

GEOG 9099B – Research Design and Presentation

Course Outline: Winter 2025

This course is taught in-person

1. Course Information

*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 6



Classes Start	Spring Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
January 6	February 17-23	April 4	April 5 & 6	April 7-30

January 14, 2025: Last day to add a second-term half course

February 17, 2025: Family Day

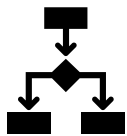
March 31, 2025: Last day to drop a second term half course without penalty



Course Instructor	Contact Information	Office Hours
Geneviève Metson	gmetson@uwo.ca	Wednesday 2:30-3:30pm SSC 2403

2. Calendar 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.



2 lecture hours, 0.5 course

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.

Prerequisite checking is the student's responsibility

Senate Regulations state, “unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

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.

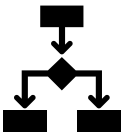
4. Course Objectives, Learning Outcomes, and Format

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

To do well in this course in-person and regular attendance is necessary (even if we do not take attendance every class). Please see the schedule and OWL for which days are essential as in-class evaluations are happening.

All course material will be posted to the new OWL Brightspace learning environment: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.



Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

5. Course Content and Schedule

Blue highlight indicates an assignment handout is reviewed;

yellow highlight indicates an assignment is due.



Week	Dates	Topic	Notes
1	January 8	Introduction, research process, and ethics	Assignment 5 (final proposal) issued Assignment 1 issued
2	January 15	Mini-orientation refresher Continued ethics (plagiarism and copyright)	Bring research questions to class
3	January 23	Background section I	Assignment 1 due Assignment 2 issued
4	January 29	Background section II	
5	February 5	Peer review and publication process	Should be done with 1 st half of assignment 2
6	February 12	Ethics review and field safety	
	February 19	Spring Reading Week	N/A
7	February 26	Research design and research methods	
8	March 5	Presentation skills I	Assignment 2 due Assignment 3 issued Short presentation task issued
9	March 12	Presentation skills II (short presentations was most valuable feedback of the semester according to students last year)	
10	March 19	Proposal presentations (must be present)	This is assignment 3
11	March 26	Proposal review (do not need to come to the classroom)	Assignment 4 due
12	April 2	Prof available for consultation	Assignment 5 due April 9th

6. Communication



☒ All correspondence with the instructor should be professional and show how the student has used available resources to independently find an answer when correspondence is about class content. At the end of this section an example template to guide your professional email correspondence is provided.

☒ Office hours

- Students are encouraged to come ask questions about class material as well as general academic/research questions.
- Introduce yourself when you come in, and tell us what course you are in, and then follow the *explain* steps under the *Example of professional correspondence structure* below

Example of professional correspondence structure

- The **yellow highlight** indicates where to fill in specific parts with context and questions.

Subject: *GEOG 9099* **short statement about the nature of the inquiry**

Main body of the message:

Hello **Dr. xxx**,

I hope this email finds you well.

- **Explain the issue or question**
- **Explain what you have already done to find information or resources or what technique you have tried to resolve the issue.**
- **Explain exactly what you do not understand based on what you have already tried and what kind of assistance or help you are looking for from your TA or instructor.**

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Your full name

7. Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
Assignment 1: One page problem statement	Written	5%	January 22
Assignment 2: Background and methods	Written	5%	March 5
Assignment 3: Proposal presentation*	Oral	30%	March 12
Assignment 4: Proposal peer-review	Form	5%	March 26 (draft proposal due March 19)
Assignment 5: Final proposal	Written	50%	April 9
Engagement		5%	



All written assignments will be **submitted electronically on OWL as a Word document.**

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 (5%):** 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 and Methods (5%):** This document will combine **800** words (plus references – you must have at least 15 peer-reviewed publications) that provides the context for your research project and **500-750** word document (plus references) that provides details of how you will do your research. The background 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. For your methods, is important to show the specific links between your research questions your selected methods and at times geographic region/area. Please include your research question at the start of this assignment (this is not part of the word count). Grades will be assigned by a peer, and checked by the instructor.
 3. **Presentation (30%):** 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.
 4. **Review of Proposal (5%):** 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.
 5. **Proposal (50%):** An electronic submission of a written proposal is required by April 9th 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.

6. 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.

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

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

- 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
- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty of 25 %/day
- An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class
- 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

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

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.

8. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and

cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

General Information about missed work:

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Assessments that Require Supporting Documentation

For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation:

Final proposal

Academic Consideration for Course Components with Flexible Deadlines

There are not flexible deadlines in this class. Each day a submission is late 25% is deducted from the final grade.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they

should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

9. 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.

All required papers 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 papers 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>).

10. 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.

11. Mental Health

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.

12. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

13. Important Dates

Monday January 6: Classes resume

Tuesday January 14: Last day to add a second term half course

Monday February 17: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 17-23: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

Friday March 7: Last day to drop a second term half course

Friday April 4: Classes end

April 5 and 6: Study days

April 7-30: Examination Period