

SYNTHESIS 100: STORYTELLING FOR A CHANGING PLANET

Summer Session I, 2025

Copenhagen, Denmark

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Lecture: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 11am – 1PMm

Academic Excursion: Thursday

Course Description:

SYN 100 is a project-based course that builds upon foundational skills by taking a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to complex global problems. Each section focuses on a different theme, challenge, or question related to the climate crisis. Despite the different class topics, all students will learn by designing and executing a team project that addresses their section's theme.

This course is structured in a unique way and it may not seem like any of your other classes. SYN 100 is a group project-based course, which means that your learning will happen through your own exploration of real-world challenges, problems, and questions. In this class:

DON'T	DO
Expect to only work independently	Expect to work collaboratively with your group
Expect to be told exactly what to learn	Expect your instructor and TA to mentor and guide your learning
Expect to focus on a narrow topic	Expect to work with your team to discover and apply resources, knowledge, and skill sets from all different disciplines
Expect that your instructor or TA has all the answers	Expect to work collaboratively with your team to figure out problems and work through roadblocks
Expect to be told what project to do	Expect to develop and complete a project that stems from your team's collective knowledge, interests, and/or skills

Section Description:

Each SYN 100 section focuses on a different theme, challenge, or question relevant to the broader concept of “a changing planet”. In this seminar we will analyze how journalists use storytelling to

write about the climate crisis. At the same time, you will develop a multimedia project (writing or audio; photo) focused on a particular climate-related story in Copenhagen. This course emphasizes the approach of narrative journalism. This kind of journalism appears in different journalistic genres (i.e. reportage, report, first-person narrative) and in different kinds of media (print, audio, video, digital). We will examine narrative journalism as a cultural practice and identify its institutional and organizational characteristics within the current media system. As part of a group project and anchored in principles of project-based learning, you will develop a climate-related story (researching topic, reporting and interviewing, media production) that sheds light on the climate crisis.

Anti-Racist and Universal Learning Framework:

The Synthesis Program commits to providing an equitable, inclusive and accessible learning environment for all. Students in Seventh College come from a variety of perspectives and experiences. There will be a range of beliefs around the different course topics. Throughout your time in the Synthesis Program we ask you to question your own and the positionalities and biases of others to create critical awareness of systematic racism in relation to the climate crisis and intersectional challenges. Some of the materials and conversations may be difficult at times. We aim to create an environment with mutual respect and the ability to listen even when we disagree or feel discomfort.

We also want the Synthesis Program to be a supportive learning environment taking into account that not everyone learns in the same manner. Specifically, we emphasize that there is no wrong or right way to engage with the course material.

Finally, students with particular learning concerns should reach out to the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) for assistance as well as you can speak with your IA or the Director of the Synthesis Program. We also want the Synthesis Program to be a supportive learning environment taking into account that not everyone learns in the same manner. Students with particular learning concerns should reach out to the Office for Students with Disabilities for assistance as well as you can speak with your IA or the Director of the Synthesis Program.

Learning Outcomes:

Through the activities and assignments, this course will help you to:

Design and complete a team project relevant to “a changing planet” theme

- Identify existing problems, challenges, or questions related to the climate crisis within your course’s topic.
- Articulate how those problems, challenges, or questions have been influenced by structural, historic, and/or systemic inequities.
- Collaborate with team members and your instructor to create and execute a project that addresses a specific problem, challenge, or question related to your section’s theme.
 - Develop a project plan and timeline, including identifying resources required
 - Collaborate with team members, TAs, and instructors to co-create project expectations, goals, and outcomes
 - Integrate knowledge, skills, and concepts from different disciplines to apply to your project

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- Drive your own learning through independent and collaborative research practices
- Create a final project deliverable to showcase your work to peers and other members of the community.

Effectively collaborate in a team

- Recognize teamwork best-practices and identify one's own personal strengths/weaknesses that can be leveraged in your team
- Understand how identity can shape one's approach to and experience with teamwork; apply this knowledge to create safe, meaningful learning environments for all team members
- Practice and apply conflict-resolution skills

Reflect on learning environment of the Synthesis Program and actively participate in opportunities to co-create learning experiences

- Define project-based learning and articulate why it is an effective way to learn
- Reflect on how learning goals and course structure connect with broader Seventh College goals
- Use the framework of collaborative grading to explore what motivates learning, particularly in the context of team-based projects

Course Texts & Materials

All class-wide readings and materials for SYN 100 will be available on Canvas. As your team will be responsible for the direction of your project, you are expected to identify additional appropriate readings and resources on your own as needed.

Collaborative Grading

One of the first questions a student usually asks is, "How will I be graded?" or "How do I get an 'A'?" These questions make sense because up to this point in your education grades may have been the only way you knew you met the expectations of a class or teacher. But what are the limitations of assessing your learning only through the lens of grades?

The instructors in the Synthesis Program will use collaborative grading for this course. What does that mean? You will decide at the beginning of the quarter the grade you want to work for during the quarter. More details about grading can be found on Canvas and will be discussed in class.

Academic Integrity

We designed the Synthesis Curriculum and SYN 100 to provide the unique opportunity for you to drive your own learning, and we therefore expect you to produce your own work.

[UCSD statement on academic integrity](#)

To uphold academic integrity, students shall:

- Complete and submit academic work that is their own and that is an honest and fair representation of their knowledge and abilities at the time of submission.
- Know and follow the standards of the class and the institution.

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Thus, no student shall engage in an activity that undermines academic integrity or facilitates academic integrity violations by others. This includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

- A. No student shall procure, provide, or accept any material that contains questions or answers to any examination or assignment unless the student's possession of the material has been authorized by the instructor.
- B. No student shall complete, in part or in total, any academic work (e.g., examination, assignment, paper) or obtain academic credit (e.g., attendance, participation) for another person.
- C. No student shall allow any academic work or academic credit to be completed or obtained, in part or in whole, for themselves by another person.
- D. No student shall plagiarize or copy the work of others and submit it as their own work.
- E. No student shall employ aids in undertaking course work or in completing any exam or assignment that are not authorized by the instructor.
- F. No student shall alter graded class assignments or examinations and then resubmit them for regrading without the instructor's permission.
- G. No student shall submit substantially the same material more than once without prior authorization from the instructor, such as a paper that was written and submitted in another class.

If you find that your personal circumstances challenge your ability to uphold this level of academic integrity, please speak with your instructional assistant or the Director of the Synthesis Program. Any work submitted that fails to meet these responsibilities will be in violation of your grading contract, and you will be subject to a lower grade and possible failure of the course. The Synthesis Program may also forward any suspected work to the Office of Academic Integrity for further review which may result in additional academic sanctions, probation and/or suspension.

Posting materials online

Any materials posted on Canvas or in class Google docs are the copyright of the faculty and instructors in the Synthesis Program and therefore should not be shared outside of Canvas on such sites as Course Hero.

Recordings of class sessions are to be shared only with members of the class and should be deleted by the end of the quarter.

Schedule

Week #	Day	Topic/Activity	Due at Meeting Time
1	1	Course & Project Introduction	
	Discussion 1	The Good, Bad, and Ugly of Groupwork	Reflect on teamwork experiences (see Canvas)
	2	Basics of storytelling Kramer & Call, <i>Telling True Stories</i>	Collaborative Grading Reflection (due by end of Week 1)
	Discussion 2	Team Dynamics & Conflict-Resolution	Complete short online quiz & reflection (see Canvas)
2	1	Teams Assigned	
	Discussion 3	Positionality & Project Audience	Complete reading & reflection (see Canvas)
	2	Poletta, <i>The Sociology of Storytelling</i>	
	Discussion 4	Positionality & Teamwork	Complete reading & reflection (see Canvas)
3	1	Identify a story project related to the climate crisis	Project driving question and context (300 words)
	2	Develop action plan for research, reporting, and writing	Project Goals & Audiences (300 words)

4	1	Reporting workshop Laufer, Interviewing: The Oregon Method	Interview materials
	2	Reporting workshop	Interview reflection (300 words)
5	1	Workshop for final project	
	2	Project Presentations	Final Projects
Finals		Final Individual Conferences	Final Individual Reflections