Tufts University
Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy
Fletcher School of International Law and Diplomacy

NUTR 229 / DHP D-230
Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergencies
Fall 2016

Class Meetings: Monday afternoon, 3:15 – 6:15 pm, September 12 – December 12, 2016
(Total of 13 sessions, no class on October 10)

Tufts University Boston Campus. Jaharis 118
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Instructor: Daniel Maxwell
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Feinstein Center: Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00 (by appointment)
Appointments: ann.obrien@tufts.edu

Teaching Asst: Jeeyon Janet Kim
Janet.Kim@tufts.edu

Office hours: Friedman School: By appointment

Graduate Credits: 1 credit

Prerequisites: Graduate Student Status

Course Description:
The past two decades have witnessed a major transformation of humanitarian action. The geopolitical changes resulting from the end of the Cold and the global war on terror have profoundly changed the environment in which humanitarian action takes place. These changes—and proposed ways of responding to them—have triggered heated debates about both philosophical and operational issues within the humanitarian community. The range of humanitarian actors has broadened to include the military and, increasingly, for-profit firms. A range of humanitarian actors and agencies has emerged from the Middle East and the global South, alongside or outside of the traditional Western, UN-led humanitarian system. Long-held principles are questioned or discarded, with humanitarian action no longer seen by many belligerents as either neutral or impartial. The “complex emergencies” of the 1990s and early 2000s have seemingly metamorphosed into “protracted crises,” with some 70% of the humanitarian budget now spent on “emergencies” lasting five years or longer. Despite the higher media attention to rapid-onset natural disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan or the Nepal earthquake,
roughly 70-80% of the actual humanitarian budget is devoted to conflict-related emergencies. Conflict emergencies are the central focus of this class, but it is increasingly clear that there are political and human-made elements to all crises, so some of the old categories (such as “complex emergencies” or “natural disasters”) are no longer very helpful descriptions.

Some observers contend that the role of humanitarian action has been reduced to that of a safety net against the most egregious impacts of the globalization and climate change, and suggest it is time to rethink the whole enterprise. Others believe the present—with more higher levels of assessed humanitarian need than at any time in the past seventy years—is a time for action, not the time for reconsidering first principles. In May 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit convened governments, donors, agencies and humanitarian actors to review the current situation, future threats, and commit to different ways of working.

This class will challenge students to consider all of these: the principles, analytical perspectives, and the actions required, to protect the lives and dignity of crisis- and conflict-affected groups—including recent developments around the World Humanitarian Summit. This class will introduce students to a broad range of research and evidence that constitutes our knowledge on humanitarian action in complex emergencies, and to the key ethical and policy debates, and practical dilemmas that surround contemporary humanitarian action. The overall objective is to enable students to gain the ability to understand and keep abreast of a rapidly evolving field. This is not a “how-to” class, but there is a strong emphasis on the practical application of this knowledge. The course simultaneously treats humanitarian action as a phenomenon to be understood and as a practice that urgently needs to be improved.

**Course Objectives:**
This multi-disciplinary course will cover a broad range of subjects, and has a number of objectives. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Outline historical perspectives on humanitarian action;
- Describe the ethical framework of humanitarian action and be able to apply international humanitarian law, principles, and codes of conduct to humanitarian action in complex emergencies, and outline major debates surrounding these frameworks;
- Utilize the main analytical frameworks (conflict analysis, famine theory, livelihoods analysis) for addressing the protection of life, livelihoods, rights and safety of people caught in complex emergencies;
- Critically and quickly read, interpret and apply research on humanitarian action;
- Analyze the political economy of conflict and humanitarian assistance;
- Describe the main critiques of humanitarian action;
- Outline the ethical and practical implications of incorporating human rights in humanitarian action;
- Utilize methodologies for improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action;
- Describe the evolving nature of conflict, crisis, and the architecture of the humanitarian system.

Specific weekly objectives are spelled out below.
Texts or Materials:
There are three required books for the course. Recommended books make more in-depth reading, but are not assigned. Because of copyright restrictions, most book readings are on the recommended list only. For each week, we will post required readings on Trunk. When books are assigned as required readings, copies of the texts will be put on reserve at both Hirsh and Ginn libraries.

Required texts:

Sphere Project. 2011. *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.* Geneva, The Sphere Project, Geneva (available on line). Note: this text is not intended to be read in its entirety. But the student is expected to know its contents and how to use it.


Other recommended books:


**On Reserve in Ginn and Sackler Libraries.**

**Recommended humanitarian websites with which students should become familiar**

- Feinstein International Center, Tufts University [http://fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)
- The Humanitarian Practice Network [www.odihpn.org](http://www.odihpn.org)
- Integrated Regional Information Network [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)
- Relief Web [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)
- Alert Net [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)
- FEWSNET [www.fews.net](http://www.fews.net)
- PHAP (Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection) [www.phap.org](http://www.phap.org)
- The Sphere Project [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)
- Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)
- The Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance (Formerly People in Aid, and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Int’l.) [http://www.chsalliance.org](http://www.chsalliance.org)
- ACAPS Project [www.acaps.org](http://www.acaps.org)

**Websites of a few of the major humanitarian agencies**

- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)
- International Committee of the Red Cross [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)
- Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)
- The World Food Programme [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)
- Oxfam [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)
- World Vision [www.wvi.org](http://www.wvi.org)
- CARE [www.care.org](http://www.care.org)
- Save the Children [www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)
Students are encouraged to explore these websites (and look for others!) for information throughout the course.

**Academic Conduct:**
Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School’s Policies and Procedures manual (http://nutrition.tufts.edu/student/documents) and Tufts University policies (http://uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/documents/HandbookAcademicIntegrity.pdf). *It is the responsibility of each student to understand and comply with these standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.*

**Classroom Conduct:**
There will be one three-hour class each week, led by Dan Maxwell and several guest lecturers. Course announcements, presentation notes, assigned readings, team assignments, case study assignments and exams are all provided on the course website on Trunk — https://trunk.tufts.edu/xsl-portal.

**Evaluation and Grading:**
The course grade will be a combination of the group case studies (20%), the written papers (15% each), class participation, small-group discussion and the Lake Chad case study (10%), and the final exam (40%).

In brief, each student will be responsible for the following. For more detailed information on all assignments and the criteria for grading them, see “Course Assignment” Notes.

- **Readings:** Students should be prepared for each class by completing the required readings and reflecting on them in advance.

- **Group case studies:** Each student will participate in a group presentation in class of a case study related to one session of the course. Topics for the class presentations will be based on the course syllabus and the presentations will usually be presented the same week as the related topic in class. Sign up for case studies will take place during Week 2. We will try our best to assign everyone to their first or second choice. Each student in the class is expected to participate in the preparation and presentation of group analysis.

- **Final case study.** There will also be a final in-class case study for the second last class—focusing on the Lake Chad Basin Crisis—a multi-country, multi-causal (and largely forgotten) crisis. This will require some additional teamwork.

- **Brief papers:** Each student will write two brief papers during the course of the semester related to a theme of the course. These papers will be in the form of a “professional brief,” roughly 1,000-1,500 words in length. The first will be an exercise on principles and law: students will be asked to choose one of two cases and explore the issues arising regarding
humanitarian action, humanitarian law, and humanitarian principles in given contexts. The second will be an exploration of one theme growing out of the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016.

- **Participation/group discussions:** Due to the anticipated size of the class, we will rely on discussion in groups of about six students on various occasions throughout the semester. Students will explore the readings of the class in these groups, based on discussion questions from the instructor.

- **Exams:** A final (open book) exam will have five or six essay questions that will ask you to synthesize material from the readings, class presentations and discussions to answer. Each student will select three to answer (one might be assigned, with the other two left to the choice of the individual student). The exam will be available for downloading from the course website on “Trunk” on December 12, and will be due on December 16 (dates to be confirmed closer to the time).

**A word about the assigned reading:**
This class requires a lot of reading, but the intent in assigning this reading is not that students commit to reading every word. Some of the reading comes from lengthy reports or documents that define important issues, or set important policy directions in the field of humanitarian action. The idea is to get a sense of what these documents say, where they come from, and how they influence the field of humanitarian action. This can and should be done without reading the entire document. For better or worse, learning how to quickly digest documents like this is an important professional skill—whether you go into humanitarian action or not. While not everyone is a speed-reader, the intent is that the readings in this course shouldn’t take more than 7-8 hours per week. Students who are having trouble keeping up with the reading should speak to Dan or Janet, or attend one of the reading workshops available on campus. The recommended reading is intended for students who are particularly interested in the topic, and who would like to dig deeper into specific topics.

**Assessment and Grading:**
The assignments, reading materials, and all announcements will be posted on the Friedman School classroom management website, "Trunk" [https://trunk.tufts.edu/xsl-portal](https://trunk.tufts.edu/xsl-portal). All students will have access to Trunk upon registration, and the course site will be open access for the first week or two until everyone has registered.

**Assignments and Submission Instructions:**
Assignments received after their deadline will not be accepted or graded unless extension is approved in advance. Students who are unable to complete an assignment exam on time for any reason should notify the instructor prior to the deadline.

**Accommodation of Disabilities:**
Students with documented disabilities are entitled to academic accommodation appropriate to their needs. If you require accommodations for this course, please contact the instructor confidentially prior to the end of the second week of classes.
**Course Schedule:**
Note: Subject to change at instructor’s discretion or due to scheduling conflicts

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session No. and Topic</th>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Dan</td>
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<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>2. Historical foundations, and</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Intro to ethics</td>
<td>Sign up for Grp Case Studies</td>
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<td>contemporary update (WHS)*</td>
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<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>3. Humanitarian principles</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Antonio Donini/ Norah Niland;</td>
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<td>Grp. Discussion</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
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<td>Dan</td>
<td>Alex de Waal Grp. Discussion</td>
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<td>Dan</td>
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<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>7. Food security and famine theory*</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Head Count case study</td>
<td>Brief Paper #2 topic due; Sign up for Lake Chad Basin Case Study</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>8. Overview of livelihoods analysis</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Grp. Discussion</td>
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<td>Nov. 14</td>
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<td>Dan</td>
<td>Grp. Discussion; Exercise</td>
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<td>10. Working in complex emergencies</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
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<td>11. Professionalizing humanitarian action</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Grp. Discussion</td>
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<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>12. The changing nature of crisis*</td>
<td>Dan</td>
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<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>13. The evolving architecture of</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Wrap up</td>
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<td>Dec. 19</td>
<td><strong>Final exam week</strong></td>
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*Please view presentation prior to class*
Course Topics, Learning Objectives, and Assignments

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Week 1: *What is humanitarianism in the 21st century? An introduction to humanitarian action through a case study*  
(September 12, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Outline the contents and expectations of the course
2. Know the administrative procedures for the course
3. Describe the confusion of working in a major complex emergency through a case study

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**
Bennett, Christina, Michael Foley, Sara Pantuliano 2016. “Time to let go: A three point proposal to change the humanitarian system.” London: HPG (Briefing version).


**B. Recommended Reading:**


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Week 2: *Historical foundations: Perspectives on humanitarian history.*  
(September 19, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Describe the historical perspectives on humanitarian action
2. Note the major epochs of humanitarian strategy and action
3. Classify the different schools of thought on humanitarianism
Assignment:
1. Sign up for Group Case Study

Preparation for class:

A. Online Presentation

B. Required Reading:


C. Recommended Reading:


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Week 3: *Humanitarian principles and codes of conduct*
(September 26, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Describe major perspectives on ethical conduct of humanitarian action
2. Summarize humanitarian principles and codes of conduct

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


**B. Recommended Reading (Note: Required for students assigned to Debate 1):**


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**Week 4: International Humanitarian Law**

(October 3, 2016 – ICRC Representative)

**Learning objectives:**

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

1. Describe the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to contemporary humanitarian action
2. Note the dilemmas of IHL in contemporary crises

**Assignment:**

1. Case Study Group #1

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading**


International Committee of the Red Cross. “International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts”. Geneva, ICRC. Pages 26-33 on humanitarian access and protection of medical facilities / personnel and 38-59 on means and methods of warfare (cyber, autonomous weapons, explosive weapons in populated areas and nuclear weapons)

Modirzadeh, N. 2014 "International Law and Armed Conflict in Dark Times: A Call for Engagement," Opinion Note, International Review of the Red Cross,

B. Recommended Reading:
Heba Aly. 2015. "No Deal to Strengthen the Geneva Conventions," IRIN. Available at: http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2015/12/10/no-deal-strengthen-respect-geneva-conventions


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Week 5: Conflict analysis and the political economy of violence
(October 17, 2016 – Dan Maxwell & Alex de Waal)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Note the changing dynamics of conflict
2. Apply alternative means of analyzing conflict and understanding the impact of conflict
3. Describe the interaction of humanitarian programming and conflict
4. Describe conflict sensitive programming

Assignment:
1. Brief paper #1 due
Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


Peruse several of the following “how to” documents on conflict analysis:


B. Recommended Reading:


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**Week 6: Information and the evidence in humanitarian action**  
(October 24, 2016 – Dan Maxwell; Roxanne Krystalli)

**Learning objectives:**  
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:  
1. Describe what evidence is and why humanitarian action has not been evidence-based  
2. Note major humanitarian information systems and how technology and evolving practice has changed them  
3. Quickly read, digest, interpret, and apply research on humanitarian action

**Assignment:**  
1. Case Study Group #1

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Online presentation on evidence in humanitarian action**

**B. Required Reading:**  


**C. Recommended Reading:**  


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Week 7: Food Security: Famine theory, entitlements, and complex emergencies
(October 31, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Describe the history of definitions and explanations for famine
2. Summarize entitlement theory and the underpinning of contemporary famine theory
3. Apply famine theory to the analysis of contemporary famines and food security crises

Assignments:
1. Brief paper #2 topic due
2. Sign up for Lake Chad Basin case study

Preparation for class:

A. Online Presentation
B. Required Reading:


Peruse (on Somalia):


C. Recommended Reading:


Note: there is also a virtual volume on “Famine” released in 2011 by Disasters, after the famine in Somalia: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-7717/homepage/virtual_issue__refugees_and_the_displaced.htm](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-7717/homepage/virtual_issue__refugees_and_the_displaced.htm)

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**Week 8: Protecting lives and livelihoods – the livelihoods framework and approach**

(November 7, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**

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

1. Describe the livelihoods framework and the contemporary derivatives of the livelihoods framework
2. Apply the livelihoods framework to humanitarian action in complex emergencies

**Assignment:**

1. Case Study Group #3

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**

Mazurana, Dyan and Daniel Maxwell. 2016. Secure Livelihoods in Conflict: What have we learned.

Young, Helen and Lisa Goldman. 2015. “Livelihoods, natural resources, and post-conflict peacebuilding” Routledge. *(Read Green “Social Identity, Natural Resources, and Peacebuilding” and Young and Goldman “Managing Natural Resources for Livelihoods: Helping Post-Conflict Communities Survive and Thrive”)*


B. Recommended Reading:


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Week 9: Rights and humanitarian protection
(November 14, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Note the theme of human rights in humanitarian action and rights-based approaches (RBA)
2. Describe the “responsibility to protect” (R2P)
3. Describe and apply principles of humanitarian protection issues in complex emergencies

Assignment:
1. Case Study Group #4

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


South, Ashley et al. 2012. “Local to Global Protection in Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. Network Paper No. 72. Humanitarian Practice Network. Read Chapters 1 & 3 and select a case study to review.


B. Recommended Reading (Required for those assigned to Debate 3):


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**Week 10: Working in complex emergencies: Protecting lives, dignity, and livelihoods**  
(November 21, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Apply the livelihoods framework to humanitarian action
2. Discuss the ethical and operational dilemmas of livelihoods applications in complex emergencies
3. Describe conflict sensitive approaches in programming

**Assignment:**
1. Brief Paper #2 due

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**

Harvey, Paul and Sarah Bailey. 2015. Cash transfer programming and the humanitarian system: Background Note for the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers. London: ODI.


B. Recommended Reading:


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Week 11: Professionalizing humanitarian action
(November 28, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Summarize the internal reforms within the humanitarian movement since Rwanda
2. Apply Sphere guidelines in a complex emergency

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3. Describe the dilemmas of improving program quality in humanitarian response

Assignment:
1. Case Study Group #5

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:

Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation with DARA. 2014. “Now or never: Making humanitarian aid more effective”


The SPHERE Project. 2011. *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*. Sphere Project, Geneva. (Peruse and familiarize yourself with the contents—don’t try to read the whole thing!)


Knox-Clarke, Paul and Leah Campbell. Exploring Coordination in Humanitarian Clusters. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI.

B. Recommended Reading:


Week 12: *The changing nature of risk and crisis*  
(December 5, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Note the changing nature of humanitarian crises  
2. Describe the metamorphosis of the Syria crisis through a case study  
3. Discuss the implications for humanitarian action

**Assignment:**
1. Lake Chad Basin Case Study

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**


**B. Recommended Reading:**


C. Lake Chad Basin Case Study:

New York: OCHA.

Conflict in the Lake Chad region continues to impact livelihoods activities and food access.

WFP. 2016. mVAM Food Security Monitoring. (In January 2016, WFP began phone-based data collection and food security monitoring in Nigeria). Reports are posted to:
http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/nigeria.html

UN News Centre. 2016. Root causes of Boko Haram threat in Lake Chad Basin must be tackled – UN political chief.


http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/08/03/%E2%80%9Dnew-terrible%E2%80%9D

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Week 13: The evolving architecture of humanitarianism/the future of humanitarian action
(December 12, 2016 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this week, students will be able to:
1. Note the current architecture of humanitarianism
2. Summarize proposals for change in humanitarian architecture

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


B. Recommended Reading:


