

COURSE SYLLABUS
GEOG 293 Approaches to Research in Human Geography (3 credits)
University of Waterloo
Department of Geography and Environmental Management

Course Description

This course introduces the skills for conducting human geography research. It is designed to give you the essential “toolkit” of a researcher, from problem definition through to designing and executing research projects – how to identify and categorize scholarly articles, identify empirical research questions, frame questions in the literature, and plan for primary data collection. The primary outcome of the course is a formal research proposal suitable in scope for a senior honours thesis. The approaches, tools and skills learned in this course will be useful for many other undergraduate courses, serve as preparation for a senior honours thesis, and are transferable to any research-related position beyond university.

Course Director

Dr. Marta Berbés-Blázquez (EV1-238)

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Office hours: Wednesdays 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM or by appointment

Time and Location

Lecture: Monday and Wednesday 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM (HH 1106)

Tutorial section 1: Monday TBD

Tutorial section 2: Monday TBD

Tutorial section 3: Monday TBD

Organization of the Course

The course involves formal lectures by the instructors and invited guests and weekly tutorial sessions. Tutorial sessions will be conducted by a teaching assistant and/or the instructor and will be the main focus for discussion of readings and assignments in the course. The required readings are central to the course. The lectures and tutorials will serve to enrich, clarify, and illustrate crucial issues from the assigned readings.

Course objectives

By the end of the course the student will:

1. Be able to frame and formulate research questions that explore topics in human geography;
2. Understand advantages and disadvantages of a variety of social research approaches;
3. Hands on experience with a variety of research methods commonly used in human geography;
4. Be able to design and write a research proposal;
5. What’s your personal objective? _____ (write it here)

Evaluation

The grade for the course will be based on the following items weighted as indicated:

Contribution	15%	Ongoing
Research question	5%	May 16
Literature review	15%	May 30
Methodological challenges	25%	June 6 th – July 18 th
Roundtable on methodologies	10%	June 6 th – July 18 th
Research proposal	30%	July 25 at 4 PM

Contribution (15%, ongoing). Your contribution grade will be based on your attendance to class and tutorials, participation in class activities and discussions, awareness of issues in required readings, and your ability to relate discussions to the broader objectives of the course. You will receive feedback for your participation after each class so that you can adjust your performance accordingly. You will be asked also to assess your contribution to the class after each lecture (e.g. I raised x point, I brought up x resource, etc.) however, only the instructor's assessment will count towards your grade.

Research question (5%, May 16th at the beginning of lecture). You will submit an initial research question early in the term to help you focus your thinking. You do not have to stick to it, in fact, it is expected that your research question will evolve as the course proceeds, and you are welcome to reformulate it at any time. The research question should contain a short background on your research topic and a well-formulated question (300-500 words, 12 font, 1.5. spacing, APA style).

Literature review (15%, May 30th at the beginning of lecture). You will complete a literature review on your research topic of interest. The literature review should be approximately 1,500 words (12 font, 1.5 spacing, APA style). It should contain at least 10 academic references and at least 5 references from the past 5 years.

Methodological challenges (25%, between June 6-July 18). As we examine different methodologies used in research in human geography, you will have an opportunity to try them out and to reflect on their advantages and weaknesses. You are expected to try them all but you will only hand in five reflections, worth 5% of your grade each. If you hand in more reflections, the top five grades will be taken towards your final grade. A reflection is simply an account of what you did, how it went, and how that particular method could help your research idea (approx. 500-750 words, 12 font, 1.5 spacing, APA style). It should be evident from your reflection that you followed the guidelines explained during lecture and from the textbook.

Methodology roundtable (10%, between June 6-July 18). In addition, you will have one chance in the term to present on the research method challenge that you tried and to share it with your peers. We will use a panel format with 4 or 5 students. Each student in the panel will have 5 minutes (strictly enforced) to present and reflect on what they did. After that first round, there will subsequent rounds of questions from fellow students and the course instructor.

Research proposal (30%, July 25th at 4 PM). This is where everything comes together. You will develop a research proposal for a project that you could (theoretically) carry out as a senior honours thesis. The proposal will be approximately 5,000 words (12 font, 1.5. spacing, APA style) and contain an introduction, literature review, research question(s), methods and expected results.

Course Readings

The recommended textbook for this course is:

- Neuman, W.L., Robson, K. (2012). Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. 3rd Canadian Ed.

Additional articles or readings will be available through the library system.

Schedule of Topics and Readings by Lecture

Date	Subject	Required readings	Assignments due
Mon. May 2 nd	Course introduction	Course syllabus	
Wed. May 4 th	Why do we do research?	Neuman & Robson pp 1-41	
Mon. May 9 th	Finding a research question	Booth & Williams pp. 35-53	
Wed. May 11 th	Ethics in research	Neuman & Robson pp 42-63	
Mon. May 16 th	Reviewing the literature, part I	Neuman & Robson pp 64-79	Research question
Wed. May 18 th	Reviewing the literature, part II	(same as above)	
Mon. May 23 rd	Victoria Day Holiday		
Wed. May 25 th	Quantitative or qualitative?	Neuman & Robson pp 80-132	
Mon. May 30 th	Sampling	Neuman & Robson pp 133-160	Literature review
Wed. June 1 st	Interviewing	Neuman & Robson pp 263-280	Last day to hand in ethics
Mon. June 6 th	Interviewing roundtable		
Wed. June 8 th	Ethnography	Neuman & Robson pp 281-306	
Mon. June 13 th	Ethnography roundtable		
Wed. June 15 th	Visual methods	Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. <i>Health education & behavior</i> , 24(3).	
Mon. June 20 th	Visual methods roundtable		
Wed. June 22 nd	Historical research	Neuman & Robson pp 307-327	
Mon. June 27 th	Historical research roundtable		
Wed. June 29 th	Survey	Neuman & Robson pp 161-191	
Mon. July 4 th	Survey roundtable		
Wed. July 6 th	Experimental research	Neuman & Robson pp 193-215	
Mon. July 11 th	Experimental research roundtable		
Wed. July 13 th	Nonreactive quantitative research	Neuman & Robson pp 216-236	
Wed. July 18 th	Nonreactive quantitative roundtable		
Mon. July 20 th	Mixed methods	Neuman & Robson pp 346-366	
Wed. July 25 th	Additional resources		Research proposal

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the on-line tutorial at <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/>

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Office located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AccessAbility Office at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health: The University of Waterloo, the Faculty of Environment and our Departments consider students' well-being to be extremely important. We recognize that throughout the term students may face health challenges - physical and / or emotional. Please note that help is available. Mental health is a serious issue for everyone and can affect your ability to do your best work. Counselling Services

<http://www.uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services> is an inclusive, non-judgmental, and confidential space for anyone to seek support. They offer confidential counselling for a variety of areas including anxiety, stress management, depression, grief, substance use, sexuality, relationship issues, and much more.

***Religious Observances:** Student needs to inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.*

***Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.*

***Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm*