



## COURSE UNIT DESCRIPTION

| Course unit title    | Course unit code |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Imagining the future |                  |

| Name of lecturer | Department           |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Raphael Coutin   | Life Sciences Center |

| Study cycle         | Course unit level | Course unit type |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Bachelor's students |                   | Optional         |

| Study method                 | Semester | Language of instruction |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Online lectures and seminars | Fall     | English                 |

| Requirements for students |  |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           |  |

| ECTS credits | The entire student workload | Contact hours | Self-learning hours |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
|              |                             | 48            | 32                  |

| <b>Aim of the module (course unit): competences foreseen by the study programme</b>  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>In an era of rapid technological change, climate instability, and geopolitical uncertainty, societies are often presented with ambitious promises from new technologies, but with little possibility for debate about their potential consequences. This course offers a space to observe, and critically engage with these changes. Students from diverse disciplines in science, technology, social sciences, and humanities, are invited to explore possible futures through scenario writing. The Lithuanian context will serve as the backdrop for imagining how emerging technologies and global risks might shape local society in the decades ahead. We will combine principles from foresight studies, science, philosophy, and design to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand social, environmental, and technological risks.</li> <li>- Anticipate possible impacts of new technologies.</li> <li>- Develop alternative, creative and sustainable scenarios for the future.</li> </ul> <p>The course encourages reclaiming our imaginative capacity to shape visions of the future that are informed, reflective, and personally meaningful—rather than passively accepting futures drawn by others.</p> <p>This course will develop analytical thinking, critical thinking, teamwork, creativity and other transferable competencies.</p> |   |  |
| Learning outcomes of the module (course unit)  | Teaching/learning methods                                   | Assessment methods                               |
| Students will be able <b>to synthesize</b> knowledge from different disciplines for understanding and critically reasoning about the current global risks for humanity as well as the social and global influences of modern technologies.   | Lectures, seminars/literature analysis, group discussions   | Observation of skills in practice, group project |
| Students will learn <b>to apply</b> futures thinking and scenario-writing techniques to sketch and argue plausible, evidence-based narratives  | Lectures, seminars literature and film analysis, group work | Observation of skills in practice, group project |
| Students will be able <b>to formulate</b> transdisciplinary solutions that address a potential or a real-world manifestation of a global catastrophic risk, such as climate change.  | Group work  | Individual project                               |

| Themes  | Contact work hours |               |           |                |                 |            |                    | Time and tasks for individual work |   |
|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
|   | Lectures           | Consultations | Seminars  | Practical work | Laboratory work | Placements | Total contact work | Individual work                    | Tasks                                   |
| Introduction to the course  | 2                  |               | 1         |                |                 |            |                    |                                    |   |
| Lithuanian historical, social, and geopolitical context   | 2                  |               | 2         |                |                 |            |                    | 2                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Scenarios for the end of the world I: anthropogenic sources of global risks   | 2                  |               | 2         |                |                 |            |                    | 3                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Scenarios for the end of the world II: natural sources of global risk   |                    |               | 3         |                |                 |            |                    | 1                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Social perceptions of risk: cognitive processes, biases and external factors that influence risk perceptions and judgments. |                    |               | 3         |                |                 |            |                    | 1                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Historical perspectives on technological innovations  |                    |               | 3         |                |                 |            |                    | 3                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Doomsday: between science, fiction and morality   | 3                  |               | 3         |                |                 |            |                    | 6                                  | Reading, group discussions              |
| Social impacts of innovations   | 2                  |               | 3         |                |                 |            |                    |                                    | Reading, literature and/or film reviews |
| Design methods for story telling  | 2                  |               | 5         |                |                 |            |                    | 6                                  |   |
| Individual project  |                    | 10            |           |                |                 |            |                    | 10                                 | Writing, Illustration                   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>13</b>          | <b>10</b>     | <b>25</b> |                |                 |            | <b>48</b>          | <b>32</b>                          |   |

| Assessment strategy                   | Weight in % | Deadlines    | Assessment criteria  |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--|
| Research - Group work                 | 40          | Midterm      | Students collaborate in groups to conduct and present research that will serve as the foundation for their individual projects.<br>Assessment will be based on:<br>Research on the Lithuanian context (history, culture, geopolitics, society)<br>Research on global risks for humanity (environmental, technological, social)<br>Reading and analysis of science fiction as a narrative and methodological tool<br>Philosophical and critical approaches to future studies<br>Short written essays reflecting research findings |
| Project Development - individual work | 50          | End semester | Students individually develop, map, and write a scenario addressing a specific global or local risk. Each scenario should:<br>Identify and analyze a specific risk<br>Critically argue its potential social consequences in the Lithuanian context<br>Propose an innovative solution or alternative pathway<br>Deliverables: written scenario (max. 10 pages) and a visual presentation  |

|                              |    |                 |   |
|------------------------------|----|-----------------|---|
| Attendance and Participation | 10 | End of semester | Students are expected to attend and actively engage in all online sessions. Full participation requires cameras to be turned on, consistent contribution to discussions, and collaborative involvement in group work. |
|------------------------------|----|-----------------|---|

| Author                                 | Year of issue | Title   | No of periodical or volume | Place of printing. Printing house or internet link |
|--|---------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Advisory literature</b>             |               |   |                            |  |
| Nick Bostrom, Milan M. Cirkovic (Eds.) | 2011          | Global Catastrophic Risks                         |                            | Oxford University Press, USA                       |
| Jared Diamond                          | 2004          | Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed |                            | Viking Press                                       |
| Pablo Servigne, Raphaël Stevens        | 2020          | How Everything Can Collapse                       |                            | Polity Press                                       |
| Shoshana Zuboff                        | 2018          | The age of surveillance Capitalism                |                            | Profile Books Ltd                                  |
| Isaac Asimov                           | 1955          | The End of Eternity                               |                            | Various  |
| Philip K. Dick                         | 1969          | Ubik  |                            | Various  |