

# Syllabus—Appendix I

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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### Guys/People/Folks:

Please go through this document carefully, because it covers almost all questions students typically ask about the course requirements. Material in this document has been divided into these sections:

- Class Participation
- Reading Assignments
- Online Course Materials
- AV Materials (films, documentaries, etc.)
- Current Affairs
- Class Lecture Notes
- Test Procedures
- Term Paper Project

### Class Participation

(a) Participation, reflecting completion of assigned readings, is mandatory (may be taken into consideration in the final computation of your course grade); therefore, you may be called on in class.

(b) Class participation in this course is defined as

- intelligently (and politely) contributing to discussions by coming well prepared to class (having completed all homework assignments for the class);
- intelligently (and politely) answering questions, when called upon, in a manner that not only reflects full attention to ongoing class proceedings but completion of all prior homework assignments for the class;
- politely asking questions on course material that you do not understand or require further clarification;
- not dominating class discussions (even if your contributions are generally thoughtful and relevant);
- politely taking the initiative in making contributions to class discussions (that is, not always waiting to be called upon).
- adhering to the policy on class notes indicated below.

(c) Class participation does NOT include asking me questions about specific course requirements and/or procedures. (If you still have questions about requirements and procedures after you have read this packet you should approach me individually, instead of taking up class time); and

(d) Class participation does not include being a class clown and/or a class jerk. A class jerk is someone who is so insecure that he/she thinks that he/she can build self-confidence by frequently interrupting class proceedings with frivolous questions and comments aimed solely at trying to show off to other class members that he/she knows

more than the teacher. If you are a class jerk you do not belong in this class. Advice: deal with your insecurity in some other way: get psychiatric help.

## Reading Assignments

(a) It is absolutely mandatory that all assigned readings be completed on time, *even if the class falls behind schedule*—meaning, reading assignments must be completed *by the date specified* in the syllabus.

(b) Participants may be called upon to summarize and discuss assigned readings (and documentary/film screenings, where applicable). If it is determined that you did not do your assigned readings you may be marked as absent from the class—which itself may carry a penalty. You may also be asked to leave the class for that day. I am sure you will agree with me that it is not fair for those who have not done their readings to “parasitize” those who have, by taking advantage of class summaries and discussions of the readings.

(c) Here are some tips on how to carry out the reading assignments in this course if you want to do well on tests/exams:

- The first order of business is to get to know the *structure/ organization* of the reading. So, if a textbook has been assigned, first carefully study its structure. For example: Does it have maps? Does it have diagrams? Does it have tables of numerical data? Does it have pictures? Are there any footnotes or endnotes? Do the chapters have headings/ subheadings? Does it have a bibliography (or a guide to suggested readings), and if so, where does it appear (at the end of the book or at the end of chapters)? Are there any study questions at the end of the chapters? Are there any questions in the margins to guide you? Who published the book? Does it have the Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data? Is the book dedicated to any one (if so, who?) What does the preface tell us? Does it have primary (original source) documents? Does the book tell us who designed it, who edited it, etc.? Is it printed on acid-free paper? Does it have appendices (and if so what are they about)? Does it have a glossary? Does it have a list of abbreviations? Does it have an index? Does the cover-design include an image (and if so what is it about)? Does the book provide us with a biography of the author? If so, who is she/he? And so on. (In other words, for all assigned textbooks you are also responsible for studying all elements of front and back matter of the book. I may test you on all this material too.)
- If a journal article or a web-based article/document is assigned, again, do the same thing: first study its structure. For example: What kind of reading is it: a newspaper article? a magazine article? an article from an academic journal? a book chapter? and so on. Does it have maps? Does it have diagrams? Does it have tables of numerical data? Does it have pictures? Is the author(s) indicated? If so, are we told who she/he is? Who published the material? (e.g. a government agency? a media outlet, such as the BBC? an organization? And so on). Does it have *explanatory* endnotes or footnotes? Is it preceded by an abstract? Does it have citations? Does it have references? If so, what system of citations is being used: *in-text* (as in APA style) or *endnote or footnote style* (as in a version of Chicago style). (I may test you on all this material too.)
- From the perspective of *content*, determine what kind of reading is it: Expository? A critique? A descriptive reading? An analytical/theoretical reading challenging current thinking? And so on. You must learn to differentiate between description and analysis. (See the writing research/term papers document available via the term paper instructions page.)
- You must *study* (not skim through) your reading material; which means reading it more than once. If you read the material only once it is quite likely that while you may understand the material as you read it, you will not be able to retain it for later recall. Consequently, it is suggested that you read the material at least twice, if not more. You are reminded that *studying* does not equal to last minute skimming of chapter(s) the night before a test. Studying implies knowing the material well via careful reading in which comprehension and retention is paramount. If you have acquired the habit of last-minute studying, you will be in for a surprise: it will not work this time. (This is not because the material you will be dealing with is overly difficult, but because of your lack of familiarity with the subject matter.) For most of you, the bulk of the material in this course will be completely new; that is, you have never come across it before at any point in your educational careers.
- After you have gone through the entire reading on the first round, the second round is where the real work of studying the reading should begin which will involve asking questions like: What is the main point of the author? In which paragraph or on which page does the author make her/his main point? Why is the author telling us this? What evidence does the author provide to make her/his point? How does the reading relate to the purpose and/or objectives of this course? And so on.

- When *studying* the readings do not concern yourself with memorizing names, dates, places and the like (except in the case of most obviously important ones.) In this course, for the most part, what you will be tested/examined on will be mostly concepts, ideas, and themes covered in the readings. *However, if the reading has graphic material then I may ask you very specific questions on that material.* Therefore, make sure that you study all maps, diagrams, pictures, etc. that may be part of the reading.
- You are strongly advised to keep a dictionary handy when studying the readings. Some of the vocabulary used in the readings will reappear in the tests/exam. I strongly urge you to purchase the following dictionary: *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. (No, the dictionary does not cost much, and yet it is a great investment.)
- I strongly recommend that you do **not** highlight readings in this course. Highlighting is a lazy person's approach to reading assignments (it is almost like cutting and pasting someone else's words). Moreover, highlighting material in this course will simply "imprison" your mind, preventing you from thinking outside of what you have highlighted. And what will happen if you discover that you have highlighted the wrong points? I am also against highlighting because people who habitually deface books by highlighting them will go on to do that to books that do not belong to them: e.g. library books.
- The best approach to reading assignments is to cultivate the life-long habit of preparing short notes on separate paper summarizing, *in your own words*, the relevant points in the reading. Do not copy material from the textbook word-for-word pretending that that constitutes studying. NOTE: the ability to determine what a reading is really about and extracting from it key relevant points is also one of the skills that this course aims to impart. This skill, however, cannot be acquired by last-minute skimming of material the night before a test!

(d) In case you want to know: The quantity of reading material I assign per week is targeted at the student with the following profile: a person who reads slow (8 minutes per average printed page); is registered for no more than 15 credit hours per session (note: full time status requires only 12 credit hours); and does not hold a job. (If you have a job you are not supposed to be registered for more than 12 credit hours and you are not supposed to work at your job for more than 20 hours per week.) If your profile does not conform to the one just outlined then please note the following: Whether you are a part-time student or a full-time student, when you complete your studies, your degrees will be worth the same; therefore, you must do the same quantity/ quality of work. Simply because you are taking too many credit hours and/or you have a job does not mean I must lower academic standards. I, like all teachers, have a responsibility to society to ensure that the courses you take at this school are not diluted in value. The importance of this point cannot be underestimated. I am sure, for example, you expect me to be fully qualified to teach in this school because the value of my educational qualifications was not compromised by teachers diluting my courses in order to accommodate my personal commitments. (Apply this reasoning to other professionals too: doctors, lawyers, engineers, airplane pilots, high school teachers, etc. You expect all of these professionals to be not only qualified but "super qualified" when you have to use their services. So, tell me, why do you think you are so special that you should be exempt from this expectation by those who may someday use your services?)

## Online Course Materials

(a) All links to online course materials (including, by the way, the syllabus packet itself) will begin with the *class home page*—usually located in the left column of the page or at the bottom of the page. ← Read this sentence again.

(b) In this day and age, especially in a country such as this one, where students of your age are almost permanently anchored digitally to the internet for all sorts of purposes, it is your responsibility to determine how to access the online course materials via these links. Excuses that you did not know how to access these materials when the rest of your classmates were able to do so will be viewed as an indication of either laziness or plain dishonesty. While you are, of course, encouraged to see the instructor if you are unable to determine how to navigate the class home page be extremely careful about not succumbing to "learned helplessness"—something that the instructor views with great distaste.

## AV Material (films, documentaries, etc.)

(a) You may be asked to see, outside class, a number of films or other AV material. If so, you will obtain them either from the campus library, or in a few cases through a link on the class home page. I will very rarely, if ever, assign you AV material to see outside class that is not accessible from the class home page or is not available in the library.

(b) About the links to AV material on the class home page: they are available through pages titled “Course AV Material I.../ II.../ III...” Make sure you study all these pages to ensure that you know what is available through these pages. (Note: not all the materials accessible through these pages are relevant to this particular course.)

(c) If there is no link for the material on the class home page, then locate the material in the library by first going to the UB library’s home page (<http://library.buffalo.edu>) and then clicking on the catalog tab and doing a title search. Notice that on the catalog *results* page you can use a format filter—they appear in the left margin of the search results page—to narrow your search if way too many results pop up. (The format filter in this case will be “video (DVD)” Do I have to tell you everything?) When you find the item write down its *call number* and take it to the circulation desk in the library where the item is located. **Do NOT go to the circulation desk to request the material without the call number in hand.** ← Read this sentence again. (By the way, you can always ask a *reference* librarian for help in finding out an AV item’s *call number* and to determine where in the library the item is located. One of the most *knowledgeable* and *helpful* librarians I have come across in this school and who has kindly agreed to help students in this class can be reached via her [biographical page](#).)

(b) If the material is available in the library, then to ensure that everyone has access to it, it will most likely be loaned to you on a two-hourly basis. (No, I have no control over the length of time for the loan.) If you still need to view the material, wait for about half an hour and then go back to check it out—assuming no one else has checked it out in the meantime.

(c) If you are really desperate, *because of poor planning on your part*, you may have the option of buying/renting the material (especially if it’s a feature film) for, usually, a nominal fee from such commercial online outlets as Blockbuster.com, Netflix.com, or Amazon.com—assuming they have it. (See, for example, the class home page for film links to the Amazon.com site.)

(d) The part of a test/exam that covers AV materials will usually (but not always) be open notebook. In other words, it is in your interest to take adequate *handwritten* notes on all AV material you see in and out of class. (Printed material of any kind will not usually be permitted.) From the perspective of test/exams, AV material in this class must be considered as visual equivalents of course readings.

(e) How do you take notes on AV material for this course? First, forget that you are watching the film for entertainment. Second, create and write down “key words” as you go along to help you jog your memory regarding the scenes, storyline of the film, etc. (Do NOT attempt to write a “film script” of the film; it is not necessary.) Third, pay attention to how the film is structured (see below). (By the way, a *shot* is a continuous filming of an action, view, etc., while a *scene*, in general, is a combination of shots that are edited together to create an episode.)

(f) You may be tested on the following aspects of AV materials you view for this course:

- Specific details of the *content* of the AV material (the plot/sub-plot) to determine that you actually did view and comprehend the material—instead of “sleepwalking” through it.
- The purpose of asking you to view the AV material. That is, you will be tested on its relevance with respect to the objectives of this course. When you have finished viewing any AV material for this course, you must immediately begin the process of cogitation, at the heart of which will be the question: So, how does this AV material fit in with the course topic? (Question: what does cogitation mean?)
- Specific details of the *format* and *structure* of the AV material, and in the case of feature films, including: the PRINCIPAL film credits that appear at the beginning or sometimes at the end of the film; the soundtrack; the film score; the sound effects; whether the film is in color or in black and white (or a combination of both); and so on. Note: if it is a music video, I may also ask you questions on the lyrics—I will tell you how to access them—the musical instruments used, and the scenes. (By the way, a good source for information on film credits of an assigned film is [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com).)

- If you are watching a DVD and the film/documentary is preceded by trailers from other films/documentaries I may also ask you questions on the trailers.

## Current Affairs

In this course it is assumed that being knowledgeable and informed about the world around you (at all levels: local, national and international) is not only a requirement of being an educated person, but it is also a required qualification for citizenship in a democracy. In a democracy ignorance is not an option available to the citizenry. Therefore, participants are REQUIRED to keep up with current national and international events—this is also, in a sense, a current affairs course—by watching and/or reading the following recommended news media:

- [Ms. Magazine](#), [Mother Jones](#), [Time](#), [New York Times](#), [In These Times](#), and [The Nation](#). (Note: there are more sources under links to course-related websites on the class home page.)
- These web accessible independent news media: [Consortium News](#); [Real News Network](#); and [Aljazeera News](#)
- Evening TV News on public television ([PBS Newshour](#)). (PBS is the channel that carries Sesame Street!)
- Morning and evening news on [National Public Radio](#) (NPR) transmitted via a local radio station (WNED FM 88.7).
- [BBC](#) (British Broadcasting Corporation) world service news from London, broadcast on WNED FM 88.7 radio from 11:00pm to 5:00 am daily.
- TV News at night on the Canadian TV channel operated by the [CBC](#) (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) that usually begins at 10:00pm.
- If you have access to cable TV: C-Span I and C-Span II; A & E; Discovery; TLC; History, BBC America.

NOTE: I may from time to time include questions on issues relevant to the course from current affairs on tests or in class discussions. Since all the above news sources also maintain their own web sites, you have no excuse!

## Class Lecture Notes

(a) It is highly, highly recommended that you take careful notes in class in a *separate* “single-subject” notebook. Important point to note: the kind of knowledge this course deals with is not the same as the type of knowledge you may be familiar with if you are a major in a STEM field.

This course deals with the kind of knowledge that you commonly find on radio (e.g. [On the Media](#), [National Public Radio](#)—[NPR](#)); in newspapers (e.g. [The Guardian](#), [The New York Times](#)); in documentaries; on television (e.g. [PBS Newshour](#), [The History Channel](#), [C-Span](#)); and on the internet (e.g. [Consortium News](#), [www.BBC.com](#), [www.c-span.org](#), [http://thenation.com](#)) That is, it is the type of knowledge common to subjects like history, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, and so on, which requires you to *think* and *analyze* and not simply memorize facts (in order to regurgitate later). In other words, very often, in addition to facts, this knowledge is what may be described as *discursive* knowledge. (Note: The word “discursive” has several meanings; the relevant one here is the one that implies careful reasoning from the perspectives of disputation and analysis. STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math.)

(b) In this course, taking notes in class is considered an aspect of class participation.

(c) You must acquire the skill of taking careful and *comprehensive* class notes (but not necessarily detailed notes). Here is a quick test you can do to make sure that your notes adequately cover what was said in class lectures: Ask yourself these four basic questions:



- What was/were the main point(s) made in the class lecture?
- What examples were used in support of the main point(s)
- Was any audio/visual material presented in class—if so, can you describe the material?
- Were any instructions given or announcements made in class—if so, did you write them down?

(d) If you lack note-taking skills find others in class who can assist you in augmenting your notes.

(e) Some or all tests in this course may be “open notes;” therefore, access to comprehensive notes will be an advantage.

(f) When taking notes on class readings this is the procedure you must follow:

- First go through the entire reading without taking any notes just to make sure that you can fully comprehend what the reading is about and how it relates to the class. (See the section on Reading Assignments above.)
- Then go through the reading again carefully and take notes on the main points (not the details). Your notes must at least cover
  - (i) *key* (important) words/phrases;
  - (ii) main theme(s)/thesis;
  - (iii) brief references to any examples presented in support of the main theme(s)/thesis; and
  - (iv) very brief descriptions of any illustrations (pictures, cartoons, graphs, etc.)
- If the reading has headings/subheadings then structure your notes on the basis of these headings.

(g) If you are being given extra-credit for keeping a class notebook/journal then you must adhere to these instructions:

Keep a notebook/journal of **all class lecture proceedings** (that is *everything* that is covered during *lecture classes*, including announcements and any AV material that is presented). However, your notebook must be in the following format:

- (i) Notes must be in a *separate* “single-subject” *regular size* spiral lined notebook. (Absolutely no other kind of notebook is acceptable. If you can’t afford one I will buy one for you—let me know.)
- (ii) All entries must be legibly and neatly written.
- (iii) All entries must be separated by relevant headings where possible.
- (iv) All entries must be clearly dated.
- (v) If you are absent on a particular day leave that page blank (and mark it with the word “absent”).
- (vi) All entries must begin on a separate page for *each* class session.
- (vii) Any other notes you take for this course outside class must be written in the back of the notebook.
- (viii) Notes for other courses you are taking should not be in this notebook.
- (ix) Write your full name on the first page at the top or somewhere on the front or back cover.

**NOTE:** failure to meet any ONE or more of these requirements will **completely** nullify this assignment as extra-credit—reminder: extra-credit means extra work for me. ← *Read this sentence again.*

## Term Paper Project

See separate instructions elsewhere in this syllabus packet.

## Test Procedures

- (a) The tests will, generally, not be cumulative in terms of reading material. That is, except in rare circumstances, you will not be tested on the same sections of the course twice. (This, by the way, is one of the major differences between a test and an exam.)
- (b) With the exception of questions on the syllabus and AV material, tests will comprise mainly (but not always) conceptual questions, not factual questions. A conceptual question is one that aims to determine your knowledge and/or understanding of a theory, concept or idea. A factual question is one that requires you to know a fact (such as a date, or a name or a place, etc.) Conceptual questions address the thinking part of your brain, whereas factual questions address the memorization part of your brain. The reason why I prefer to ask conceptual type of questions in my tests is that I want you to learn how to think, not how to memorize. In this course, thinking is more important than memorizing facts.
- (c) Tests will sometimes cover only a portion of class time. Therefore, do not assume that no teaching will occur on the days when tests are given. (Additionally, do NOT skip classes that immediately follow a test on the assumption that nothing of substance will be covered because you have just had a test.)
- (d) For obvious reasons (ever heard of something called the “dumb” phone?) once the test has begun you are not permitted to leave the classroom until you have completed and handed in your test. Therefore, make sure that you go to the bathroom BEFORE the test begins.
- (e) Each test will cover in varying proportions SELECT materials from lectures and class discussions, reading assignments, and documentary/ film screenings (where applicable).
- (f) Students caught cheating on tests will automatically get an 'F' grade for the entire course. Other punitive measures may also be sought.
- (g) The test dates are specified in the separate schedule in this packet, however, please note that the dates may be subject to change. If a date for a test is changed, it will almost always be in the direction of postponement.
- (h) In large classes, tests will *sometimes* (that is not always) be of the multiple-choice variety. Therefore, please bring to class a pencil on test dates. NOTE: When you select your options in the multiple-choice tests, your selection must reflect class discussions and/or readings. In other words, your choice must not be determined solely by the content of the questions without reference to course material and/or class discussions. You should note that when I compose the incorrect options I try to do so from the perspective of the person who has not come to class regularly and/or has not done their work. That is, I present the type of options that they think are correct merely by guessing on the basis of incorrect knowledge derived from outside the course—may be from their high school days, or from watching TV, or from reading a newspaper, etc. Not surprisingly, you will sometimes come across two or more options that appear on the surface to be identical and correct. However, if you have done your work you should be able to spot the difference between them, and thereby choose the correct one. In some cases, however, you will, in reality, be presented with two correct options. In such instances select the option that provides the most complete information relative to the other options. NOTE: for all questions, select only one option per question (multiple options are not permitted for a single question).
- (i) Whenever you are shown (or asked to see) audio-visual material (films and documentaries) you should always assume that questions may be asked on it (see below).
- (j) My tests are not designed to be intelligence tests. I am not a psychologist I am not in the business of trying to measure your intelligence with my tests. The tests only measure how much studying (includes comprehension) you did (if any!) of course material. If you do badly on a test it is not a reflection on your intelligence, but your class attendance and studying habits.
- (k) The tests will be designed with the following objectives in mind:

- i) provide a means for impartial assessment of your learning performance;

- ii) serve as a mechanism for determining weaknesses in my teaching and/or your learning;
- iii) serve as a means of summarizing course material covered; and
- iv) determine if you are doing your best in meeting the learning requirements of this course.

(l) No test can cover everything that is assigned in a course. Moreover, you are not doing this course in order to take tests. Therefore, if there are no questions on material that you bust your guts studying—most likely at the last minute with an “all-nighter”—do not despair; you have not wasted your time because you are now more knowledgeable than you were before (which is why you are in this course in the first place—smile).

(m) All tests in this course will cover *some or all* material specified in: (a) the syllabus packet; (b) the announcements on your class home page on the web; and (c) announcements in class.

(n) Tests/exams will **NOT** be given on an individual basis prior to the assigned time and date under almost ANY circumstances. ← **Read this sentence again.**

(o) What if you miss a test? See policy on attendance and missed work in **Syllabus—Appendix II**

(p) If a test is a take-home test (OR if an in-class test has been converted into a take-home test by mutual arrangement) then you must get a B+ or above on the test (otherwise your score will be converted to a zero). ← **Read this sentence again.**  
NOTE the following about take-home tests:

- i) The correct procedure for taking a take-home test is to, first, study the assigned materials that the test is supposed to cover (going by the syllabus and/or announcements in class and/or class home page) once more, and then, second, to proceed to do the test. If you try to take a short-cut by first going through the test questions and then “rummaging” through the materials looking for paragraphs that you *think* provide you with answers to the test questions then you may be in for a nasty surprise!
- ii) I prefer that you do the test on your own (however, I will have no way of finding out if you did the test collaboratively). By the way, here is a question for you to ponder: how can you trust the person with whom you decide to the test that she/he will come up with the right answers? Do you know how the person is doing in class in terms of test scores?

(q) If a scantron sheet is provided for your test answers, then note the following:

- i) The sheet must be completed **AFTER** you have completed the test (but making sure that you have enough time left) so that no erasures are necessary and there are no mistakes.
- ii) Make sure that you fill in the appropriate answer bubbles carefully, as instructed at the top of the scantron sheet. Note: your scantron score supersedes any other score because it is your responsibility to ensure that the answers you indicate on it are the ones you intended.
- iii) Be super careful about ensuring that you have bubbled in your last name (-space-) first name (per school records), and Student ID # *on the back of the sheet.*
- iv) **Failure to comply with these requirements will result in the rejection of the test by the scantron scanning machine at the computing center (you will be assigned ZERO points for the test).** ← **Read this sentence again.**
- v) As indicated above, once your final course grade is submitted at the end of the semester it will not be changed *under any circumstances.* Therefore, if you took a test and your score is missing then it means that your test was not scanned by the machine at the computing center. (No. The computing center does not send me names of those whose tests were not scanned. And why should they?) **Policy reminder: as also indicated in the test instructions, if the computing center does not scan your test because of missing and/or incorrectly placed information sheet then the test will carry ZERO points!** Stupidity, which I define as intellectual laziness, must carry a penalty (most especially when it inconveniences others).



(f) Graded tests are not usually returned to students. Therefore, if you would like to go over the grading of your test please come and see the instructor. Note: the procedure for going over your test will require you to bring with you your notes, textbook, and other relevant materials so that you can consult them for each incorrect response to determine what the correct response should have been. Tests, as indicated above, serve as an additional learning tool in this course.