

SYLLABUS
GEOGRAPHY 1014: WORLD REGIONS

SPRING 2011

Standard Stats:

World Regions, GEOG 1014 ; CRN 18485

Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday 2.00PM to 3.15PM in McB 100

Hot-linked quick reference outline:

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2. RESOURCES

3. ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS/GRADING

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3.2 Midterm & Final Exam

3.4 World Leaders Visual Exams

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4. COURSE OBJECTIVES

5. IMPORTANT CLASS POLICIES

1.STAFF:

Instructor: John Boyer
125 Major Williams
231-4071

joboyer@vt.edu

Office Hours: Monday on-line, 8-9PM. Or by appointment, anytime.

For On-line Office Hours go to:

<http://plaidavenger.com/live/>

And you will see me LIVE answering questions that you have sent to me through AIM. My screen name is: geog1014. I only answer questions sent in through AIM, but you can also feel free to converse with your fellow students in the chat room that you will see under the live picture of me.

Teaching Assistants:

****Please contact TA's for all questions about grades and questions.***

*****Please contact your 'last name specific' TA—not just the first one on this list!***

Last Names A-K

Brent Sams

Email: brent.geogta@gmail.com

Office Hour: Wednesday 1.00-2.00PM, 112 Major Williams

Last Names L-Z

Andy Evans

Email: Andy.geographyTA@gmail.com

Office Hour: Monday 2:00-3.00 PM, 112 Major Williams

2.RESOURCES:

Texts

Required: The Plaid Avenger's World, 5th edition, 2011

ITS THE FREAKIN' 5th EDITION! The Arab Revolution edition to be exact!
ISBN 978-0-7575-9385-7godforsaken book won't be at the bookstores until a few days before classes begin, at the earliest! And its like \$95 bucks. Damn the man making us pay! Of course, its still probably a lot cheaper than all those serious rip-off chemistry and/or personal health textbooks.

And yes, you have to get a brand new copy of the new edition in order to keep up with tons of new current events and world leaders. Old editions from previous semesters will contain all sorts of out-of-date info that will be wrong for current quizzes and tests....and will serve to confuse you and screw you up.

More importantly, you MUST HAVE A BRAND NEW FROM THE BOOKSTORE 5th EDITION in order to get an unused passcode (in the inside front cover) which you must have to access the textbook website where all the course materials and grades are managed. Please don't bother with any attempted scams to use old passcodes, or old editions, or a 'shared' passcode....none will work, and I've already heard all the BS stories that you could possibly come up with to get out of buying a book. But I don't blame you for trying!

By the way, you should know that there are about a million copies of this book floating around town, many of which are owned by your friends and roommates. These copies may be brand new, still in the shrink wrap plastic, but they DO NOT have the access codes in them! They are unusable! And please don't attempt to scam the bookstores by trying to "return" these shrink-wrapped copies for credit...I'm pretty sure they will just have you arrested on the spot, and I can't cover bail for all of you.

Optional: National Geographic Atlas of Worldnd **edition & Earth**
Pulsend **Edition**...but will be packaged at the bookstore together as a SET, 2012
ISBN 978-1118057797 (for the set)

This atlas set will be used for an optional assignment to accumulate points, however it is not required nor does it have an access code, so sharing copies if encouraged. It is also an extremely useful tool to have on your desk your entire college career, and the set is priced radically lower than you can get them for individually, even on-line.

However, the bookstores usually send all copies of un-purchased books back to the distributors half-way through the semester, so please don't wait to get the books until the end of the semester when you are suddenly in dire straights and need the points

...because the books will likely not be there anymore, and ordering them individually on-line will cost twice as much.

[BTW, you can try to order them individually, and it is possible you might get them cheaper that way, but not very likely you will. For those that want to attempt it anyway, here are the specs of each of the books:

National Geographic Atlas of the World-College, 2nd Edition: ISBN 978-0-470-88887-2
National Geographic EarthPulse, 2nd Edition: ISBN 978-0-470-94831-6]

www.plaidavenger.com is also required reading for the course. Content derived from the current event exploits of the Avenger and the Global Leaders pages will be part of the weekly quizzes, as well as into the midterm and final exams.

Other Web Resource

Often referenced and utilized international news sources of the instructor:

World Press Review www.worldpress.org/wprw.htm has a daily update on global news--from news sources around the globe, reported from the countries themselves.

The International Herald Tribune on-line edition <http://global.nytimes.com/?ihht>

BBC www.bbc.com Click on the NEWS section.

Al Jazeera <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

Asia Times Online www.atimes.com/

The Economist www.economist.com/

Foreign Affairs www.foreignaffairs.com/

CIA World Factbook <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

10 X 10 www.tenbyten.org/10x10.html

Christian Science Monitor <http://www.csmonitor.com/>

3.ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS/GRADING: (aka..How to earn your grade)

This is a radical, experimental course when it comes to grading, and I hope you embrace and enjoy this change. If you don't, then you should bail out now, not later. Instead of having a set amount of mandatory activities that you are required to do and then assessing your grade from your performance, I am going to provide a host of opportunities for you to earn points towards your grade, thus allowing you to choose your path according to your interests and skills.

It's a 'create your fate' grade: you choose what you want to work on, and keep earning points doing different activities until you achieve the grade you desire. Are you an excellent test-taker? Then take lots of tests. Not good at taking exams? Then do alternative written or film viewing assignments to earn your points. I would suggest mixing it up and doing a little of everything to cover all your bases and ensure you get enough points to get the grade of your desires.

BUT BUYER BEWARE! You can't wait until the last minute to make this happen! The one way you can screw this up is to keep putting off things until the end of the semester, living under the delusion that you can do a whole bunch of stuff in the last weeks of class to make up for slacking all semester. **THIS WON'T WORK!** Almost all of these assignments consist of turning in things every week and/or attending scheduled events all semester long...AND THERE ARE NO 'MAKE-UPS' or 'EXTRA CREDIT' or any other additional opportunities offered at the end of the semester to earn points. So choose and plan your semester wisely!!!

Please note that the point totals shown for each activity are the maximum points **possible**; you don't simply get all the points simply for participating. In other words, you **can** earn up to 200 points for taking the Final Exam, but if you only get half the questions right (a 50% conventional grade) than you would only receive 100 points towards your final grade (50% of 200 points = 100 points earned). The inverse is true for films: they are worth 15 points each, and you can attend as many of them as you like, so you could earn anywhere from 0 to 150 points for that activity based upon how many you do.

Here are the possible activities you can do to earn points towards your final grade, followed by the grading scale.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum points POSSIBLE</u>
1) 13 weekly quizzes x 30pts	=400 (+10 for doing all 13)
2) Midterm Exam	=125
3) Final Exam	=125
4) World Leaders Exam 50x2	=100 (+10 for dressing up)
5) Films 10x15pts	=150 (15pts each up to 150)
6) Non-class events paper	=25/each
7) Atlas quizzes (11)	=110
8) Twitter Assignment	=200
9) Forum Commenting (14wks)	=210
10) Delicious New Curation	=20/each, 200 points max
11) Geographic Film Review	=25/each, 150 points max
12) Flash Quizzes	=???
13) Random Attendance	=???
14) Plaid Correspondents/Artists	=???
Total	1500+ ???

Final Grade Breakdown:

1050 points = A

1000 points = A-

970 points = B+

930 points = B

900 points = B-

870 points = C+

830 points = C

800 points = C-

770 points = D+

730 points = D (Minimum passing grade for P/F)

less than 729 = LOSE

My advice: DEFINITELY do the weekly quizzes, plan on taking the mid-term and final exams, plan on taking the World Leader Exams, and attend as many films as you can. That alone will pretty much get you a strong B, if you do well on exams. If you are really smart and really want to ensure an A or high B, you will completely lock in a high grade by adding on EITHER the Twitter project OR the Forum Commenting or a combination of other opportunities listed. Hell, if you do enough work early enough, you may have no need to take the final exams at all! But that is up to you and your work ethic!

****Statute of limitations:** Again, remember that you must contest a grade within two weeks of the assignment date! More details on this policy are available in the Important Course Policies section of this syllabus.

Here is an explanation of each possible assignment:

3.1 WEEKLY BOOK READING/PODCAST QUIZZES:

Each week, an on-line quiz will be posted on the textbook website (the one you will get to by using your access code located in the front of the textbook). The quiz will consist of questions from selected chapters of the textbook, as well as selected questions created from the Plaid Avenger's blog (www.plaidavenger.com) from the previous week. These quizzes are open-notes, open-book, open-website and can be taken as many times as you like. In other words, keep taking the damn thing until you get a 100% on it. Each weekly quiz will be posted on Tuesday after class and will be available until the following Tuesday before class begins, when it will be replaced by the new quiz for that week. *Take it early, take it often, but just don't forget to take it! It's worth 400 points towards your freakin' grade!*

Every week (starting Tuesday Jan 25) there will be a weekly quiz on selected chapter from the textbook and a plaid-cast. The TA's will be sending you an announcement about it, an announcement which will tell you what chapters/plaid-casts that week's quiz is on. Each weekly quiz is only active for exactly a week, at which point it is replaced by the next quiz. As added incentive, if you complete all 13 quizzes, you will automatically receive a +10 point bonus. Again, take the quizzes as many times as you want! Only your highest grade will be recorded! You should earn 400 points towards your final grade by semester's end.

3.2 MID-TERM EXAM & 3.3 FINAL EXAM

Are just that, and each is worth a possible 125 points, so combined you could earn another 250 points toward your final grade...but that's only if you get a perfect score on both tests! And these exams are killa', so don't bank on getting perfect scores!

The midterm for the class will be held on Thursday February 23rd from 2PM to 3.15PM...that's right! It's during our regular scheduled class time! But you DO NOT have to come to the classroom to take it! The final exam will be Wednesday May 9th from 1.05PM to 3.05PM. Don't worry though...it will only take most of you 30 minutes or less to complete. These are mandatory dates, with no rescheduling, no make-ups, no do-overs, and no exceptions. If you cannot attend these exam dates and are convinced that you can't pass the class without these points, please go ahead and drop the class. Take it next semester!

Both exams will be ON-LINE!!! It is highly advised that you be on campus on a very stable, secure and reliable connection, as any disruption in service before you submit your exam will result in a failed attempt...and there is only one attempt permitted for you to take your exam in the specified time periods!

The bad news: The exams are extremely challenging.

The worse news: The exams are timed, and you have one attempt only at them.

The worser news: The exams are on-line, and a 'lost connection' is not an excused reason for missing. You will need a solid connection, so it is best

to be on campus.

The worst news: The exams cannot be 'made-up'. No excused absences. If you can't make it, you can't take it. Period. But that's the beauty of the points accumulation system: if you can't make an exam, then plan to do other activities to earn points.

MIDTERM EXAM: Thursday February 23rd from 2PM to 3.15PM

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday May 9th from 1.05PM to 3.05PM

3.4 WORLD LEADERS VISUAL EXAMS

This is another new option that I have never offered before which will act as both a way to earn points, while simultaneously providing you with a study guide/practice for the midterm and final exams. We will have one just before the midterm exam, and the other on Reading Day just before the final exam. Each will be worth 50 possible points. Both will be conducted in McB 100.

So what's the deal with these exams? They will be focused on the world leaders that you need to know for this class, and are visual exams. That means that the exams will be on-screen, and entail the identification of major world leaders while also testing you on current events...basically asking you about what those folks have been up to this semester.

Added bonus? Why not! Anyone who convincingly dresses up as one of our world leaders for these exams earns another +10 points. But you got to look like them! Just putting on a suit and saying you are David Cameron won't cut it!

1st World Leader Exam: Wednesday February 22nd at 8.00PM in McB 100

2nd World Leader Exam: Thursday, May 3rd at 5.00PM in McB 100

3.5 MOVIE QUIZ ASSIGNMENTS:

Ten nights throughout the semester, a movie will be shown in McB 100 on most Wednesday nights from 7.30PM to 9.30PM. Look at the class calendar on the Textbook website to see the list of films and dates. You DO NOT have to attend ALL of the films--in fact, don't come to any if you don't like international cinema! It is possible that other film events will become available as special circumstances present themselves during the semester. I will make an announcement and post to the course calendar when additional films are added. You can earn up to 15 points for each film you attend. Directly after viewing the film, we will have a quiz on the film--some of the questions will be used to spark debate and analysis and the answers will be given; other questions will

simply be asked and you have to provide the answer. So what we have is a unique kind of test in which some answers are given, and some are not--in both scenarios, you are expected to treat this quiz just as you would a regular examination--no sharing of answers or talking to your neighbors will be tolerated.

A run-down of film viewing guidelines is posted just under the film schedule on the course website.

Tentative Movie Schedule

Movie Schedule 7.30-9.00PM, McB 100 (Title are subject to change and your votes)

January 25, Wednesday ***Outsourced***

February 1, Wednesday ***Charlie Wilson's War***

February 8, Wednesday ***Good Bye, Lenin! OR The Lives of Others***

February 15, Wednesday ***Beyond Rangoon OR The Lady***

February 22, Wednesday No film, World Leader Exam at 8PM

February 29, Wednesday ***Paradise Now OR Waltz with Bashir***

March 14, Wednesday ***Blind Shaft OR The Sun Behind the Clouds***

March 21, Wednesday ***Sin Nombre OR El infierno OR El Cartel***

March 28, Wednesday ***Lumumba OR Life, Above All***

April 4 Wednesday ***Prisoner of the Mountains OR 5 Days of War***

April 11, Wednesday ***Rabbit Proof Fence OR Walkabout***

April 18, Wednesday ***Brotherhood of War***

April 25, Wednesday ***Bel-Can-Can OR No Man's Land or Before the Rain***

May 2, Wednesday ***City of God OR Motorcycle Diaries OR Even the Rain***

Film viewing guidelines

Also, because this is a part of your class grade, behavior during the film's presentation should be identical to regular classroom behavior during the lectures. This policy is strictly regulated and enforced.

For each of the films you will be given a short quiz at the end of it. You must **pick up a scantron when you enter the room**. They will be available before the movie. Once the film starts the scantrons will no longer be available. If you come late you will not have a scantron and thus will not get credit for attending the movie. Please be on time!

-You will need a #2 pencil.

-Be respectful of the people around you, please no talking during the film.

-Laptops are NOT to be used during the movie. The bright screens are distracting to everyone around you.

-Please turn your cell phones OFF during the film.

-Whatever food/drinks you bring into the movie need to be thrown away when leaving.

-We will not hesitate to ask people to leave if they cannot follow these simple request (yes, even the cell phone one).

-Please check your movie grades throughout the semester to make sure you got credit for the ones you attended. Sometimes student numbers are bubbled in wrong and you may not get credit. Contact your TA immediately if this is the case.

Please Note: You must bring a #2 pencil and your ID number (located on your Hokie Passport) to the movie in order to get credit.

*For those who have conflicting class schedules and cannot make any of the movie times but are really into watching films, there is an optional geographic film review written assignment that you may want to explore. The instructions for this geographic film review assignment are located on the website in the 'FILM' section.

3.6 OUT-OF-CLASS TALKS/ACTIVITIES

To encourage you to attend outside internationally-focused events outside the classroom, (of which there are many every semester) I will allow you to earn points towards your grade by writing up a short paper of pre-approved activities.

The outside events may be films, live performances, public lectures, art exhibits, or community/ethnic/religious festivals that relate to anything international in scope, and occur outside the normal class time.

The papers for these events should be at least 3 page long (12-point font, double-spaced, 1" margins). In the paper, you should describe the event and then link it to the material of the course to the best of your ability. You may hand in the reports at any time beginning with the second week of class, BUT YOU CAN ONLY TURN IN ONE A WEEK, MAXIMUM. Each of these event papers is worth up to 25 points. The papers will also be due within the week they are assigned, with the specific date specified in the announcement about the events.

Please keep in mind that the event must be pre-approved by me. No paper will be accepted on any event that has not been run past me first. In fact, I encourage you all send me any events that you think are applicable and that you may even want to advertise in class. I will select one or two events per week based upon your recommendations and post them on the course calendar and announce them in class.

Please submit all papers digitally to the head TA:

Head honcho TA

Brent Sams

Email: brent.geogta@gmail.com

Office Hour: Wednesday 12:30-1:30 PM, 104 Major Williams

3.7 ATLAS ASSIGNMENT

This assignment pertains to the optional textbooks: **National Geographic Atlas of World 2nded.** & **Earth Pulse 2nded.** Set, 2012 ISBN 978-1118057797 (for the set)

This atlas quiz assignment is worth a possible 110 points. As with all things, it is not required, and in addition these books do not have an access code, so sharing copies is encouraged. It is also an extremely useful tool to have on your desk your entire college career, and the set is priced radically lower than you can get them for individually, even on-line.

The assignment consist or 11 atlas quizzes on 11 different regions of the world that are available on the Plaid Avenger textbook website. You will have until the last day of class,

May 1st, to take the quizzes and they **must be submitted BEFORE 7:00pm** or you will not receive credit. There are a total of 11 quizzes on 11 broad world regions and you must take **ALL 11** to receive credit. The quizzes are found under the testing tab in the 'Atlas Extra Credit Quiz' heading. The details for each quiz are as follows:

1) Unlike the weekly textbook quizzes that have unlimited attempts and unlimited time, you will only have **ONE HOUR** to take each quiz and only **TWO CHANCES** to take it!! **NO EXCEPTIONS OR EXCUSES!** Each quiz is 20 questions.

2) The questions come from 2 atlases: College Atlas of the World and EarthPulse. EarthPulse questions are designated with 'EP' before each question and page numbers given, since it is not divided up by region. On the other hand, the College Atlas of the World questions are found throughout the book depending on region and question theme, so page numbers are not given. Explore the atlases before beginning the quiz...or you will likely FAIL!

3) You will have the opportunity to earn up to 110 points towards your final grade depending on your **overall quiz average of the highest score of all 11 quizzes**. The scale is as follows:

100% quiz average = 110 points

95% quiz average = 100 points

90% quiz average = 95 points

85% quiz average = 90 points

80% quiz average = 85 points

75% quiz average = 80 points

70% quiz average = 75 points

65% quiz average = 70 points

60% quiz average = 65 points

55% quiz average = 60 points

<55% quiz average = 0 points. 0. Nada. Nothing.

***To calculate your score, take the average of all your quizzes, for example: you get 200/220 possible points after taking all 11 quizzes, or a 90.9% average, equaling 90 points towards your final grade since it is in the 90% range. There is no rounding up on

points. You must get at least the minimum average for a point category to receive those points. If you get 99.99% average, you get 100 points, no rounding to 110.

3.8 The Plaid Shadow Cabinet aka World Leaders Twitter Assignment

This is a new radical experiment too, combining social networking with following international events...specifically in the case by following the actual people who shape those events: the world leaders!

Let's get this experiment underway! What we are trying to do is to get folks more interested and engaged with these major world movers and shakers via having you guys report on their daily activities and opinions (and maybe even their prejudices and negative press). Not only will your tweets show up on Twitter, but also on each leader's page at <http://www.plaidavenger.com/leaders/> which will have a constant feed of all your tweets. It may end up getting some attention if we all kick ass at it...in fact, it already has!

MOST IMPORTANT: Only our master list of the 85 most influential leaders are to be used, and you **MUST** contact me to be assigned the leader of your choice. We already have the twitter accounts in place, so **DO NOT** create an account yourself...you will not get credit if it has not been cleared by me and the account created by me.

Brief points:

- 1) YOUR FIRST TWEET OF THE DAY is on location of your leader: you **MUST** tweet EVERY DAY on the location of your leader. Most of the time they should be in their home state, so you simply tweet something like 'I am at home in Iran working on domestic affairs'.....but if they are traveling abroad, be sure to say when, where, and who they are meeting with. Do that every day.
- 2) Second tweet of the day should concern what they are working on, or meeting with. If it's just boring domestic affairs, you can keep it brief.
- 3) Twice a week you must mention and interact with another plaid world leader. This can be about meeting recently, or news between your countries, or just tweeting about how you are buddies or enemies. You can view all the leaders here: <https://twitter.com/#!/plaidavenger/world-leaders/members>
- 4) Focus more on any international shit they are doing. Meeting with a foreign leader? Working on greenhouse gas emission legislation? Buying weapons from Russia? Hit that stuff up hard.
- 5) You can make judgment calls to put in what the world leader may be thinking about, if you are confident in your knowledge. But don't overstate anything too radically.
- 6) You can tweet funny shit too, if you spot something of interest, or have insider info or their particular culture....like maybe say for David Cameron: 'Just had a jolly good spot of tea and some fish n chips' or 'Just met with the Queen. Her knickers were in a bunch' (if he actually did meet with the Queen, that is)
- 7) When Twittering - look on Google news for stories on your person and use that as a basis for your tweet. Direct quotes as the twitter is encouraged. If you talk about another leader please mention them (@).

For example- Plaid_Barack: At the UN conference meeting with @Plaid_Hu about how the US and China can work together.

8) Don't get overwhelmed by all this though....just do AT LEAST a few tweets a day...but as many more as you want depending on how into you get!

9) VERY IMPORTANT: Remember to LOG OUT after tweeting. We do not want you to by accident start tweeting updates as yourself to the world leader or start following others.

10) Try to reply to @replies to the best of your ability as the world leader - if you have any question send Boyer an email (joboyer@vt.edu)

11) These accounts are for information on the specific leader. The goal is NOT to follow everyone and try to get followers back. We want true dedicated follows who are interested. The only accounts these people will be following is the other plaid leaders and @plaidavenger or the actual leaders twitter. For instance Plaid_Obama is following the actual @BarackObama. For your leader if you find the actual person twittering you can follow them, BUT THAT IS IT. The real trick here is to be interesting enough that others start to follow you WITHOUT having to reciprocate!

12) BE CIVIL! While the occasional curse word is fun, please no mean-spirited at-tacks or F-bomb dropping...even if you have a leader that might be prone to such behavior!

13) Write in proper sentences with capitals. You will lose points for not capitalizing peoples names and places or not writing complete thoughts.

If you are up for this, pick a leader (or two if you can handle it) and contact Katie at kpritcha@vt.edu to 'sign-up' for that leader and to get the password to their twitter account. Do not share that password with anyone else. Be sure Katie gets your info, because we will be throwing you up to 200 points for the semester based upon your performance. Extra points can be earned by helping me write-up and update your leaders' bio on the Plaid Avenger's site at:

<http://www.plaidavenger.com/leaders/>

Contact me for more details on that front. Also, if you have a world leader not on my list that you would like added, contact me to make the case for their inclusion. This assignment MUST be started by the 2nd week of classes in order to earn credit.

These are graded twice a semester (midterm and at the end). If you have twittered less than 30 times from the start to midterm you will receive a zero for that part, same if you've twittered less than 30 times between the midterm and the final. You also need to twitter over spring break or will lost points.

3.9 The Plaid Avenger Forums Commenting Assignment

[*If you have experience as a *forum moderator* and would like to take on that role for this exercise, please contact me immediately!*

This is another weekly assignment created to encourage you to engage more deeply in international news within your personal interest range, interact with other smart peeps in this class and in the world, while also earning a few points along the way.

The forums are located at <http://www.plaidavenger.com/forum> and it is all free! You don't have to pay for subscriptions to any on-line news sources or anything else! But you do have to include a variety of news stories, from a variety of different news sources, from a variety of different regions. Here is how it works:

Each week (12:01am Sunday to 11:59pm the following Saturday) you will have the ability to earn up to 15 points by posting a MINIMUM of 2 news stories in the appropriate forum and 3 replies to other posted stories from other students. The LAST week to post will be April 22nd to April 28th. Each region forum has the list of countries below it, so please make sure you're posting in the right place. Please try to spread out your postings to at least 3 different days...but please feel free to make multiple comments if you are in a debate/conversation with others!

When signing up - create any username you want, but you MUST enter your Virginia Tech email address when asked for email, or you will not get credit for your comments.

For posting news stories:

Have the title of your post be the news story title. In your description please include a link to the story, a quick summary (2-3 sentences) of why it is cool or what it is about, and any questions you have for others or why you found the story interesting.

For replying to other peeps stories:

2+ sentence reply to another persons news story on what interested you about the story, or why its important, etc - AKA an intelligent reply. You of course can disagree with other folks comments, start a lively debate, and/or offer other stories to support or counter their comments.

You know, it's called intelligent civil discourse. Get on it! You can earn up to 100 points doing this, but quite frankly I sincerely hope that many of you continue to do it long after you get out of this class. Keep the learning alive, baby! Grow the network of smart Plaid peeps! Encourage other folks from other classes and other parts of the world to join in the fun!

Points will be assigned twice during the semester: about half-way through the semester you will get a grade so you can gauge how well you are doing, and final grades for the assignment will be posted by May 6th. The comments will not be graded till then, if you would like feedback on how you are doing please email your TA as listed in the syllabus and on the textbook website: <https://webcom6.grtxle.com/>

You must pick stories that are NOT based in the United States (okay, we will be pretty flexible on this one, but do your best to be as international as possible), as this course and this assignment is pushing to introduce you to international affairs and get out of the domestic-only news mindset.

****These comments are graded twice a semester (midterm and at the end). Please contact your TA if you would like them to look over your comments sooner.****

LAST CRUCIAL IMPORTANT POINT: NO US SOURCES OF NEWS MAY BE USED! (with some exceptions below) All cut-and-pasted news links must come from pre-approved international news sources. Hit me or your TA up if you find a well balanced news source from another country that you would really like to use, but to get you started, here is a brief list of go-to places that are solid:

The International Herald Tribune on-line edition <http://global.nytimes.com/?ihht>

BBC www.bbc.com Click on the NEWS section.

World Press Review <http://www.worldpress.org/>

Al Jazeera <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

Asia Times Online www.atimes.com/

The Economist www.economist.com/

Foreign Affairs www.foreignaffairs.com/

Christian Science Monitor <http://www.csmonitor.com/>

In addition, the awesome **World Press Review** site not only has a daily update on global news—from news sources around the globe, reported from the countries themselves—but they also list a links a hell-ton of news sources from around the planet, listed by country, at:

<http://www.worldpress.org/gateway.htm>

and they even list the political bias of each news source as well, so you can get even smarter about the views expressed in each story! ALL of the news sources provided at this gateway are applicable to use as well. Get diversified in your news! Get global! Check out what other papers in other places are spinning!

Examples of thoughtful story posts and replies:

Thoughtful comment on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday to receive 20 points.

Post:

The interior minister of Mexico died in a helicopter crash. He was a major political figure in the fight against drugs. He predecessor died in an airplane crash three years ago. While it does look like the crash was due to weather it is a bit suspicious. This may be a major blow to Mexico's war against drugs.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/12/world/americas/top-mexican-official-among-8-dead-in-helicopter-crash.html>

Reply:

The cartels could have hardly arranged a more fortuitous turn of events, Mexico's number 2 man in the war against drugs out of the way. If I were in charge of the department of the interior for Mexico I would make very sure that the people in charge of my helicopter and airplane maintenance were extremely trustworthy, it would seem that perhaps the cartels have a mechanic on their pay rolls. However, considering the fact that he switched copters at the last moment it is entirely possible that the cartels were not involved and instead the crash was the result of poor but not malicious maintenance.

Comments will be graded on frequency AND quality. Points: You can earn 15 points/ week if make the appropriate number of posts and replies for that week, therefore if you started immediately you can earn a possible 210 points possible for the semester.

3.10 Delicious NEWS CURATION

As the world population grows exponentially, so too does demand for and consumption of resources...even news and information. Even though we live in an era of unprecedented technological innovation, there's more junk, noise and crap on the internet than ever, and with more people online than ever, the problem gets worse every day. Over the course of the semester, the Plaid News Project will attempt make sense of some of the noise on the web by creating a collection of news sources from around the world that are vetted by students for credibility and reliability.

The Assignment:

Each week, (12:01am Sunday to 11:59pm the following Saturday) you will be responsible for curating a stack, or playlist of links, in your Plaid Region account on Delicious. The accounts are based on geographical regions, and will be shared by 1-3 students at a time. Each member of the group will create one stack of five or more links with original commentary on the information they gather on their topic each week.

The regions are: Americas, European Eurasia, South Central Asia, East Asia-Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa. Also International Organizations

Wait, what is Delicious?

[Delicious](#) is a web-based social bookmarking site through which links from anywhere on the internet can be saved, shared and accessed from any computer at any time. Links can be organized through tags, or organizational keywords, and they can be curated into "stacks", playlists of five or more links that have been created around a central topic or theme. Tags will be incredibly important to the Plaid News Product as they make it possible to easily navigate and discover new content on the web.

Things to keep in mind:

TAG EVERYTHING! When you're saving a link, be sure to use tags to categorize and describe it for others. This includes being sure to tag geographical region (continent), geographical region (subregion), kind of news source (state-run news agency, mainstream media, print media [you can even drill down to "newspaper" or "magazine] or blog), and you can even include the slant or bias-- left, right, center, liberal, conservative-- if one is present.i

You're free to use whatever sources you think are good or relevant to your topic, and bonus points if you're able to find multimedia content. Good articles and text are important, but don't forget the important role that images play in reporting the news. Including videos, TV interviews and even news reports in a stack make the information you're collecting more engaging and interactive to your audience and to others who may find Plaid content on the web. The links you use don't have to be the newest or freshest sources on the web-- they just have to be good at illustrating or explaining the topic at hand.

What's the deal with writing commentary?

The goal of the Plaid News Project is to get people to think critically about the news they consume. When you're writing the commentary for your stack, answering these questions may get you off to a good start.

- How/why did you pick your source? What made it seem credible or not credible to you?
- How did you find your source? Did you stumble on it from Google or Google News? Did you click on it from a trackback or blog link? Was it viral on Twitter or Facebook?

It may also be helpful to include a "bad" source-- for example, a state run media source-- to show how unreliable reporting can warp or change the trajectory of a news story. And please, as this is a college course, do your best to use proper capitalization, punctuation and spelling. Not every stack has to be serious-- you can be funny!-- but remember that you are representing Virginia Tech and the World Regions course with the work you do. Purposefully inflammatory language and profanity will not be tolerated.

Here are a few other things to help you get started...

- *Pick a continent you want to learn about and read about sub-regions in your book.* Do you love, hate or belong to Team West? NATO? Are you in an economic free trade zone or in some sort of cooperative trade agreement such as the EU, NAFTA, BRIC, ASEAN, etc.? This will help you identify world leaders, political parties, and regional issues about which you can make stacks or identify cultural opinions and beliefs that interest you.

- *Identify how your region gets news.* Does your region rely mainly on highly-censored state news sources for information? Does your region have "free" public media, well-respected regional news networks or something similar? Are there any well-known bloggers or tweeters who are active in your region? In the case of some regions, like Israel/Palestine or Afghanistan, sometimes a well-informed blogger may have news or up-to-the-minute information about happenings on the ground. (A good example of this-- the guy who live-tweeted Bin Laden's capture and didn't know it, for example, or any of the active Gazans who tweet about Israeli mortar fire, checkpoints, etc. on a daily basis.)

- *Finding news may not always be easy...* If you're working on a region doesn't have positive (or any) diplomatic relations with the US, things can get tricky as western media sources may not report on them often. A good example of this would be the virtual media blackout on leaders like Khaled Meshaal of Hamas, an organization seen by the US government as a terrorist group-- he may only show up one or two times a week in English-speaking media sources, but having knowledge of another language (French, German, Arabic) or accurate translation software can help you track news about him down.

- *Don't be afraid to other social media networks.* If you see something relevant on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Quora, Wordpress, BeepI, mixi, YouTube or anywhere else... as long as you have a link, include it! Social media is one of the prime places that raw, on-the-ground reporting of violence, revolt, etc. takes place. Just remember that, in the case of breaking stories, sometimes information is reported without confirmation. If it seems too good to be true, feel free to mention that in your commentary on the subject.

One more thing-- take a look at the info below to better understand the background behind the project!

- Watch the [Know Your News](#) video from Professor Boyer to understand the concept of triangulating the news.

- Take a look at this report on [The News Literacy Project](#), covered by PBS Newshour, one of the inspirations for the Plaid News Project.

- The [News Literacy Project website](#) is also a great starting point for discovering good, solid news sources for your respective region.

- And yes, even though everyone knows how to Google, do take the time to look at these helpful and necessary [Google Search Tips](#) before setting out on the wild, uncharted internet!

Possible 20 points per stack, 1 stack per week, max 200 points. Happy stacking!

3.11 GEOGRAPHIC FILM REVIEW/SCRIPTING

For those of you that are really into international cinema, have an eye for detail, and are anxious to explore other films that are not on our viewing schedule for this semester, this assignment is for you! In a never-ending attempt to broaden the film selection used in this course, I would like to offer you the opportunity to help me scour the globe for films applicable for use in this course AND help me research the details of the film through a geographic lens.

In essence, the assignment tasks you with finding an international film and then taking notation while watching it on specific geographic, cultural, and historic details that we can use to create a learning experience from for future classes. I will have a more thorough explanation and write-up for those interested in this 25 point option (for each one you do), which you can do once a week, all semester long.

BUT HOLD ON! Like most other options in this class, you must clear the film title with me prior to doing the write-up assignment. And there is no room for duplication, so if someone does 'Slumdog Millionaire', then no one else can do a report on that for the rest of this semester. I am encouraging you to choose films you like, or that you would like to explore, but I also can make recommendations if you are not sure where to start.

In fact, I should probably insist that you schedule a meeting with me before you start this endeavor, or perhaps I can set up a group meeting for everyone if there is a lot of interest from the class. I strongly encourage you film buffs and film majors to investigate this option.

3.12 “FLASH” PODCAST QUIZZES:

At random times throughout the semester, we will suddenly post a quiz and then social-network the hell out of announcing it to you, as well as emailing you an announcement. From the point it is posted, you will have 48 hours to review the material that the quiz is on, and take the quiz...unlimited attempts on it as well. The quiz will consist of questions created from the Plaid Avenger's blog and the Professor's rants and on-line office hours, all of which will be referenced and pointed to for you in the quiz itself. It's random, it's timely, and it's on the fly. And who even knows how many points it will be worth? How exciting!
Points: ????

3.13 RANDOM ATTENDANCE BONUS

Well, this one is pretty self-explanatory. But I shall endeavor to explain to the utterly clueless. At any given time throughout the semester during class lecture on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I may get exceptionally giddy and generous and feel the need to give bonus points to everyone who is physically present in the classroom at that time. How many points? Depends on my mood and how hard I have laughed that day...perhaps +10, perhaps +20, or even more radical gifts have occurred in the past. It's all such a delicious mystery! Possible points: ?????

3.14 PLAID AVENGER CORRESPONDENTS & ARTISTS

From a distant land you want to better inform the Plaid Avenger about? Or perhaps you are into news reporting, communications, and script writing? Then you too can become a part of the World Plaid Correspondent team, helping the Avenger stay abreast of international happenings by doing some investigative reporting of your own and developing a workable script for future plaid-casts. This is a work-in-progress, so contact me personally for more details. Not for the weak-of-heart, scammers, or minimalist workers!

In addition, if there are any artist-types in class that would like to express their skills with some plaid production stuff, please contact me as well. Looking for folks specifically into building collage-type art and possibly even stencil/graffiti artists. Need say no more. Possible points: ??????

4. Course Objectives:

The overall objective of the course is to broaden and strengthen the individual's interest in the world at large; to consider how/where/why physical and cultural forces shape and define the earth we live on. Geography 1014 is a world regional survey designed to acquaint undergraduate students with a variety of geographic, historic, environmental, demographic, religious and economic characteristics of various areas of the world. The world is a big place, filled with trillions of facts and figures, billions of people, hundreds of thousands of places, and lifetimes of experience: we can only cover so much.

Readings, lectures, slides, and films will be employed to promote interest and highlight geographic themes, but are not intended as exhaustive regional surveys.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

Skill or ability

- To evaluate the causes of major historical events and their impact on the contemporary world.
- To critically analyze the media coverage of a foreign country or event from a variety of different news sources and ideological perspectives.
- To understand and interpret global current events and international issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- To describe current major regional/global issues and make predictions of how these issues will impact the future.

Knowledge

- To describe the historical, economic, cultural, social and physical characteristics of the major world regions the various state that comprise these regions; both in terms of their uniqueness and their similarities, as well as how they interact with each other in the modern world.
- To understand fundamental issues in international relations including world interdependence and of the global nature of contemporary issues.

-To comprehend and analyze relations between nations, international government and non-governmental organizations, and major global actors in historic and contemporary debate.

Beliefs and attitudes

- To possess a broad individual interest in the world at large.
- To maintain a sense of on-going engagement toward current national and international affairs.
- To empathize with diverse perspectives on global issues and events; that is, to be able and willing to see things from a different perspective while maintaining one's own.
- To develop an appreciation for the great variety of cultural forms and ways of thinking throughout the world, and to formulate a world view that uses this appreciation to become responsible global citizens
- To possess confidence to converse with others on global topics and pressing issues of our day.

5. Important Class Policies

(aka..other stuff you NEED to know!)

Email Response From Your TA

If you email your TA, please allow up to two business days (that's Monday to Friday) for a response. If your TA does not respond within two business days, then you may feel free to email again. Although your TA will make all attempts to respond to emails quickly, circumstances may prohibit a quick response.

Missed Exams/Events & Excuses

Exams can only be made up if you experience a documented personal emergency. You can not reschedule or make-up exams you plan to miss for any other reason. With this many students, we simply cannot accommodate make up exams for any other reason. So if you plan to attend your sibling's wedding, attend an event your student organization is holding, take a trip to Hawaii, hike the Appalachian Trail or anything else on the day of the exam, have fun, but simply plan to earn more points through some of the other assignments available to you.

It is likely that at some point in the semester you will fall ill or have a personal emergency that may leave you unable to attend an exam or complete a quiz. In order to make up the exam, you must (1) contact your TA or the departmental secretary (540-231-6886) **prior** to the exam, and (2) provide credible of your personal emergency. For medical emergencies, we accept excuses from Schiffert Health Center, Cooke Counseling Center, hospitals, or your personal physician. For all non-medical personal issues (for example, death in the family), the dean of students can supply you with an excuse.

Important Contacts:

- Schiffert Health Center: 540-231-6444
- Cooke Counseling Center: 540-231-6557
- Office of the Dean of Students: 540-231-3787

Please Note: Weekly quizzes can only be made up if your excuse covers the entire week of the quiz. MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ESSAY FORMAT. NO EXCEPTIONS.

My advice: Unless showing up for the exam will result in a painful death, I would not miss it. But remember, all points are optional, so if you have to miss an exam just plan to make up the points in other ways.

Posting Grades and Missing/“Incorrect” Grades—Statute of Limitations

We will try to have grades posted within one week of the assessment. Please do not emails us before that time, or your email will be ignored. If we haven't posted the grades, then we haven't received them from test scoring services. **If your grade is missing or incorrect, you must contact your TA within two weeks of the exam, movie, etc. After two weeks, no changes will be made.** For example, if you attend a movie on September 5th, we will post grades by September 12th, and you must contact us by September 19th if you have an issue with your grade. Although we try our best to make sure all grades are posted properly, it is the student's responsibility to ensure their grades are posted correctly. This policy is meant to prevent a huge influx of emails at the end of the semester.

Technical Issues on Weekly Quizzes

We do not accept technical issues as an excuse for missed weekly quizzes. In a course that relies heavily on online quizzes, **technical issues should be expected**. If your computer is experiencing problems, there are many computers available to you around campus, such as in Newman Library, Torgerson Hall, or the Math Emporium that you are free to use. Our advice is to take the quizzes early, and take them often (if you care to), because if your computer or your connection dies 10 minutes before the quiz is due, we cannot help you.

CONCERNING ON-LINE TESTS & MOVIE QUIZZES:

The University Honor system is in operation throughout this course. This applies especially to the individual component of your grade performed 'outside' of prescribed class time, i.e. the movie viewing. ALL WORK DONE OUTSIDE OF CLASS IS TO BE CONDUCTED INDEPENDENTLY!!! All on-line exams are closed-book, closed notes, done-by-yourself, independent work! And any 'sharing' of movie quiz information or skipping the film and showing up at the conclusion only to scam a quiz grade will be considered a serious violation of the University Honors system, and will be dealt with judiciously. The death penalty is encouraged.