BRIDGING THE AMERICAN DIVIDE (B8585)

COURSE SYLLABUS

FALL A & B TERM, BIDDING ONLY

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PURPOSE

Americans are a deeply divided people. The purpose of this course is to help interested Columbia Business School students gain a better understanding of the causes and consequences of the American divide—and what they might do to help bridge it.

SCHEDULE

There will be (7) three-hour classroom sessions in Uris 332 on Tuesdays from 2:15pm - 5:30pm **(Sept 10 / Sept 17 / Sept 24 / Oct 1 / Oct 8 / Oct 29 / Nov 12) and a four-day field trip to Youngstown, Ohio or Decatur, Alabama from 1 - 5 November 2019.**

The four-day visit to Youngstown, Ohio or Decatur, Alabama, will engage students in a variety of learning activities. These will include social settings as well as meetings with individuals associated with organizations whose fortunes have been changed by economic conditions and/orde-industrialization—e.g. manufacturers, unions, local government, innovation centers, and nonprofit service-providers. In addition, students will write a Final paper, not to exceed 10 pages in length..

REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to be prepared for and participate thoughtfully in all aspects of the course, including the seven class sessions at CBS and site visits in Youngstown or Decatur. **Attendance is required for each class, and missed classes are heavily frowned upon, and participation points deducted accordingly (an additional assignment may also be required)**. If there are extenuating and excusing circumstances, this must be shared in writing prior to class with your Professor and TA.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND SCHEDULE:

Class 1	Sept 10, 2019	Introduction to the Course; Nature and Causes of the American Divides

Topics: Objectives, Norms and Expectations for the course; Syllabus Structure and Course Plan; General introduction to the nature and causes of the American Divides; Self-Assessment of "Tribe" Identity; Student and Faculty Intros; Intro to Youngstown and Decatur

Readings and Study Questions:

General Introduction to the "Divide":

1. "Leaders Can't Shy Away from Sensitive Topics" Bill Boulding, HBR, March 13, 2018
2. "Business Class: Inside the Strange Uniform Politics of MBA Programs and What it Says about America's Elite," John Benjamin, New Republic, May 14, 2018 (https://newrepublic.com/article/148368/ideology-business-school)
3. "The Birth of a New Aristocracy" Matthew Stewart, Atlantic Magazine, June 2018 (long article, but rich in material.)
4. "The American Dream is Alive and Well," Samuel Abrams, NY Times, Feb 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/opinion/american-dream.html
5. Website: ("Take the Quiz" for Self Assessment) "Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape" (https://hiddentribes.us/), Oct 2018.
    - **After completing the survey, please input your results to the overall class profile (aggregate) by Sunday, September 8 11:59PM: https://bit.ly/2UfLEgQ**

- (optional) "The Rich White Civil War," David Brooks, NY Times, Oct 15, 2018.
- (optional) "Hidden Tribes: The New Report Centrists are Using to Explain Away Polarization, Explained," Vox, Zach Beauchamp, Oct 18, 2018. (https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/10/22/17991928/hidden-tribes-more-in-common-david-brooks)

Study Questions:

a. What are the key messages of these articles for you?
b. What do you most agree with? Disagree with? Why?
c. How are we as Columbia MBA students connected to the Divides?
d. Complete your "hidden tribes" self-assessment profile (8 minutes) and review your "category" and be prepared to discuss.
e. What should we heed from these articles in the way we will conduct our classes in Bridging the American Divide?

Class 2	17 Sept 2019	Globalization (Cause) and Political Tribes (Consequence)

Topics: Effects of competition from abroad, trade imbalances, the outsourcing of employment, and the rise of "political tribes" in America.

Readings and Study Questions:

Topic A (Prof Usher): Globalization

1. "The Economic Gains from Trade: Comparative Advantage" (HBS 796-183)
2. "Importing Political Polarization? The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure" (Autor et al) –pages 1-6 and conclusion

Study Questions:

a. Why do economists believe more trade is always beneficial to a country?
b. In what situations might more trade be harmful?
c. What is the relationship between trade and political polarization?

Topic B (Prof Jick): "Political Tribes"

1. "CASE": NY Times Video Documentary, "Inside a Steel Plant Facing Layoffs" 2018 (in library course reserves and online) (14 minutes)
2. Excerpts from Political Tribes, Amy Chua, Penguin and Random House, 2018, Introduction, pp. 1-11 and Chapter 8, pp.177-196 ("Identity Politics")
3. OR "The Threat of Tribalism," Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld, The Atlantic, Oct. 2018.
4. "The Retreat to Tribalism" David Brooks, NY Times, Jan 2, 2018
5. You Tube: Jonathan Haidt, "Can a Divided America Heal?" Nov, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-_Az5nZBBM. (:20)

Study Questions:

a. In the NYT video, Steelworkers were incented to "train their replacements" from the Mexican factory: 1) Why did Mark and John each react the way they did?, 2) How would you have reacted if you were in their shoes?, 3) How would you view "globalization" from their standpoint?, and 4) How do you react to the Union protest that "American Workers Are Under Attack"?
b. What did you learn about "political tribes" from the Haidt YouTube, the Chua chapters, and Brooks article? Do you agree with the "new tribal left" and the "new tribal right" framework?
c. How do you personally connect to the issues in this session?

Class 3	**Sept 24, 2019**	**Technology, Automation, AI (Causes) and Job Loss and Skill Impacts (Consequences)**

Topics: The longstanding debate over the relationship between technological innovation and the demand for labor, the potential impact of machine learning and robotics on employment in the US, and the impact of job loss on American communities. The crisis is deepening dramatically and affecting all communities in America in terms of individual and community health and well-being. What is the impact socio-economically on communities and the nation? What are the potential ways to intervene, and what will they cost?

Readings and Study Questions:

Topic A (Prof Usher): Technology, Automation and AI

- Why Trump Doesn't Tweet about Automation, Tom Davenport, HBR, Jan 12, 2017.

- David Autor and Anna Salomons, "Does Productivity Growth Threaten Employment?" MIT Working Paper, June 2017; read pages 1 to top of 7, and conclusion pages 46-47.

Study Questions

- Why do politicians rarely talk about automation? Should they?
- Will rising automation in the US lead to lower employment and/or lower wages?

Topic B (Prof Jick): Automation/Job Loss/Deindustrialization Impacts

1. (Case) "Why Do Americans Stay When Their Town Has No Future?"Alex MacGillis, Bloomberg Business Week, May 23, 2018.
2. "A World Without Work," Derek Thompson, Atlantic, July-August, 2015
3. "When a GM Plant Shuts down in Lordstown," NY Times Podcast (30 Minutes), July 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/05/podcasts/the-daily/general-motors-car-plant-lordstown-ohio.html (or read transcript)
   (Or,) "What Happens to a Factory Town When the Factory Shuts Down," Dan Kaufman, NY Times, May 5, 2019.

- (optional) "Going Back to My 'Dying' Hometown," Michele Anderson, NY Times, March 20, 2019.
- (optional) "A High School Reunion Reveals: When Steel Mills Fell Silent, Fates Got Flipped," NPR Podcast, Sept 3, 2018. https://www.npr.org/2018/09/03/640257956/opinion-a-high-school-reunion-reveals-when-steel-mills-fell-silent-fates-got-fli

Opioids

4. Video: "Left Behind America," PBS Frontline, Sept. 2018. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/left-behind-america OR podcast version (https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/public-broadcasting-service/frontline-audiocast-pbs/e/56226279?refid=asa&autoplay=true)....
5. "Workers Overdose on the Job and Employers Struggle to Respond" Jenny Gold, NY Times, Sept 23, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/21/business/economy/opioid-overdose-workplace.html

(optional) "The City's Overdose Deaths are Down. Can Others Learn from It?" Abby Goodenough, NY Times, Nov 26, 2018. (Dayton, Ohio story) (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/25/health/opioid-overdose-deaths-dayton.html)

Study Questions

- (Case) After reading MacGillis article, what would you recommend they do—stay or leave their community? Why? What would you personally do if you were in their shoes?
- How is your own sense of mobility, community, civic responsibility challenged by this session's readings?

- What is the impact socio-economically on individuals, families, communities and the nation from various economic factors such as automation and globalization?
- How has, and will, opioid and other drug addictions affect workplace and management issues?

Class 4	1 Oct 2019	Legal and Illegal Immigration; Race Relations

Topics: a) Effects of immigration from abroad and migration within; winners and losers from changes in the American labor pool, and reaction from community groups; b) Race relations divide and socio economic impacts.

Readings and Study Questions:

Topic A (Prof Usher): Legal and Illegal Immigration

1. "The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration", National Academy of Sciences
2. "Schools Scramble to Handle Thousands of New Migrant Families", NY Times, July 9, 2019
3. "In My Town, We Need Immigrants" NY Times, July 31, 2018.

- (Optional) "The Elites Feed Anti Immigration Bias" WSJ, July 11, 2018 (https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-elites-feed-anti-immigrant-bias-1531176949)

Study Questions:

a. Do immigrants to the US reduce employment and/or wages of native born workers?
b. Which Americans are most likely to benefit from immigration? Which are most likely to be hurt by immigration?

Topic B (Prof Jick): Race Relations (Guest Speaker: Professor Van Tran, CUNY)

1. Excerpt from So You Want to Talk About Race Ijeoma Oluo, Hachette Books, (2018), Introduction (pp. 1-7), AND see YouTube video , "So You Want to Talk About Race" (Google Talks, Feb 6, 2018) Start at 10:24-51:00)
2. "Quiet Death of Racial Progress" David Brooks, NY Times , July 12, 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/12/opinion/racism-progress-income-equality.html)
3. "PWC Opens a Dialogue On Race," Vanessa Fuhrmans, WSJ, March 14, 2019)
4. "Coming of Age in MultiEthnic America: young adults' experience with Diversity" Van Tran, 2017.

- (optional) "Dear Candidates: Here's What Black People Want," Alicia Garza, NY Times, May 29, 2019.
- **(Youngstown Section)** "Stop Pretending Black Midwesterners Don't Exist" Tamara Winfrey Harris, NY Times, June 17, 2018

Study Questions

a. What are the key manifestations and causes of racial and ethnic divides in America?
b. In Oluo's Chapter One, she asks, "Is It Really About Race"? What do you think?

c. In your experience, are these issues improving, worsening, or staying about the same?
d. How are you personally engaging, affecting, and/or affected by the issues of Race?

Class 5	8 Oct 2019	Media and Religious Divides / Systemic Problems, Systemic Solutions

Topics: a) The American divides include religious differences. We will examine the role of religion in the workplace and beyond. In addition, the media is characterized as symbolizing and perhaps attenuating the divides. We will examine the role that media has played. b) The multitude of causes and consequences of the Divides in America can be argued to be "systemic" problems requiring systemic solutions—deeper interconnected causes requiring deeper integrated solutions. We will explore systemic explanations of the American Divides and potential systemic solutions.

Readings and Study Questions:

Topic A: The Media, Guest Speaker Dick Tofel, ProPublica

1. "Is America's Media Divide Destroying Democracy?" Richard Drew, CS Monitor. Com, 2019. https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2019/0416/Is-America-s-media-divide-destroying-democracy
2. "Local News Fades Out: A Divide Between Newspaper Haves and Have Nots," Keach Hagey, Lukas Alpert, and Yaryna Serkez, WSJ, May 4-5, 2019.

Topic B: Religion, Guest Speaker—Professor Joseph Sorett, Columbia University, Religion Department: Religion in America

1. (Case) "Managing Religion in the Workplace: Abercrombie & Fitch and Masterpiece Cakeshop", HBS, 2018

Topic C: Systemic Problems, Systemic Solutions (Profs Jick and Usher):

1. "Lessons from Rust-Belt Cities that Kept Their Sheen" Eduardo Porter, NY Times, May 1, 2018.
2. "Think Positive, Climb Out of Poverty? It Just Might Work" Seema Jayachandran, NY Times, July 15, 2018.
3. "Layoffs That Don't Break Your Company," Sandra Sucher and S. Gupta, HBR, May-June 2018.
4. "Some Rural Areas Are Better For Economic Mobility," Richard Florida, Citylab, Oct. 2018. (https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/10/rural-areas-are-better-economic-mobility/571840/)

- (optional) "The Economist Who Would Fix the American Dream," Gareth Cook, The Atlantic, Aug. 2019. (Skim)

Study Questions:

a. What do the readings lead us to consider as "systemic solutions"?
b. To what extent do you favor individual/community solutions? Public Policy/government solutions? Corporate solutions and responsibilities?

Class 6	Oct. 29, 2019	**Tools for Bridging Divides and Managing Conflictual Conversations; Preparing for Decatur and Youngstown Visits**

Topics: a) What are "better ways" to have conversations across the divides? What tools, skills and attitudes are most effective? How will we as a class interact with each other and with those we meet in Decatur and Youngstown around issues that we may find contrary to our own values and experiences? B) What are the key background factors and information about Decatur or Youngstown we need to know prior to our visit -- the history, demographics, economics, and politics?

Readings and Study Questions:

Topic A: Guest Speakers: Better Angels Organization (Prof Jick) - Learning to Dialogue

1. You Tube: "Better Angels group puts Democrats and Republicans, Trump supporters and immigrants, in the same room to listen to each other," July 2018 (8 minutes) https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/angels-group-puts-democrats-republicans-trump-supporters-immigrants/story?id=56814771
2. "Better Conversations: A Starter Guide" On Being, Civil Conversations, https://onbeing.org/civil-conversations-project/better-conversations-guide/
3. "America Needs All of Us: A Toolkit for Talking About Bias, Race and Change" Welcoming America. (https://www.welcomingamerica.org/content/america-needs-all-us)
4. "Divided America, difficult conversations: If you're ready to have them, here's how," Cindy Dampier, Chicago Tribune, Nov 10, 2018. https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-life-political-divide-breaking-bubble-20181108-story.html.
5. "Don't Get All PC About My Truth," Michael Roth, Boston Globe, Aug 22, 2019. (https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2019/08/22/don-get-all-about-truth/8W4NxIj1tdnto40zMqEjrN/story.html)

Study Questions

a. How do you recommend companies engage in discourse about sensitive political and social issues?
b. What strikes you as the key ingredients of the approaches outlined in the readings for "bridging the American divide"?
c. How should we prepare ourselves for constructive discourse in Decatur and Youngstown among ourselves and with the people we will be meeting?

Topic B: Preparing for Decatur and Youngstown

Decatur cohort only:

1. "Southerners, Facing Big Odds, Believe in a Path out of Poverty", NY Times July 4, 2019

2. "The South's Economy is Falling Behind-- All of a Sudden, the Money Stops Flowing,"Sharon Nunn, WSJ, June 9, 2019. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-souths-economy-is-falling-behind-all-of-a-sudden-the-money-stops-flowing-1156010

Youngstown cohort only:

1. A Blue Collar City Sticks with Trump," Trip Gabriel, NY Times, May 21, 2019.
2. "Trump, Tariff, and a Glint of Hope Flickers in 'Steeltown USA'" Patti Waldmeir, Financial Times, March 14, 2018.
3. "Two Tomorrows": Economic and Community Strategy for the Region, 2017 Report.
4. Podcast: "The Rust Belt Resurgence: Who Really Benefits?" May 21, 2018, City Club of the Mahoning Valley
5. A Dream of Youngstown
    a. Part 1; 7:08 min; available by internet/YouTube
    b. Part 2; 7:56 min; available by internet/YouTube

Study Questions

a. What are the most intriguing learnings for you from the prep readings?
b. What questions are raised for you based on the readings that you hope to have answered during your visit?

Class 7 thru 11	**1 – 5 Nov 2019**	**Trip to Decatur, Alabama or Youngstown, Ohio**

Details will be provided separately.

Class 12	**12 Nov 2019**	**Wrap Up of the Course: Lessons Learned, Applications to You**

Topics: Takeaways from the Youngstown and Decatur Visits—what insights did you gain from the Youngstown visit? What are the business and economic themes that must be understood? What aspects of the Divide in America are better understood now? What are the potential avenues for individuals, communities, and American society/politics to help "bridge the divide"? What public policies must play a role in all this? What do you see as your own role and your own responsibility as a future business leader in regard to the Divide and the path forward?

Readings and Study Questions:

1. "Our Newest Cultural Warriors: Activist CEO's," Aaron Chatterji, NY Times, March 5, 2018
2. "The Rich Kid Revolutionaries" Rachel Sherman, NY Times, April 28, 2019
3. "Silicon Valley is Over, Says Silicon Valley" Kevin Roose, NY Times, March 5, 2018
4. "Bain Capital, KKR to back hardship fund for Toys R Us workers" Adam Lewis, Pitch Book Platform, Sept 28, 2018.
5. (Optional) "Trump's Populism: What Business Leaders Need to Understand," Rafael Di Tella, HBS Cold Call Podcast transcript, March 22, 2018.

Study Questions

a. What are your key takeaways from your Field visit?
b. What questions remain in your mind?
c. In what ways are you hopeful for the future of Decatur/Youngstown? Less hopeful?
d. What insights have you gained about the "Divide" in America?
e. What can and should companies do (e.g. Activist CEO's) about the many issues represented in what you saw during your visit?

GRADING:

Contribution to the learning process and the paper will be weighted equally in determining the final grade.

1. **Class and Trip Participation** (50%): Includes engagement and contributions made in class discussions, with course guests, during the Decatur/Youngstown trip, debriefs, and other discussions. We will also use "YellowDig" (described below), an interactive online platform allowing us to continue to discuss and deepen our knowledge between classes.
2. **Final Paper** (50%): 1250 words due on **Monday, Nov 18, 2019, 11pm**. Choose one of the following based on your trip, the course, and any additional readings if appropriate:
   a.

Investor	Assume you are considering investing in a business and placing it in Decatur or Youngstown. What would be your business case for doing so, your reservations, and your recommendation? What would be the primary hurdles to success and how would you approach them?
Consultant	If a business in Decatur or Youngstown called you in as consultant to help close the business due to ongoing losses, how would you recommend approaching the decision and its consequences? How would (or wouldn't) you take into account the costs of closing to the community?
Public Official	We encountered many different social issues affected by and affecting doing business in the visited communities. What are your top 3 public policies and resource decisions you would recommend to communities and state/federal agencies to help reduce the social costs and/or spur growth in communities like Youngstown or Decatur?
Personal	What would be your personal activist "manifesto" and platform regarding the relationship between business and larger social issues that you would expect to be engaged with in your future business life? What resistance would you expect from "Corporate America" and how would you seek to overcome that?

Yellow Dig

YellowDig is an interactive online platform which allows us to continue learning and conversing "off line" from our class meetings. Its purpose is to provide commentary, relevant articles, videos, debates, etc. beyond what we have time to do in class.

Your ticket to admission to the website is to CONTRIBUTE-- an article, a blog, an update, a link, a stimulating question, a stimulating response. These will be in the form of a POST, a COMMENT, and LIKES. We would expect that each student can add value in some way, and in so doing, gain a tremendous amount from others who are adding value. The more you give, the more you will gain! **We would hope to see at least 2 contributions per student and at least 2 "comments" on other's contributions, as well as "likes". There is a scoring system where you are expected to reach 100 points minimum.**

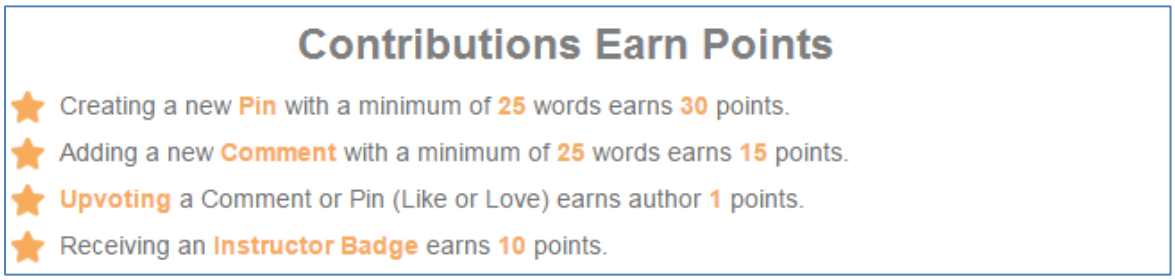
Here's what to do:

a) **Give your contribution a title which will inform and entice the reader**
b) **Provide an intro paragraph to what the article or commentary is all about, and what interesting issue or question it addresses.**

You will access YellowDig by clicking the tab on the left-hand side of the Canvas course. Do NOT access through Web as you will not be in Class list that way—ONLY USE CANVAS. Please add your PHOTO to your registration on Canvas.

YellowDig will function as a component of your Class Participation score. Each student will be expected to make *at least* two "Pins" and two "Comments" over the course of the semester, and you will see that is roughly 100 points….

Note: *A pin requires an introductory paragraph—of at least 25 words, explaining the nature and importance of your contribution. At least 25 words is required per* ***Pin*** *or* ***Comment*** *to receive points.*

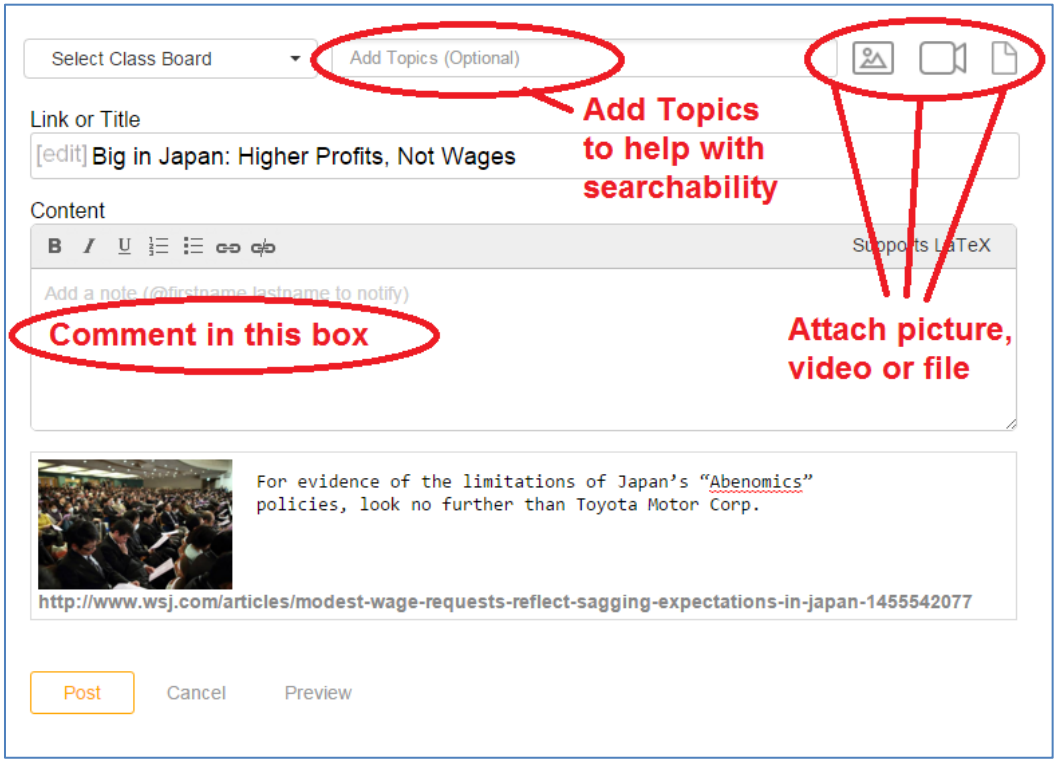


An Important Tip: Be careful when linking to sites or articles that require logins! Make sure to make use of the "Preview" feature to make sure YellowDig can display your Pin effectively. Articles from websites like the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, etc., will require logins- submitting these traditionally may create a barrier for your classmates. Instead, you should make a PDF of the article you wish to share, which you can attach to your Pin.

How To Begin: Make a Pin!

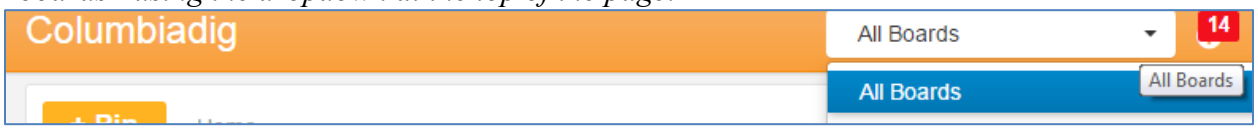
1. First, press the pin button at the top left.

1. Then, copy and paste the link and an image and short summary of the article should appear.
2. Write down your thoughts on the article (where appropriate add pictures, videos, or documents, and tag information) and press post.



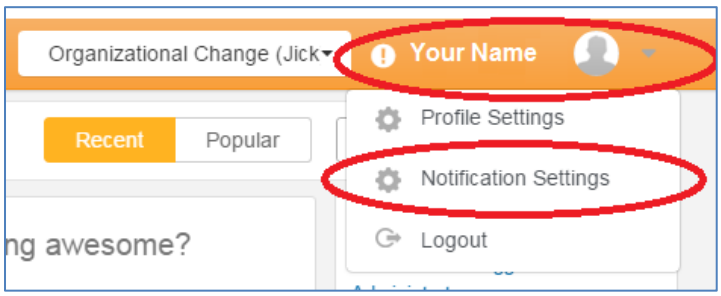
You can also tag people in your post by typing @their name in your pin.

You may be using YellowDig in other courses. You will be able to cycle through your course "boards" using the dropdown at the top of the page:

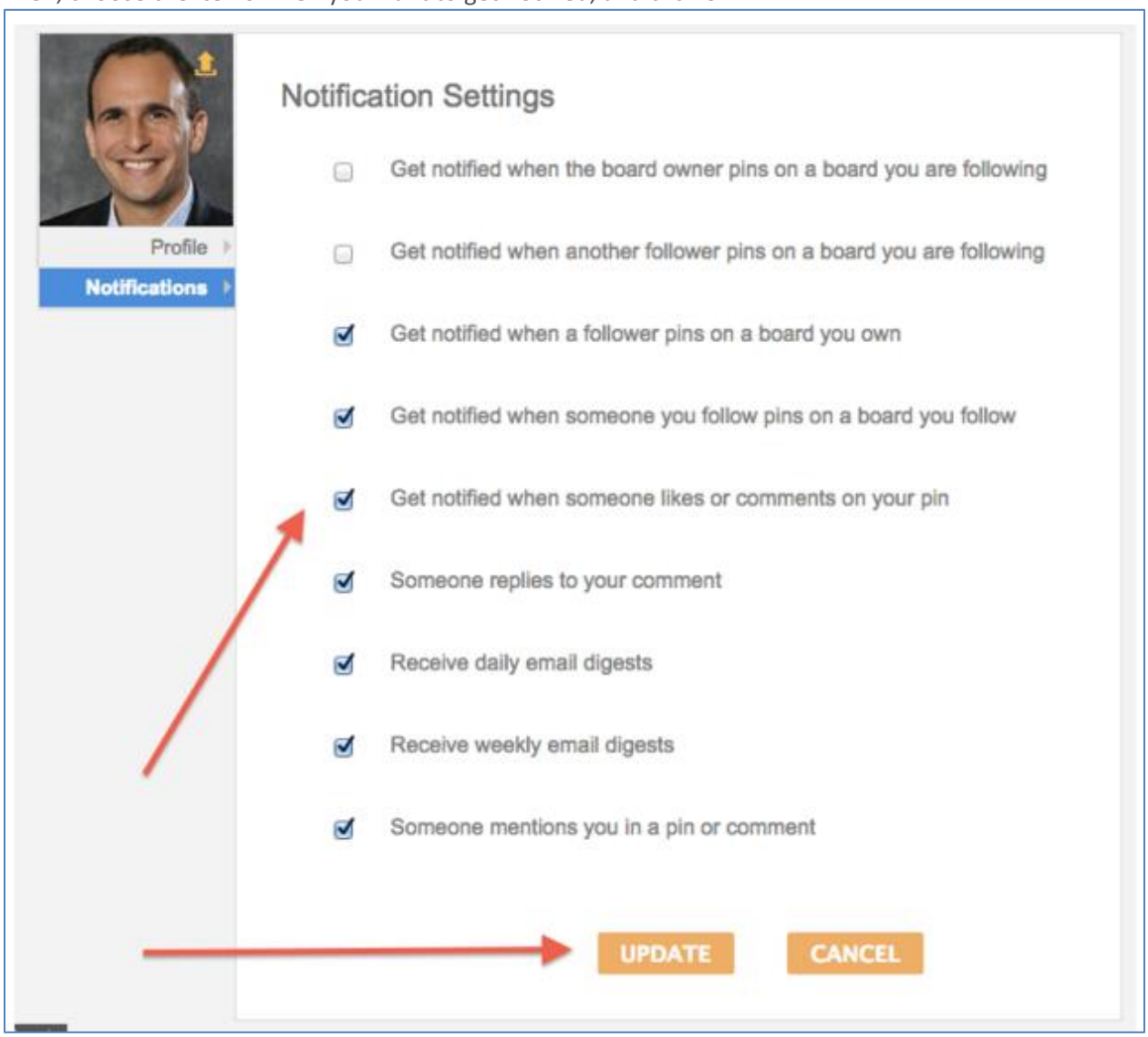


YellowDig will send you e-mail notifications, based on your Notifications Settings. Note: These are independent of your CANVAS Notifications Preferences.

You can adjust your YellowDig Notifications Preferences by first your name and dropdown menu from the upper-right:



Then, choose the items when you want to get notified, and click UPDATE:



- If you encounter any issues you should contact the CBS Canvas Team at canvas@gsb.columbia.edu