Diplomacy Lab (officially IS/PSCI 4034 Topics in Diplomacy Lab) is conducted as a 3-credit force-add only course. Students accepted onto research teams work on a semester-long “policy advice” group research project for a bureau or office at the U.S. Department of State, with their final project submitted to the corresponding DoS office at the end of the semester, as well as the possibility of an in-person or teleconference presentation for that office (depending on project requirements.) Since many projects are multidisciplinary in nature, Diplomacy Lab is open to students from all majors, pertaining to requirements and needed skills for each independent research project.

For more information, contact Chris Price (IS/PSCI Experiential Learning Coordinator) at chprice5@vt.edu, or arrange a meeting with him in 119 Major Williams Hall.
The Impact of English on Violent Extremism

Regional English Language Office for Central and East Asia
US Embassy Tanzania (Dar es Salaam): Educational and Cultural Affairs

Research Leader: Chris Price chprice5@vt.edu

Overview:
The U.S. State Department’s Office of English Language Programs, through its Regional English Language Offices (RELOs) and U.S. Missions around the world, offers after-school English classes to at-risk youth in over 80 counties as a means of introducing U.S. culture, fostering mutual understanding between these host country nationals and Americans, and enhancing eligibility for educational and employment opportunities. Many of these English Access Microscholarship classes are Muslim-majority. Other English language learning programs, including English for imam classes and English/book clubs, are offered to Muslim populations as a way of promoting interfaith dialogue and tolerance. While it can be relatively easy to assess language progress in these programs, measuring changes in attitudes and behaviors—such as radicalization and participation in violent extremist activities—poses greater challenges. While there has been a good amount of research conducted on the correlation between education and radicalization, there is little exploring the effectiveness of language programs in countering violent extremism, one of the department’s predominant foreign policy goals. We propose a project that explores this relationship. Is there any evidence that programs advancing language and cultural proficiency can have a tempering effect on radicalization and violent extremism? What realistic ways of measuring changes in attitudes and behaviors of participants in the aforementioned programs are available? Are there successful examples of language/cultural programs from other countries being used to counter violent extremism? Which language and cultural content is most likely to lead to changes (i.e., foster empathy, develop tolerance, build resilience to extremism)? What factors made them successful? Are there successful examples of virtual or online language/cultural programs or exchanges aimed at preventing online radicalization? Are some marginalized populations, such as girls, refugees and internally displaced persons, more likely to benefit from such programs than others? The answers to these questions and more can help inform and shape the development of the department’s language and cultural programs—its soft power—so as to be more effective in addressing one of the most prominent issues it faces: Radicalization and violent extremism.

Format of Final Project:
The ideal deliverable is a 20-25 page research paper.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
Counter-terrorism, Education & Cultural Studies, English Language Learning

Comments:
Office of English Language Programs: https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau/organizational-structure/office-english-language-programs
Regional English Language Office for Central and East Africa: https://tz.usembassy.gov/education-culture/regional-english-language-office/
‘Access’ Program: https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/english-access-microscholarship-program
Overview:
In his December 13, 2018 speech on the current Administration’s New Africa Strategy, National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton stated that “ISIS, al-Qaida, and their affiliates all operate and recruit on the African continent, plotting attacks against American citizens and targets. Any sound U.S. strategy toward Africa must address this serious threat in a comprehensive way.” Young people with grievances, which may include lack of economic opportunities, are a prime target for violent extremists online. Africa’s population is projected to double to two billion people by 2050, and many will be under 18, making Africa the youngest continent. Currently, almost 70 percent of Africans are under 25 years old. This youth bulge will impact the world and we need to ensure African youth are listened to, invested in, and are more confident about their future.

This project will research youth influencers and opinion leaders, whether for good or for ill, in two of the largest cities in Africa; Lagos and Nairobi. Other large cities in Sub-Saharan Africa which may be included include Abdijan, Accra, Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, Durban, Johannesburg, Kano, Kinshasa, Luanda, and Mogadishu. Looking at local leaders, social media, and bloggers, non-governmental or independent sources, determine who and what is influencing youth. What is fueling grievances? How can we lay the groundwork to help youth prosper? What are the impediments in youth obtaining good jobs or developing their own non-government organizations or private entities?

Format of Final Project:
Please present your findings in a 1-5-page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
African Studies; Civil Society; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Counter Terrorism; Democracy & Human Rights; Education & Cultural Studies; International Development; International Relations; Psychology; Sociology; Youth Issues.

Comments:
The White House recently released a new Africa Strategy which can be found here: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/

The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs handles all press, social media, and exchange programs within the Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State. https://www.state.gov/p/af/

Research projects for this office should all focus more heavily on society, media, social media, education, and exchange programs. For more information on exchange programs please visit the Bureau of
Overview:
In his December 13, 2018 speech on the current Administration’s New Africa Strategy, National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton stated that “...lasting stability, prosperity, independence, and security on the African continent are in the national security interest of the United States...We want our economic partners in the region to thrive, prosper, and control their own destinies.” He also said “we will ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars for aid are used efficiently and effectively.” The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor states that “Democratically governed nations are more likely to secure the peace, deter aggression, expand open markets, promote economic development, protect American citizens, combat international terrorism and crime, uphold human and worker rights, avoid humanitarian crises and refugee flows, improve the global environment, and protect human health.” In 2018 the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe had elections for their presidents, and in 2019 Botswana, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa will hold presidential elections.

This research project should compare and contrast recent and/or upcoming elections between two or more of the above countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on this comparison, attempt to identify the most effective international, governmental, and non-governmental interventions, (E.g. media training, exchanges, public statements, education, etc.) aimed at promoting free, fair, and non-violent democratic process, and analyze the role and impact of media and/or social networking on said process. Your analysis of international interventions should include U.S. Government statements, and the impact of international observers and election delegations, and may include those of other countries as well.

Format of Final Project:
Please present your findings in a 1-5 page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
African Studies; Civil Society; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Democracy & Human Rights; Education & Cultural Studies; International Relations; Sociology; Statistics; Politics.

Comments:
The White House recently released a new Africa Strategy which can be found here: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/
The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs handles all press, social media, and exchange programs within the Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State. https://www.state.gov/p/af/
Research projects for this office should all focus more heavily on society, media, social media, education, and exchange programs. For more information on exchange programs please visit the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: https://eca.state.gov

*ID: DipLab 1915206*

**South Korea’s Role in the Indo-Pacific**

East Asia and Pacific Bureau: Office of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Research Leader: Jamie Anderson  
jcanderson@vt.edu

**Overview:**

Over the past decade, multiple South Korean presidents have released various iterations of a policy to diversify South Korea's economic, political, and cultural ties towards Southeast Asia and India. Every time, attention to DPRK diverts away from this important priority. The US and ROK are discussing ways to cooperate across their respective Indo-Pacific Strategy and New Southern Policy. This research would lay out where the ROK's have already invested political and economic capital (analysis of private sector and government investment), ROK overall priorities with their NSP; and concrete recommendations for US-ROK cooperation spanning all three pillars of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (economic, security, and governance).

**Format of Final Project:**

5-page research paper, two pages of recommendations, and potential presentation to the Korea Desk and the ROK Embassy.

**Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:**

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Cyber Security; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships.

**Comments:**

This project is possible in one semester.
How Do Governments Protect Outlying Populations from Revolutionary/Militia Groups?

Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)

Research Leader: Robert Hodges   robertah@vt.edu

Overview:
Any form of revolutionary or militia (militia groups) movement must have resources to fight the existing regime. Understanding the most common areas of emergence for militia groups is in rural areas of a state. The reasoning is that most states experiencing militia group activity are considered developing and may lack the military capabilities to monitor and protect rural populations. This lack of interaction with the rural populations also exposes them to possibilities of being raided for food and other necessities to fight the government.

This project will examine how developing states can better protect outlying populations to deny resources and ensure loyalty to the legitimate regime. To perform this examination, the group will work in pairs to research states that have had militia groups emerge. We will use states that have shown a level of success and those who have failed in protecting rural populations. This can also include any states that had international support from other states or the UN. Upon completion of the research, commonalities are examined to provide best case advise to the US Department of State on how to advise and assist developing countries in protecting their outlying populations from militia group action.

Format of Final Project:
4-page recommendation report accompanied by supporting comparative case studies for up to six different rebel/militia groups

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:
Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Counter-terrorism & Counter-Violent Extremism; National Security; Global Security; Planning and Development;

Comments:
This is the fourth phase of ongoing Virginia Tech research for CSO lead by Robert Hodges, and not found in the Diplomacy Lab research menu circulated to universities engaged in Diplomacy Lab.
Diplomacy Lab & Wonk Tank
(from the DoS and http://diplomacylab.org/)

for more information, contact Chris Price,
International Studies/Political Science Experiential Learning Coordinator, at chprice5@vt.edu

The Mission
Launched by the Department of State in 2013, Diplomacy Lab is a public-private partnership that enables the State Department to "course-source" research and innovation related to foreign policy challenges by harnessing the efforts of students and faculty experts at colleges and universities across the United States. Diplomacy Lab underscores the Department’s commitment to engage the American people in the work of the State Department, and the need to broaden the Department’s research base in response to a proliferation of complex global challenges.

The Alliance
Diplomacy Lab is a partnership between the Department and U.S. colleges and universities. Partner schools participating in Diplomacy Lab conduct research around various topics presented to them by the State Department in areas including climate change, democracy and human rights, counterterrorism, global health, and energy security. Partner universities are responsible for recruiting student teams to undertake Diplomacy Lab projects and faculty members to guide the teams. Over the course of a semester, professors guide students in developing a final work product that accomplishes the goals outlined by the Department. Students have opportunities throughout the semester to discuss their research with State Department officials.

What’s Wonk Tank? (Currently on hold)
Wonk Tank is a competition for university students across the United States to showcase their ability to be America’s next great “foreign policy wonk.” A wonk is an individual who has a keen interest in and aptitude for the details of public policy. Like the hit television show Shark Tank, future “wonks” are invited to pitch policy proposals addressing a specific international problem or challenge requiring attention, a nuanced solution, and next steps to consider. Three finalists will be brought to Washington, D.C. to present their pitches to a panel of Department of State officials.

Why Wonk Tank? (Currently on hold)
In response to a proliferation of complex global challenges, the U.S. Department of State aims to broaden and strengthen its foreign policy by engaging the American people in the work of diplomacy and development. Recognizing the growing role young people are playing in shaping the global agenda, the U.S. Department of State launched Wonk Tank in 2015 as part of the existing Diplomacy Lab program aimed at fostering the next generation of foreign policy leaders.