

GEOG 9099B – Research Design and Presentation

Course Outline: Winter 2024

This course is taught in-person

1. Course Information

Classroom Location

Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 6
Location and announcements can be found on the OWL website.

Contact Information

If you wish to contact us by email, please put **GEOG9099B** in the subject line of the email.

Instructor: Geneviève Metson
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30pm
or by appointment
Phone: 661-2111 x85011
Email: gmetson@uwo.ca

Instructor: Peter Ashmore
Office Hours: By appointment (email)
Phone: 661-2111 x85026
Email: pashmore@uwo.ca

2. Calendar Description

Course Description

This course prepares students to successfully design and communicate what they wish to do for their graduate research. The focus of the course is on the development of a research proposal which requires a comprehensive and critical review of the literature, development of a manageable research question, determining and developing an appropriate and ethical methodology to address the question, and the communication of the research project. The end result is the development of a preliminary proposal suitable for a general audience that is presented orally and in writing at the end of term. The various components of a proposal are considered in a practical manner to enable effective research leading to the thesis.

Course weight

0.5 course with 2 lecture hours

This is a mandatory course for all M.Sc. and M.A. Geography students. Students from other programs must seek permission from the graduate chair and instructors.

3. Textbook

The main readings in this course pertain to your Master's project and the proposal you develop in the course. Supplemental readings may be assigned throughout the term.

4. Course Objectives/learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop manageable research problems
- Identify and appreciate the need for responsible and ethical methodologies
- Efficiently search the literature and have knowledge of other library resources available
- Develop and explain robust research methods to address proposed research questions
- Have an understanding of peer-review and publishing
- Critically evaluate research – both proposals and literature
- Effectively communicate their research proposal orally and in writing

5. Evaluation

Further details will be provided as each assignment is introduced in class. A quick view of assignments and due dates is provided below. All written assignments will be **submitted electronically on OWL as a Word document**. We will be using Turnitin to check all assignments for originality.

- Assignments must be single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, have 2.5cm margins and respect word count (we will not read assignments that do not meet these criteria).
 - In text references and bibliography must always be in a consistent journal or society format which uses author and date in text (e.g. APA, but not footnotes or numbering) and be input using a reference manager.
1. **One Page Problem (10%)**: In **300** words provide the reason for doing the proposed research and the specific question(s) you will address. You need to convince us that your research is worth doing. Your research question may/will change over time. This is an opportunity to make sure the structure and logic of your problem is clear.
 2. **Background and rationale (10%)**: This is an **800** word document (plus references – you must have at least 15 peer-reviewed publications) that provides the context for your research project. It should show us how your research fits into the “bigger” picture and provide us with an understanding of where your research ideas are coming from. Please include your research question at the start of this assignment.
 3. **Methods/Study Area (10%)**: This is a **500-750** word document (plus references) that provides details of how you will do your research. In some cases, you will need to explain why you have chosen the geographical region/area for your research. It is important to show the specific links between your research questions and the methods. Please include your research question at the start of this assignment.
 4. **Presentation (25%)**: A short (less than 10 minutes) oral presentation will be scheduled for a class period in mid-March. This presentation should be geared to a general audience rather than to a group of specialists. Presentations will be evaluated based on quality of the proposal and presentation. A grading rubric will be provided well in advance of your presentation. Supervisors will be invited to attend.
 5. **Review of Proposal (10%)**: As well as preparing a research proposal, you will be asked to contribute to the development of the successful completion of your peers’ research proposals. This will be done through academic peer review. You will be asked to read one of your peer’s proposals and provide feedback on it. You will be submitting your own draft proposal first followed by your review of a peer’s proposal some days later. This will occur toward the end of March. Dates and details are provided in the assignment sheet distributed in class closer to that time.

6. **Proposal (30%):** An electronic submission of a written proposal is required by April 10 and targeted at a general audience. Marks will be based on quality of your research question, the overall project design, the validity of the research methods and overall organisation and style. Submissions should be a maximum of **1500** words, single-spaced, not including references, figures and tables, and utilising Times New Roman 12pt with 2.5cm margins. Appropriate acknowledgement of sources must be made using referencing, quotation marks etc. You will use Turnitin to ensure your proposal is entirely your own work.

Please note that the formal “Proposal” required by the Master’s program is a separate document developed in consultation with the supervisor and advisory committee. It is generally written in greater detail for a more specialised audience and must be approved by the supervisor and committee member for continuation in the graduate programme. All students are advised to consult with their supervisor and committee as appropriate throughout the term.

7. **Notes and discussions (5%):** Your grade is based on submitting questions before class (when asked) and participating in notes summarizing class discussion/findings. Sign up for one class (2-3 students for each class) and summarize the discussion/findings of your class. The integration of the summaries, which will be done by students, will become the class notes. As a team you will submit these to us by email for review the day after class and we will post them on OWL.

Quick guide table to assessments

Evaluation Components	Specifics	Format	Weighting	Assignment Schedule
Assignment 1	One page problem statement	Written	10%	January 24
Assignment 2	Background	Written	10%	February 7
Assignment 3	Methods	Written	10%	February 28
Assignment 4	Proposal presentation*	Oral	25%	March 13
Assignment 5	Proposal peer-review	Form	10%	April 3 (draft due March 22)
Assignment 6	Final proposal	Written	30%	April 10
Notes and discussion	Engagement		5%	When scheduled

*Short presentation on March 6th gives you 1% bonus

Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned chapters/sections in the text. Students are **REQUIRED TO COMPLETE ALL COMPONENTS** of this course. There are no exceptions to this. Extra assignments to improve grades **will NOT** be accepted.

- All assignments are due by 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin
- Rubrics (assignment sheets/handouts) will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to consider feedback before contacting the instructors; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days

Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: *You* are responsible for your grades in this course.

6. Course content and schedule

Blue highlight indicates an assignment handout is reviewed; yellow highlight indicates an assignment is due.

Week	Wednesday Dates	Topic	Notes
1	January 10	Introduction and research process	Introductions Assignment 6 (final proposal) issued Assignment 1 issued
2	January 17	Ethical consideration in academia (plagiarism and copyright)	Bring research questions to class
3	January 24	Background section I	Assignment 1 due Assignment 2 issued
4	January 31	Background section II	
5	February 7	Research design and methods	Assignment 2 due Assignment 3 issued
6	February 14	Ethics review and field safety	
	February 19-23	Reading Week	No class
7	February 28	Presentation skills I	Assignment 3 due Assignment 4 issued Short presentation task issued
8	March 6	Presentation skills II	Short presentation due (not graded)
9	March 13	Proposal presentations	Assignment 4 due
10	March 20	Peer review	Assignment 5 issued Draft proposals due March 22
11	March 27	Proposal review	
12	April 3	Profs available for consultation	Assignment 5 due Assignment 6 due April 10th

7. University Policy Regarding Illness

Illness

Please visit the link to the university policy for more information.

<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=- Page 12>

If you feel that you have a medical or personal concern that is interfering with your work, you should contact your Instructor, Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

Attendance

It is expected that students will attend all classes. Students are encouraged to obtain missed lecture notes from a fellow student, and a summary will also be posted on OWL.

Short Absences

If you miss a class due to minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or exam. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow the missed lecture notes from a classmate.

Extended Absences

If you expect to be away from campus for an extended amount of time, please make prior arrangements with your course instructors and/or supervisor.

For the complete policy on registration visit the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) website.

8. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All assignments submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. chatGPT¹) may be considered plagiarism if it is identical or nearly identical to existing work. Although it is not possible for us to ban students from using AI to help explore a problem, if a student cannot explain, argue for, and defend the answers, text, and graphical representations used in a submission, the student will fail.

9. Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students

For the complete policy and regulations visit the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) website

10. Procedures for Appealing Academic Evaluations

Students may appeal an academic decision or ruling in accordance with the appeal procedures set out below. Students have a right to appeal to their graduate programs and, if unsuccessful, to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). Some decisions may be appealed further to the Senate Review Board Academic. The Vice-Provost's rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA).

For the complete policy and regulations visit the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) website.

¹ Remember there are also security and ethical concerns with using these services. They collect data on what you input. If you input sensitive information, or protected data you have access to, this could put you at risk and/or be a violation of research and academic ethics.

11. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. [Information regarding accommodation of exams](#) is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "[Accessibility at Western](#)" is available.

12. Support Services

Support Services

Student Support Services

Academic Support and Engagement

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's [Health and Wellness website](#) for more information on mental health resources.

Academic Concerns

If you are in academic difficulty, it is strongly recommended that you see your Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

13. Other Information

For a list of Graduate Regulations please visit the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) website

For The University of Western Ontario Senate Regulations, please see the [Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policies](#)

Email Policies

Please respect the fact that Professors receive multiple emails from students and will deal with those emails in a fair, organized and timely manner. Please ensure the subject line contains **GEOG9099B**.

14. Important Dates

Monday January 8: Classes resume

Tuesday January 16: Last day to add a second term half course

Monday February 19: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 17 to February 25: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

Thursday March 7: Last day to drop a second term half course without academic penalty

Friday March 29: Good Friday – Department Office Closed

Monday April 8: Classes end