

Course Outline/Syllabus (required)

You may list broad topics, a detailed weekly schedule, or a formal syllabus. Attach this form and any additional pages to your course proposal.

Course Title: Conversations on the Future of the Planet and of the People

Week 1: Establish the rationale for the course and my credentials to guide it.

At present, our civilization is facing two major challenges: 1. climate related disasters and disappearance of species. 2. dangers related to irrational group behavior rooted in the weakness of human biology and social media. The future of the planet and of the people is in urgent need of stabilizing actions by the current inhabitants of this planet.

Science has helped us understand nature better and has improved the quality of life in all parts of the world. Technologies that came out of scientific study of nature have helped to reduce poverty and increase the quality of our lives. Technologies have come with their own set of problems contributing to environmental issues. Information technology has helped us in many ways but also has created many social issues. Social media make it possible for anyone to create false information, misinformation, and conspiracy theories without editorial moderation for accuracy. Monetized algorithm favors sensationalism and rapid spread of false information, rumors and conspiracy theories. All of these have contributed to erratic and often, irrational group behavior jeopardizing group welfare. Now, we have AI to contend with. Some scientists consider AI "a societal risk on par with pandemics and nuclear war".

In this age of information disorder and frequent, catastrophic climate related disasters, what can ordinary citizens like us do to mitigate the excesses of technology and social media to stabilize the planet and the course of human civilization?

At the end of the course, I hope each one of us will be able to develop an idea or two to act on, at an individual level, to make this world a safer place for future generations.

Self - introductions by participants.

Establishing guidelines for discussion period.

Agenda for subsequent weeks.

Week 2: State the following *facts* in a short talk. (20 to 30 minutes)

There has been enormous progress in science in the past 200 years. We have better understanding of the physical aspects of this planet and of life. Science has advanced so many new technologies which have enriched our lives. They have contributed to longer life, elimination of diseases, rapid travel, rapid communication, space travel etc., But they have also contributed to unstable physical conditions in the planet and irrational collective human behavior. Experts have started sounding the alarm (discuss recent articles on climate crisis and crisis in group behavior).

What are the strengths and weaknesses of science and technology which have contributed to the current crisis?

Questions for discussion - Open to Discuss

Week 3: State the following *facts* in a short talk. (20 to 30 minutes)

Every technology comes with its own problem, Information technology and social media particularly. What is media? What is media education? How does human mind function? How do creators of media-messages use our brain's vulnerabilities to their advantage? What can we do about it?

Questions to discuss.

Week 4: State the following *facts* in a talk. (30 to 45 minutes)

Further thoughts on how social media interfere with learning and thinking. What can we do to take control of what media we consume? How can we teach our children to use media wisely and think for themselves.

Questions to discuss: Open to discuss.

Week 5: State the following *opinion* in a short talk. (30 to 40 minutes)

A short summary of cultural anthropology.

Based on understanding of cultural anthropology, behavioral sciences, and neurobiology, can we understand how we got here?

Have we placed excessive emphasis on Individuality, Competition, and individual happiness at the expense of collective welfare and cooperation?

Have we placed legality ahead of morality?

Too many people want to influence our thoughts. Too many distractions to think on our own.

It is good time to learn from ancient civilizations and the natives of the lands on how to be good guardians of natural resources. Time is also ripe to balance competition, individual happiness and legality with cooperation, universal happiness, and morality.

Develop ideas for individual action.

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING-WILMINGTON – EQUIPMENT REQUEST FORM

PLEASE PRINT

Course Title: Conversations on the Future of the Planet and of the People

Instructor(s): Balu H. Athreya

NO AV EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED FOR THIS COURSE.

Schedule your AV needs as well as the needs of your guest speakers. Indicate "ALL" when equipment is needed for every class; indicate "SOMETIMES" for an occasional need. If you know the exact dates, please note them on the form.

If you rearrange furniture, please return it to its original state at the end of your class.

<u>Microphones</u>	
<u>DATES</u>	
_____	Wireless Lapel
_____	Wireless Handheld
_____	Headset Microphone

<u>Visual Aids</u>	
<u>DATES</u>	
_____	Video Document Camera
_____	Videotape/DVD
_____	Blu-Ray Player

<u>Audio</u>	
<u>DATES</u>	
_____	Ta
_____	Bo

<u>Computers</u>	
<u>DATES</u>	
X _____	PC computer

<u>Teaching Aids</u>	
<u>Lecterns on a table and a chair are standard equipment in all rooms.</u>	
_____	Light for Lectern
_____	Stools

<u>Special Equipme</u>	
<u>DATES</u>	
_____	Piano
_____	Electronic Keyboar
_____	Video Camera
_____	Music Stands: _____

**** Music stands MUST BE returned to the**

Comments/Explanations: _____

