

## WORLD COUNTRY TESTS AND CURRENT EVENTS

In past quarters the world country exam has been a standard feature of the course. Some would argue that rote memorization has no place in a modern university education since it does little to promote critical reasoning skills. Yet memorization of taxonomies still plays a major role in many disciplines – geology, chemistry, or biology – and mastery of basic class labels provides the foundation for subsequent critical thinking. The same is true with geography. Moreover, basic knowledge of the global political boundaries is fundamental to citizenship in a democracy. Our political votes and economic votes (product purchases) should be informed by the global reach of their outcomes.

Toward that end, one of the course requirements is to pass (70% or higher) two country quizzes that will be administered each week during lecture. Each country quiz will consist of a randomly selected set of ten countries from three continents/global regions. A map will be displayed in class and you will be required to write down the ten country names on a piece of notebook paper. After passing two quizzes you are finished with the requirement for the quarter and you are free to leave class at the start of subsequent quizzes. If you never manage to pass two quizzes at 70% or higher you will be assigned the average of your four highest quiz grades. A comprehensive list of country names and an outline map of world countries is available in PDF form on the course website. If you would prefer a hard copy please ask your section leader.

Knowing the location of a country is a good starting point for global awareness, but location is somewhat meaningless in the absence of context. Context can be gained directly through direct experience (travel) or through current events. For example, most people in the U.S. probably have more definite notions about the location, the culture, and the economy of Afghanistan because of media exposure it received after the September 11 terrorist attack. On the other hand the news media industry tends to have intensive coverage with a narrow focus. To promote awareness of world events, and to help you learn the locations of countries, you can earn extra credit points by submitting current event reports. Each report will be worth one extra credit point. Report guidelines follow.

1. The news story should originate in the mainstream print media and be less than one week old. Good print sources include the *Santa Barbara Newspress*, *L.A. Times*, *Christian Science News Monitor*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, or a weekly new magazine (*The Economist*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. New and World Report*). The report should contain a full citation to the primary source – *newspaper or magazine name, article title, date, section, and page(s)*.
2. Each report should be two to three paragraphs in length. The first paragraph should provide a synopsis of the news story in 100-200 words. The second and third paragraph should provide relevant background information on the country from the Encyclopedia Britannica. The Encyclopedia Britannica is available online through the UCSB library webpage (<http://www.library.ucsb.edu/epubs/books-frames.html>).
3. After two reports have been submitted for any given country it is no longer eligible for other reports. All of the reports will be posted on the course website so you should check it before writing a report. The course website contains a sample report for Swaziland.
4. Email a digital version of your report to Prof. Sweeney. Either Word (\*.doc) or WordPerfect (\*.wpd) versions are acceptable.