

## **SYN 100 GS:**

### **WATER IN OAXACA: DOCUMENTARY APPROACHES TO A CHANGING CLIMATE**

Summer Session I, 2027 in Oaxaca City, Mexico

#### Professor:

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Associate Professor

Department of Communication

#### Class Schedule:

Lecture: Monday, Wednesday, 9am – 12pm

#### 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:

| <b>DON'T</b>                                    | <b>DO</b>                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expect to only work independently               | Expect to work collaboratively with your group                                                                          |
| Expect to be told exactly what to learn         | Expect your instructor 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 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 and document the water crisis gripping Oaxaca, Mexico. Through documentary modes that span videography, photography, and audio recording, we will produce creative projects that represent, analyze, and call for action to reverse the worsening crisis. We are intentionally non-committal to genre as we reflect on what strategies and tactics of documentary storytelling are most suited to the Oaxacan context with its rich indigenous traditions and stark economic inequalities, as well as the reality that tourism growth has proven to be a double-edged sword. For your group project, you will develop a documentary intervention in that illuminates this critical issue. As part of that process, we will have curated conversations about documentary ethics and hands on workshops for using different technologies.

### 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 considering 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 learning concerns should reach out to the Office for Students with Disabilities for assistance as well as you can speak with your instructor 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 the “water in Oaxaca” 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, the instructor, and local collaborators to co-create project expectations, goals, and outcomes
- Integrate knowledge, skills, and concepts from different disciplines to apply to your project
- Drive your own learning through independent and collaborative research practices

### **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.

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. No student shall plagiarize or copy the work of others and submit it as their own work.
5. No student shall employ aids in undertaking course work or in completing any exam or assignment that are not authorized by the instructor.

6. No student shall alter graded class assignments or examinations and then resubmit them for regrading without the instructor's permission.
7. 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**

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Day</b>   | <b>Topic / Activity</b>                                                                          | <b>Due at Meeting Time</b>                                                         |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1           | 1            | Course and Project Introduction                                                                  |                                                                                    |
|             | Discussion 1 | The Good, Bad, and Ugly of Groupwork                                                             | Reflect on teamwork experiences (see Canvas)                                       |
|             | 2            | Creativities and Documentaries<br>Kerrigan and McIntyre, "The 'Creative treatment of actuality'" | First imaginings after the first week, reflections on water usage in your homestay |
|             | Discussion 2 | Team Dynamics and Conflict Resolution                                                            | Complete short online quiz & reflection (see Canvas)                               |
| 2           | 1            | Teams Assigned                                                                                   |                                                                                    |
|             | Discussion 3 | Positionality & Project Audience                                                                 | Complete reading & reflection (See Canvas)                                         |

|               |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                          |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | 2            | Indigeneity and Climate in Oaxaca                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                          |
|               | Discussion 4 | Howe and Boyer, <i>Ecologics</i>                                                                                                                                                                | Two project abstracts, pros and cons                                                                                     |
| 3             | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify your group's documentary project about the water crisis in Oaxaca</li> <li>Develop you a timeline for production and post-production</li> </ul> | Proposals covering context, documentary medium, and collaboration (500 words)                                            |
|               | 2            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessing the field and getting started</li> <li>Digging in through snowball interviewing</li> </ul>                                                     | Layout project goals and audiences (300 words)                                                                           |
| 4             | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting B-roll and preliminary documentation</li> <li>Technical tutorials</li> </ul>                                                                  | Rushes of material collected                                                                                             |
|               | 2            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal and less formal interviewing</li> </ul>                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rushes of material collected</li> <li>Review of another group's rushes</li> </ul> |
| 5             | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rough cut of project</li> </ul>                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer feedback</li> </ul>                                                          |
|               | 2            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fine cut of project</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer feedback</li> </ul>                                                          |
| <b>Finals</b> |              | <b>Presentation of final projects</b>                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Final Individual Reflection</b>                                                                                       |