

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
GGR/JPG1111H: Research Practice in Geography and Planning
Winter 2017
Tuesdays 10:00am-12:00pm TBA

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Office Hours: TBA

The great tragedy of science: the slaying of a beautiful theory by an ugly fact.

Thomas Huxley

This here's a re-search laboratory. Re-search means look again, don't it? Means they're looking for something they found once and it got away somehow, and now they got to re-search for it? What is it they're trying to find again? Who lost what?

Kurt Vonnegut (Cat's Cradle)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the philosophical and methodological approaches to research in geography and planning. Through seminar and lecture modules, students will acquire an understanding of different research paradigms, quantitative and qualitative methods, and the knowledge necessary for developing sound and reflective geographic and planning-based research strategies. The goals of the course will be to provide students with the knowledge needed to effectively evaluate research, understand the process of research design, formulate research questions and develop a geographic and or planning-based research proposal.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Readings: Students are expected to complete the readings before each class.

Class Participation: Aside from weekly attendance and participation in class discussion, each student is required to chair the discussion for one week. This will involve a presentation of the key issues in the week's readings. Each student must submit one question for class discussion (on Blackboard) based on a substantive issue raised in at least one of the readings. The weekly question is due no later than noon on each Tuesday preceding class.

Term work: There are a number of assignments for the course; some of them very brief (e.g., 2 pages) but others will be substantial (e.g., the final research proposal).

Presentation: Students will be required to present their final proposal to the class during the final week of the class.

EVALUATION

The final grade will be based on the following criteria:

Class participation	10%
Chaired class sessions	10%
Mini research proposal (2 pages single-spaced)	15%
Peer Review	15%
Research proposal presentation	10%
Research proposal (20 pages double-spaced)	40%

DETAILS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: Students are expected to complete all readings each week, submit one weekly question for discussion and to provide insightful classroom discussion. Remember - what you get out of a class reflects what you put into it. This is a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. Students are expected to attend every class and engage actively with the material. While we understand that students may be absent due to illness or other university-accepted reasons, unexcused absenteeism will be regarded as a failure to participate and your participation mark will be deducted by 20 percent (2 marks out of a total of 10 possible) per missed class.

Chaired session: Each student must sign up to chair the discussion for one week. The chair is required to lead the initial discussion (this requires more than just summarizing the readings – we have all read them) and to sustain discussion throughout the class. Try to be creative and/or challenging in generating the discussion. In-class exercises and role-playing often work well.

Mini research proposal: The purpose of the mini proposal is to initiate some thoughtful reflection on what you want to do and how you want to do it. The proposal should be 2 pages single-spaced and should contain the following: i) intro paragraph to contextualize the research (i.e., introduce topic of research and justification for its importance including its geographic and/or planning relevance); ii) research question; iii) description of proposed methods (e.g., population to be studied, data to be collected and/or analysed, methods for collecting data – this proposal represents your initial thoughts and ideas); and iv) timeline for conducting the research. **DUE DATE: TBA. The late penalty is one grade point per day. Please submit 3 copies of your proposal.**

Peer review of mini and final research proposals: In addition to receiving feedback from the course instructor, each student's proposals will be peer reviewed by one student in the class. Comments will be provided in written and oral format. Peer reviews will be presented **on TBA**. The peer review comments should demonstrate thoughtfulness, critical insight and attention to detail.

Research proposal presentation: All students are required to give an oral presentation of their proposal. The purpose of the presentation is to improve your oral speaking skills but to also provide you with valuable feedback. Each student will be allocated 10 minutes for speaking and for answering questions from the audience.

Research proposal: The research proposal should be no more than 20 pages in length (double-spaced) and should include:

- an introduction that includes a statement of the research question, discussion of the research context, identifies geographic and/or planning relevance of the research
- brief literature review (no more than 5 pages)
- a detailed discussion of all research methods including justification for all methods selected
 - research setting and research participants
 - proposed sample size and sampling methods (e.g., recruitment)
 - data collection methods (e.g., interviews, surveys, archival research)
 - a discussion of ethical issues and rigour
- appendix that includes a timeline for completion as well as survey/interview scripts

DUE DATE: TBA. The late penalty is one grade point per day.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE TOPICS FOR EACH WEEK MAY CHANGE SLIGHTLY

READINGS TBA

Week 1: Introduction and Overview

Week 2: Research Questions and Research Design

Week 3: Sampling and Selecting Participants

Week 4: Survey Research– Guest Speaker

Week 5: Conducting Interviews and Focus Groups

Week 6: Research Ethics

Week 7: READING WEEK

Week 8: Participatory and Community-Based Research

Week 9: Assessing Rigor in Research

Weeks 10 and 11: Analysing Qualitative Data

Week 12: Final Research Proposal Assistance

Week 13: Final Research Proposal Presentations