

**GEOG 4800: APPLIED GEOGRAPHY
FOUNDATIONS OF ANALYTICAL RESEARCH**

Lisa Nagaoka
Environmental Science 210C
940 565-2510
Lnagaoka@unt.edu
Lisa.nagaoka@unt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Applied Geography is the synthetic capstone course designed for geography seniors; the course focuses on skills that will be important for geography-related careers. The majority of the course will focus on developing and writing a research plan, however the skills involved in this endeavor are transferable to any career path. As such, this course can be seen as a professional development class.

The class is reading intensive and covers numerous academic journal articles written by geographers, geologists, and archaeologists (many of whom are at UNT), as well as government or business reports. The readings are examined in detail with reference to exploring research design and implementation.

The class is also writing intensive. Through several writing exercises, students will develop an area of research interest, choose a specific topic, and formulate research questions from which hypotheses are developed. The course culminates in the development of a research plan and prospectus for a topical research question. The goal of this course is to provide a transitional window between undergraduate classroom learning to independent research necessary for success in geography-related careers and graduate programs. The only way to achieve this goal is through rigorous immersion in pure and applied research.

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to

1. Identify relevant geographic research problems.
2. Find and evaluate relevant literature sources.
3. Create a research plan that uses the appropriate concepts and techniques.
4. Develop writing and editing skills.
4. Develop effective oral communication skills.

Required Text:

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. (2008). *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition. University of Chicago Press.

Course Website:

Assignments and readings will be posted on the class web site.

<http://www.geog.unt.edu/~lnagaoka/geog4800>

COURSE STRUCTURE

Reading Questions (20%)

It is important that you read the assigned readings before class because they provide the basic information on writing about research, and they will be the basis for in-class activities and discussions. In order for you to get credit for reading the material, you will be given 3-4 questions to answer document that you have read the material before class. The questions will be graded on a plus/check/minus system. Since the reading is done in preparation for that day's class period, no late reading questions will be accepted.

Writing Assignments (65%)

There are a variety of writing assignments in this class, which are designed to help you build toward your final research prospectus. The research problem you focus on in this class can build on work in previous classes, but you cannot use projects completed in previous classes or are working on in current classes to fulfill the requirements of this class (see section on Academic Dishonesty below). Moreover, you will not be able to fully take advantage of the skill development process we will be going through in this class if you simply resubmit earlier work.

- **Topic/Question/Problem Description (10 pts)** - This statement will be your first attempt at defining a problem to research. A topic is a narrow, focused interest within the research area you have chosen (e.g., your area may be Medical Geography; a topic would be TB distribution in DFW [Oppong et al. 2007]). You will follow the advice in the textbook to develop a one sentence statement that describes your research topic, the question that is being asked, and the relevance of the research.
- **Problem Description (20 pts)** - This is a one to two page description of your research problem that provides a detailed consideration of the research question you seek to answer and the context and relevance of the research. The information should be supported by a solid bibliography of references.
- **Research Prospectus (200 pts)** – Your research prospectus will follow the research concepts outlined in the chapter by Babbie (2007). In addition to building on your topic, question, and problems of interest, the prospectus should detail which of the three kinds of research you are undertaking, the units of analysis that will be relevant to solve the problems you are focusing on, the temporal and spatial scale of analysis, a chosen research method, and a statement on sampling. You might go so far as to describe any skill-sets and tools that you might apply to the problem (e.g., appropriate GIS, statistical, and/or graphical solutions to problems). You should end your prospectus with an indication of anticipated outcomes and survey some claims that you might make given a particular outcome.
- **Research Plan (100 pts)**—The research plan *is* the prospectus in simple, outlined form (non-narrative).
- **Annotated Bibliography** – An annotated bibliography is a summary and an evaluation of the references that you use in your research. As such, it provides a database of information regarding your literature search. You will turn in your bibliography at three points during the semester. For the first two times your bibliography will be graded on check/plus/minus system. You will be expected to have a minimum number of references and annotations that summarize and evaluate the articles. The grade for the final version will be included in the grade of the Research Prospectus.
- **Peer Reviews of Student Drafts (20 pts each review)** – In addition to writing, you will be commenting on other students' work. Sometimes it is easier to see problems in writing in other people's work. Thus, you will not only learn how to effectively comment on other's writing, but improve your own writing. You will be graded on the quality of the comments and editing provided on the drafts.

Mini-presentation of Research Plan (5%)

This is a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation of your research prospectus to be presented in class. You will be graded on your oral presentation of the information and your visual aids (e.g., Powerpoint slides).

Group Work (10%)

Since collaborative work is an important component of most employment settings, we will spend most class periods working in groups on various tasks including discussions about writing exercises and analysis of articles. For each class period, you will take notes on how each task was handled just as you would in a work setting. Each group will receive a grade (plus/check/minus) for their work. Periodically you will also be asked to evaluate the quality of each group member's participation, as well as conduct a self-evaluation. If severe conflicts arise within the group, we will work through a mediation process to try and resolve the conflict. Ultimately, each group has the power to "fire" members for poor participation. If you are fired from a group, you can try to be "hired" into another group or work on the remaining assignments on your own.

Attendance and Punctuality

In this class, we will model workplace expectations regarding absences and tardiness. You will be rewarded for good records in both categories. Students who are punctual and have perfect attendance (no excused or unexcused absences) will earn 3 final grade percentage points for class participation that will be added to their final grade (e.g., an 87% [B] would become a 90% [A]). Students who are punctual and attend all class sessions except for one excused absence will receive 1.5 additional percentage points added to their final grade.

For unexcused absences, your grade will be docked 2% for each class missed. After five unexcused absences, you will receive a WF for the course. Tardiness will be recorded after five minutes into the class period. An excused tardy will not count against your record.

As with an employment situation, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor before the class period to have an absence or tardy categorized as excused.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATION

The Department of Geography, in cooperation with the Office of Disability Accommodations, complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request by the second week.

EXTRA CREDIT

The Department of Geography does not allow extra credit assignments (work not specified on a course syllabus).

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: (a) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (b) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (c) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; (d) dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s) (*you cannot dual submit in this class from previous semesters or this semester*); or (e) any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. Altering a returned test and claiming a grader or scanning machine made an error is also considered cheating. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: (a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk: Date	In-Class Topic	Reading Assignment Due	Writing Assignment Due
1: Jan 21	Career Skills		
2: Jan 26	Career Skills	Chap 1: Thinking in print; Chap 2: Connecting with your reader	Time Management/Myers-Briggs
2: Jan 28	Problem Development	Chap 3: From topics to questions; Chap 4: From questions to problems	Topic/Question/Problem Development
3: Feb 2	Library Class	Chap 5: From problems to sources ;Chap 6: Engaging sources; Articles	
3: Feb 4	Reading Academic Literature	Articles	
4: Feb 9	Identifying Audience, Problems	Articles	Library Scavenger Hunt
4: Feb 11		Articles	Problem Description
5: Feb 16	Problem Description Discussion		Peer Review of Problem Description
5: Feb 18			Review Response
6: Feb 23	Arguments and Claims	Chap 7: Making good arguments; Chap 8: Making claims	Articles
6: Feb 25	Reason, Acknowledgements, Responses	Chap 9: Assembling reasons and evidence; Chap 10: Acknowledgements and responses	Articles
7: Mar 2			Annotated Bibliography
7: Mar 4			1st Research Plan
8: Mar 9	Research Plan Discussion		1st Peer Review of Research Plan
8: Mar 11	Understanding Graphics	Chap 12: Planning Chap 13: Drafting your report; Chap 15: Communicating evidence visually	Articles
9: Mar 23		Chap 14: Revising your organization and argument; Chap 16: Introductions and Conclusions	Articles
9: Mar 25			2nd Research Plan
10: Mar 30	Research Plan Discussion		2nd Peer Review of Research Plan
10: Apr 1	Research Plan Discussion		
11: Apr 6			2nd Annotated Bibliography
11: Apr 8		Chap 17: Revising style	1st Draft Research Prospectus
12: Apr 13	Research Plan Discussion		Draft Research Prospectus Reviews
12: Apr 15	Research Plan Discussion		
13: Apr 20			
13: Apr 22			
14: Apr 27	Presentations		
14: Apr 29	Presentations		
15: May 4	Presentations		
15: May 6	Presentations		
Finals: May 12			Research Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography