Micic *The Five Futures Glasses* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- Bart Edes, *Learning from Tomorrow* (Changermakers Books, 2021).

- Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (Random House, 2010).
- Willis Harman, *An Incomplete Guide to the Future* (WW Norton, 1979).
- Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything* (Shambhala, 2001).
- Amy Webb, *The Signals are Talking: Why Today's Fringe is Tomorrow's Mainstream* (PublicAffairs 2016).
- Jennifer Gidley, *The Future: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University, 2017).

Books on *Charting and Planning for the Future*

The Optimists

- Alicia Wanless, *The Information Animal: Humans, Technology and the Competition for Reality*, (Oxford UP, 2025)
- Thomas Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2016).
- Christopher Coker, *Future War*, (Polity, 2015).
- Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Nearer: When Humans Transcend Biology*, (Viking, 2024).
- Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson, *Machine, Platform, Crowd: Harnessing our Digital Future* (WW Norton, 2017)
- Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, *The New Digital Age: Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business*, (Knopf, 2013).
- Robin Hanson, *The Age of Em: Work, Love, and Life when Robots Rule the World*, (Oxford University Press, 2016).
- Michio Kaku, *The Future of Humanity: Terraforming Mars, Interstellar Travel, Immortality, and our Destiny Beyond Earth* (Doubleday 2018).
- Peter Diamandis and Steven Kotler, *Abundance: The Future is Better than You Think*, (Free Press, 2012).
- James Lovelock (with Bryan Appleyard), *Novacene: The Coming Age of Hyperintelligence*, (Penguin, 2019).
- Darrel West and John Allen, *Turning Point: Policymaking in the Era of AI* (Brookings, 2020).
- Thomas Kostigen, *Hacking Planet Earth: How Geoengineering Can Help Us Reimagine the Future*, (Penguin, 2020).
- Peter Diamandis and Steven Kotler, *The Future is Faster than you Think*, (Simon & Schuster, 2020).

- Ari Wallach, *Longpath: Becoming the Great Ancestors our Future Needs* (HarperOne, 2022).

The Pessimists

- John Arquilla, *The Troubled American Way of War: From Hiroshima to the Age of Algorithms* (Wiley, 2026).
- Annie Jacobsen
 - *Nuclear War: A Scenario* (Dutton, 2024)
 - *Biological War: A Scenario* (Dutton, 2026)
- Yuval Noah Harari, *Nexus* (Penguin 2024).
- Christian Bros, *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare* (Hachette, 2020)
- Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford, 2014).
- Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*, (Basic Books, 2015).
- Amir Husain, *The Sentient Machine*, (Simon & Schuster, 2017).
- James Barratt, *Our Final Invention: AI and the End of the Human Era* (St. Martin's Press 2013).
- Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction*, (Crown, 2016).
- David Biello, *The Unnatural World: The Race to Remake Civilization in Earth's Newest Age*, (Simon & Schuster, 2016).
- Kai-Fu Lee, *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019).
- David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming* (Tim Duggan, 2019).
- Elizabeth Kolbert:
 - *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (Henry Hold, 2014).
 - *H is for Hope: Climate Change A to Z* (Penguin 2024).
 - *Under a White Sky: The Nature of The Future* (Penguin 2022)

The In-betweeners

- Jack Watlin, *The Arms of the Future: Technology and Close Combat in the Twenty-First Century* (Bloomsbury, 2023)
- Max Tegmark, *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* (Knopf, 2017).

- Richard Yonck, *Futures Minds: The Rise of Intelligence from the Big Bang to the End of the Universe* (Arcade 2020).
- Trond Undheim, *Pandemic Aftermath: How Coronavirus Changes Global Society* (Atmosphere Press, 2020).
- Alec Ross, *The Industries of the Future*, (Simon & Schuster, 2016).
- Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Signal Books, 2016).
- Paul Scharre, *Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War* (WW Norton 2018).
- Matthew Burros, *The Future, Declassified* (St. Martin's Press, 2014).
- Henry Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Daniel Huttenlocher, *The Age of AI and our Human Future*, (Little, Brown & Company, 2021)

Books that *Fictionalize the Future*

- Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*, (Spectra, 1993). (Mackenzie)
- P.W. Singer and August Cole:
 - *Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the next World War*, (Harcourt, 2015).
 - *Burn-In: A Novel of the Real Robotic Revolution*, (Harcourt, 2020).
- Omar El Akkad, *American War* (McClelland & Stewart, 2017).
- Margaret Atwood, *one* book from the “MaddAddam Trilogy”, (McClelland & Stewart, 2003; 2009; 2013).
- Alexander Weinstein, *Children of the New World* (Picador 2016).
- Elliot Ackerman and James Stavridis, *2034: A Novel of the Next World War* (Penguin, 2022)

III. Foresight Report (30%) & Studio Presentation (15%)

Due Date: Presentations Nov 30 and Dec7; Written submissions are due Dec 7 at Midnight.

Using the tools and methods discussed, taught, and practiced during the semester, students will conduct an in-depth, group-based strategic foresight project. Five research clusters of 5-6 students will be selected by Professor Wilner and identified in Week two. Each cluster will be assigned a specific topic to explore over the course of the term:

- **Future of Supply Chains**
- **Future of Autonomous Warfare**
- **Future of Authoritarianism**

- **Future of Alliances**
- **Future of Cybersecurity**

The objectives of each cluster is to uncover “What is surprising?” about their collective topic. The challenge is to present that surprise to high level Canadian decision makers. If you had the Prime Minister’s ear, what would you tell him about your topic and findings?

Clusters will be provided with two “cluster prep sessions” to meet virtually an/or in-person as a group during class time to discuss the project, divide the workload, discuss ideas and findings, finalize material, run necessary exercises, etc. These self-determined group study sessions are critical to your success – please use the time wisely to complete the various tasks required for the final report and presentation.

Students within each cluster will share one collective grade.

Clusters will submit a written report (5000 words, not including sources) and present their findings to the class in a detailed 30-minute presentation (using PowerPoint or Prezi). Research teams will likewise be expected to help direct the subsequent Q&A session and class discussion.

Research clusters will be expected to complete a number of strategic foresight exercises and steps. Written reports and oral presentations must include:

- Selection of 7-10 core Assumptions about your Domain
- Domain Map (i.e., binding the project’s scope)
- Comparison of Current/Credible Assumptions
- Horizons Scan (i.e., Insights section that describes 4-6 Change Drivers (i.e., clusters of weak signals))
- At least two Influence Cascades or Influence Diagrams (i.e., identifying second and third order consequences)
- Three short Scenarios (i.e. fictional accounts of future environments used to explore current policy and planning assumptions)
- Policy section that describes at least four future challenges or opportunities for Canada stemming from your report

Reports must include a detailed reference list of all materials and sources used (not included in word count). Likewise, graphics, visual representations of exercises (i.e., the Influence Diagram, domain map, etc.), and hyperlinked video/digital material must be included (graphics not included in word count).

For inspiration on how you might structure your cluster report, see the US National Intelligence Council’s [Global Trends](#) reports, the UK Government Office for Science [foresight reports](#), or Policy Horizons Canada’s [foresight repository](#).

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- (1) improve students' collaborative research skills;
- (2) improve students' analytical and written/presentation skills;
- (3) develop students' ability to synthesise and present complex information in a clear and concise manner;
- (4) test students' ability to organize and produce an in-depth strategic foresight project

The mark will be *shared* by all members of the cluster, and will be allocated by the instructor based on the following criteria:

<i>Evaluation</i>		
<i>Oral Presentation (15%)</i>		
/7	PRESENTATION	The overall quality of your presentation, including remaining on time, clear delivery, audible voice, organization, charisma, etc.
/8	SLIDES	Quality, clarity, and usefulness of slides
<i>Written Report (30%)</i>		
/5	COMPLETENESS	The extent to which the presentation/paper covers each of the required foresight exercises – adequacy, quality, accuracy and completeness of coverage
/5	INFORMATION SEARCH & VALIDATION	The depth and breadth of the search process used in identifying signals and change drivers; the level to which information and sources are corroborated and validated; quality of sources
/5	CREATIVITY	The nature, novelty, and utility of the scenarios; scope, accuracy, and breadth of influence diagram/futures wheel
/5	POLICY EXPLORATION	The quality, accuracy, and completeness of policy discussion
/5	PRODUCT DESIGN	The nature and quality of graphics, visual representations, and web video content
/5	QUALITY OF EXPRESSION, and STYLE	Precise language; ambiguous terms and jargons avoided; free of grammatical errors, typos & misspellings; structure and style; accessibility and readability

IV. Participation in class: 15%

Students are expected to: join every class having done all the required readings; actively contribute to class discussions; eagerly participate during in-class exercises and guest lectures; and be upstanding colleagues with fellow classmates. Foresight is a group activity and jerk-free enterprise – *bring your best improve game* (“Yes, and!”). The participation mark will be based on regular attendance and the quality of your interventions and leadership in class.

5. Brightspace and Submissions

This course uses [Brightspace](https://brightspace.carleton.ca), Carleton's learning management system. For access, go to brightspace.carleton.ca and login with your MyCarleton1 username and password. For help and support with the platform, contact the [ITS Service Desk](#).

All assignments will be submitted on Brightspace. Assignments should be submitted in Word.

Late submission penalties: The date and time of your submission will be recorded by Brightspace. Deadlines for the submission of written work and presentations are strictly adhered to and are rarely negotiable. Failure to submit a piece of written work by the stated deadline may result in 5% daily reductions from the final grade.

By the end of the first class of this course you will know when ALL the deadlines and dates for presentations are. Plan your workload on this and other courses according to these deadlines.

Note on Final Grades

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

6. Communications

Please use your Carleton email account for all course-related correspondence.

7. Plagiarism and Complementarity

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

8. Moderate Use – Content Generation with Attribution

AI use in this course: Students may use AI tools for ideas, clarifying challenging concepts or getting started on projects. Some acceptable uses include:

- Sounding board (e.g. generating essay topics with ChatGPT, using Microsoft Word's Smart Lookup or Copilot to find inspiration and related topics)
- Creating outlines (e.g. using AI to structure an essay or presentation flow, using Microsoft Word's Outline View with AI suggestions)
- Providing definitions or explanations of complex concepts (e.g. using AI to explain a difficult theory or to find relevant information)

Documenting use of AI: It is necessary to document your use of AI in this course, using the following guidelines:

- Clearly identify and cite AI-generated text (e.g. "The following sub-section was generated by ChatGPT/Microsoft Word's Researcher tool/Copilot")
- Review, edit and ensure accuracy and originality of final submissions
- AI-generated content should not exceed 10 per cent of the total assignment length

Why have I adopted this policy? This policy supports the use of AI as a supplementary tool, helping students develop ideas and structure their work while emphasizing the importance of transparency and personal engagement with the content. AI can be used for inspiration and foundational support and can encourage students to critically assess and refine AI-generated material.

9. Mental Health

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful: Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

- Carleton Resources:
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
 - Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
 - Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
 - Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
 - Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
 - Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>
- Off Campus Resources:
 - Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
 - Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
 - Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
 - Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
 - The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

10. Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the [Pregnancy Accommodation Form](#).

Religious obligation: Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the

deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

11.Required Readings

Four or five *required readings* accompany each week's class. Students should expect 40-50 pages or more of reading a week. Most of these readings are short (between 8-12 pages). You will be expected to read them before class and consider the arguments, ideas, and processes put forward. The syllabus also includes video and media content. These readings and videos form an important part of the class discussion and in-class exercises. The readings are intended to provide you with a useful introduction to various topics and techniques covered in the course. Most are available freely online, and/or via CU library services and CULearn.

Each class also includes an **optional *Fun Read* section**. This material is meant to provide students with a taste of the lighter side of futures study, strategic foresight, and forecasting, and to highlight some possible leads in identifying weak signals and developing insights. Some of this material will prove exceptionally useful to your cluster reports and scanning efforts.

COURSE CONTENT & READING LIST

Week 1 – September 14

Introduction to Strategic Foresight & Assumptions Exercise

- Peter Bishop and Kay Strong, “Why teach the future?” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14:4 (2010).
- Jim Dator, “What Futures Studies is, and is Not,” Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies 1995.
- Peter Padbury, “An Overview of the Horizons Foresight Method,” *Word Futures Review* 12:2 (2020).
- Alessandro Fergnani and Thomas Chermack, “[The Resistance to Scientific Theory in Futures and Foresight](#), and what to do about it,” *Futures and Foresight Science* 3:3/4 (2021)
- [Optional] Policy Horizons Canada, “[Module 2: Assumptions](#)”, 2016.
- [Optional] Jerome Roos, “[We don’t know what will happen next](#),” *New York Times*, April 2023.
- [Optional] Peter Bishop, “A yardstick too far?” *Foresight*, 3:3 (2001).

FUN READ

- Center for a New American Security, [Future of Warfare](#).
- The Institute for the Future, [Who we are and what we do](#).
- [School of International Futures](#), Europe
- School of International Futures, “[Strategic Foresight Toolkit](#)”.
- The [Future of Humanity Institute](#), UK.
- [Policy Horizons Canada](#), Gov of Canada.
- Florence Engasser, “[Top Ten Toolkits for Futures](#),” NESTA
- Sitra, “Futuremaker’s Tool-box,” <https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/toolbox-for-people-shaping-the-future/#what-is-the-future>
- Policy Horizons Canada, “[Module 1: Introduction to Foresight; An Overview of the Horizons Foresight Method](#),” 2016.
- UK Gov, “[The Futures Toolkit: Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight Across UK Government](#),” Government Office for Science. November 2017.
- UN Futures Lab, “[UN Strategic Foresight Guide](#),” December 2023.

Week 2 – September 21

Cluster Prep Sessions #1 ~ Independent cluster-based research session

NOTE: Use this time to meet your cluster, establish a rough timeline of deliverables for the major project, discuss your topic in broad strokes, and develop a long list of *assumptions* (via your cluster’s Mural page, to be distributed in Week 2) pertaining to your major project’s core theme. We will discuss these assumptions during Week 3.

Week 3 – September 28

Domain Mapping & Exercise

- **Alex Wilner** and Talya Stein¹, “[Revisiting the Use and Utility of Domain Mapping: A Comparative Study of the Future\(s\) of Diplomacy and International Affairs](#),” *Futures & Foresight Science* 7:1 (2025).
- Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, *Thinking about the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*, (Washington, DC: Social Technologies 2006), Chapter One on Framing, **pp 13-24**
- Averil Horton, “A Simple Guide to Successful Foresight”, *Foresight* 1:1 (1999).
- [Optional] Joseph Voros, “A Primer on Futures Studies, Foresight and the Use of Scenarios,” *Prospect* 6 (2001).
- [Optional] Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, “Framework Foresight: Exploring Futures the Houston Way,” *Futures* 51 (2013).

FUN READ

- Future Tense Podcast, “[Some Foresight about the Future of Foresight](#),” June 2021.
- New York Times’ “[Op-eds From the Future](#),” 2019. [Peruse]
- Skim a few of the short commentaries in *The Economist*, [The World Ahead 2026](#).
- Keith Kloor, “[Paranormal Activity](#),” *Science*, Jan 2022.
- Robin Murphy, “[Would life be better as a robot?](#)” *Science Robotics*, 8:85 (2023)
- Kevin Roose “[Why the Hugging Face Hack Should Make you Worry about AI](#)”, New York Times, Sept 2026
- Dexter Filkins, “[Is the US Ready for the Next War?](#)”, New Yorker July 2025

Week 4 – Oct. 5

Scanning to Analysis: Weak Signals & Influence Diagrams

- Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, *Thinking about the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*, (Washington, DC: Social Technologies 2006), Chapter Two on Scanning, **pp 64-75**.
- Kerstin Cuhls, “Horizons Scanning in Foresight – [Why Horizon Scanning is only a part of the Game](#),” *Futures & Foresight Science* 2:1 (2020).
- Peter Bishop and Andy Hines, *Teaching about the Future*, Palgrave Macmillan: 2012), chapter 2 “Systems Thinking”, **pp.63-96**.

¹ Former PAPM student (Class of 2023).

- [Optional] Brent Mills² and Alex Wilner, “[The Science Behind ‘Values’: Applying Moral Foundations Theory to Strategic Foresight](#),” *Futures & Foresight Science* 5:1 (2023).
- [Optional] Ross Shachter, “Evaluating Influence Diagrams,” *Operations Research* 34:6 (1986).
- [Optional] Elina Hiltunen, “Good Sources of Weak Signals: A Global Study of Where Futurists Look for Weak Signals,” *Journal of Futures Studies* 12:4 (2008).

FUN READ

- Watch: McKinsey & Company, “[Focused on Foresight](#): An interview with the US’s National Intelligence Officer for Warning,” 2009.
- Katheryn Schulz, “What a Major Solar Storm Could do to our Planet,” *New Yorker*, February 26, 2024
- Margaret MacMillan “[A New world order is coming](#). We aren’t ready” *New York Times*, Sept 2026
- Alina Chan, “[How to Stop a Lab Leak from Starting the Next Pandemic](#),” *NYTimes*, Aug 2026
- Eric Schmidt and Selina Xu, “[We Returned from China. We Realized our Century’s Biggest Challenge](#),” *NYTimes*, July 2026

October 12 – Statutory Holiday (Thanksgiving)

NO CLASS

Scanning Submissions Due

Week 5 – Oct. 19

Guest Lecture and Exercise

Guest Lecture with **Jennifer O’Rourke**, current NPSIA PhD Student and former NPSIA MA graduate. Jen has over a decade of experience in policy foresight, leading initiatives at Policy Horizons Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, and National Defence. *Jen is a foresight whiz-kid*. She’ll run the class through various foresight exercises. Details TBD.

Read **two** (or more) of the articles listed below:

- Alex Wilner and Martin Roy, “[Canada’s Emerging Foresight Landscape](#),” *Foresight* 22:5/6, (2020).

² Former NPSIA student.

- Fraser Reilly-King, Colleen Duggan, **Alex Wilner**, “[Foresight and futures thinking for international development co-operation](#): Promises and pitfalls,” *Development Policy Review* 42:S1 (2024).
- Inbal Marcovitch and **Alex Wilner**, “[Tackling the Geopolitics of Standardization](#): Lessons from Canada's Strategic Foresight-to-Standards Pilot Project”, *International Journal* 79:4 (2024)
- Jonathan Calof and Brian Colton, “[Developing Foresight that Impacts Senior Management Decisions](#),” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 198 (2024).

FUN READ – The AI Edition

- Jon Easterly, “[The Warning Lights are Blinking Again](#),” NYTimes, Aug 2026
- Dylan Freedman, “[Anatomy of an Autonomous Attack](#),” NYTimes, Aug 2026
- Alice Lassman, “[AI Will Affect Your Social Life. Yes, Yours.](#)” NYTimes, Aug 2026
- Ross Andersen, “[AI is Getting Scary Good at Making Predictions](#)”, The Atlantic, February 2026.
- Bill Gates, “[The turbulent AI era is here](#). The choices we make now are critical.”, GatesNotes, Aug 2026
- Brett Goldstein, “[Stop Testing AI like an App. Test it like a Weapon](#),” NYTimes, July 2026
- WJ Hennigan, “[AI Drones are Coming. We are Not Ready](#),” NYTimes, July 2026
- Bret Stephens, “[I’m Begging You: Never Write with AI](#),” NYTimes, Aug 2026
- Eli Saslow, “[The World’s Leading Deepfake Expert No Longer Trusts his Own Eyes](#),” NYTimes, June 2026
- Taffy Brodesser-Akner, “[I profile celebrities for a living. Nothing prepared me for Tilly Norwood](#),” NYTimes June 2026.

October 26 – Reading Week

NO CLASS

Early Bird Book Review Submission

Week 6 – Nov. 2

Foresight Analysis Part 2 – Cross Impact Analysis

- Policy Horizons Canada, “[Module 5: Change Drivers](#)”, 2016.
- Alain Auger, Inbal Marcovitch, Karla Cisneros-Rosado (DRDC), “[Emerging Technologies’ Breadcrumbs](#): Leveraging Statistics to Detect Emerging

Technologies and Charting a Path for a Safe and Secure Future”, Conference Proceedings, ISI World Statistics Congress 2023, Ottawa, Canada.

- Peruse the Triple Helix website and **read a selection** of several [Briefing Notes](#), [Policy Perspectives](#), or [Policy Series](#) on emerging technology.

FUN READ – Tech Quarterly

- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly [Quantum Technology](#), March 2017.
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly [Synthetic Biology](#), April 2019.
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly, “AI and its Limits,” June 2020.
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly, [Climate Technology](#), June 2022.
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly, [Defense Technology](#), January 2022
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly, [Spy-craft](#), July 2024.
- *The Economist*, Technology Quarterly, [The Age of CRISP](#), March 2025

Week 7 – Nov. 9

Scenario Planning & Exercise

- **Alex Wilner** and Talya Stein, “The Alternative Future(s) of Canada-US Relations: Leveraging Strategic Foresight and Scenario Development in Canadian Foreign Policy”, *International Journal*, forthcoming 2026.
- Mats Lindgren and Hans Bandhold, *Scenario Planning: The Link between Future and Strategy* (Palgrave: 2003), Chapter 2: “Scenario Planning: An Introductory Overview”, pp. 21-46.
- Peter Bishop, Andy Hines, and Terry Collins, “The current state of scenario development: an overview of techniques”, *Foresight* 9:1 (2007).
- [Optional] Lena Borjeson, et. al., “Scenario Types and Techniques: Towards a User’s Guide”, *Futures* 38 (2006).

FUN READ – The Fixtion Edition

- Margaret Atwood, “[A Survival Story: How to Influence the Final Chapter](#)”, *The Economist*, Minds on the Future edition, Nov. 2, 2015.
- Jasper Jeffers, “[AN41](#): A Futuristic Fiction Story about War, People, and Robots,” *MIT Technology Review*, October 24, 2019.
- Thomas Pierce, “[This is an Alert](#)”, *New Yorker*, March 30, 2015. [Chem Warfare Drone Fiction]
- *The Economist* “[Data Detectives](#)”, (Technology Quarterly) June 2, 2018. [Graphic Novel]
- Johannes Lichtman, “[Invisible Ink](#): At the CIA’s Creative Writing Group,” *The Paris Review*, January 9, 2024

- Jaouen Salaun, Florence Gaub, Nicolas Minvielle, Roxanne Montfort,” [NATO 2099](#) (Graphic Novel), 2024.
- Andrew Marantz, “[Among the AI Doomsayers](#)”, New Yorker, March 11, 2024

Week 8 – Nov 16

Cluster Prep Sessions #2 ~ Independent cluster-based research session

NOTE: Use this time to complete elements of your foresight report. In lieu of weekly readings, use the time you would have spent prepping for this particular class by prepping your final presentations/papers. *By the end of today*, your cluster should have completed an Assumptions exercise, a Domain Mapping exercise, several insights (driven by dozens of Weak Signals), and at least one influence diagram. Some of your report should be written, too.

FUN READ

- David Wallace-Wells, “[The Uninhabitable Earth](#),” *New York Magazine Intelligencer*, July 2017
- Sanjay Khanna et. al., “[Planning when you can’t predict](#),” Future Skills Centre, 2022. [Read pp 7-20, esp.]
- Linnea Sinkkila and Gokce Sandal, “[What Makes Strategic Foresight Successful in Organizations?](#)” Futures Platform, 2021
- Tiernan Ray, “[Can ChatGPT predict the future?](#)” ZDNet, Nov 2023.
- Anna Wiener, “[How Perfectly can Reality be Simulated](#),” New Yorker, April 15, 2024
- Dhruv Khullar, “[Rise of the Nanomachines](#),” New Yorker, June 13, 2024
- Malcolm Harris, “[Shell is Looking Forward](#),” New York Magazine *Intelligencer*, March 3, 2020.
- Andy Tomaswick, “[2.8 Days to Disaster – why we are running out of time in low earth orbit](#),” Universe Today, December 2025
- School of International Futures, “[Features of Effective Systemic Foresight in Governments around the World](#),” 2021.
- Rivka Galchen, “[Are We Doomed?](#) Here’s how to think about it,” New Yorker, June 3, 2024

Week 9 – Nov 23

Foresight & Public Policy

Read **three** (3) of the articles listed below:

- Alex Wilner and Martin Roy, “[Canada’s Emerging Foresight Landscape](#),” *Foresight* 22:5/6, (2020).

- Fraser Reilly-King, Colleen Duggan, Alex Wilner, “[Foresight and futures thinking for international development co-operation](#): Promises and pitfalls,” *Development Policy Review* 42:S1 (2024).
- Inbal Marcovitch and Alex Wilner, “[Tackling the Geopolitics of Standardization](#): Lessons from Canada's Strategic Foresight-to-Standards Pilot Project”, *International Journal* 79:4 (2024)
- Oliver Jütersonke and Emily Munro, “[Developing Anticipatory Governance Capacities in Ministries of Foreign Affairs](#),” Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Issue 34, (2024).
- J. Peter Scoblic, “[Strategic Foresight in US Agencies](#),” Future Security, New America Foundation, Dec 2021.
- Robin Champ, Kara Cunzeman, and Suzette Brooks Masters “[Charting a Brighter American Future](#): The Case for a U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight,” Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance (2024).
- Amy Nelson and Alex Montgomery, “[Is the US Military’s Futurism Obsession Hurting National Security?](#)” Brookings, Jan 2022.

FUN READ

- NATO [Strategic Foresight](#), 2026 [Peruse]
- European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), [Horizons Scanning in Briefs](#). [Peruse]
- Centre for Strategic Futures (Singapore), [Driving Forces Cards](#), 2022.
- RAND, [Security 2040](#) project website [Peruse]
- Josh Rothman, “Why the Godfather of AI Fears what he’s Built,” New Yorker, November 13, 2023
- Carl Zimmer and Marco Hernandez, “[This Cell Feeds, Grows and Reproduces. And It’s Manmade](#),” NYTimes, July 2026.

Week 10 – November 30

Strategic Foresight Studio One: Cluster Presentations

Come to class prepared to present your cluster’s strategic foresight project

Week 11 – December 7

Strategic Foresight Studio Two: Cluster Presentations

Come to class prepared to present your cluster’s strategic foresight project