

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

This course will review on some of the challenges facing humanity. Many are obvious but need accurate assessments to suggest positive responses.

Session 1 OVERPOPULATION. We are currently at around 7 billion people, rising to 10 billion by 2050. How can our globe support such a huge number with even basic food and energy? Yet population projections show a decline thereafter due to various demographic factors. What are these factors, and can this decline offer significant relief to population pressures?

Session 2 GLOBAL WARMING. It's hard to avoid this issue with dramatic headlines of looming climate catastrophes. Are these headlines overblown? There are many different approaches to reducing global warming, from renewables to increased efficiencies.

Session 3 RESOURCES. Key resources such as water, soil, trees, minerals, oil, (and surprisingly sand) are all being over-exploited, so we will review how to manage such resources sensibly and sustainably.

Session 4 MISINFORMATION. Social Media are all very well for spreading information to wide audiences but when those messages are not true, or misleading, or fantastic, we have a recipe for major problems. How can we rein in the fakeness and ground ourselves in (real) facts?

Session 5 AGGRESSION. There is always a war going on somewhere, sometimes small and local, sometimes large and international. Why must humans be so aggressive and bellicose? If this is part of our evolutionary heritage, can we find an antidote?

SESSION 6 POWER. The need for individuals to dominate others is closely related to aggression but plays out in social dynamics such as the rise of Strongmen who are usually oppressive and destructive. Can we arrange our societies with the checks and balances to contain this negative energy?

SESSION 7 INEQUAITY. Elite capitalism has many ills to correct, e.g. bosses earn huge salaries while workers are trapped in poverty. Why did our economy evolve like this? Our economic history will be reviewed (with a USA focus), and solutions proffered.

SESSION 8 OPEN DISCUSSION. This last session will solicit questions raised in the course or any Challenges the class brings forward that have not been addressed.

The format will be mainly presentations with discussions encouraged. There are many good textbooks available, and these will be recommended during the sessions.

LEADER: Peter Smith, retired from a career in Pharma and IT, will lead this course with assistance from Dr Peggy de Wolf, educator, and sociologist.

FORMAT: Hybrid

MAXIMUM: 35

MONDAYS 10:00 a.m. to noon 8 sessions starting September 26th through November 14th