

GEOGRAPHY 7101, SP 2024: RESEARCH DESIGN

BASIC INFORMATION

This in-person class meets Wednesdays 2-5 PM, in Derby Hall 1116.

Instructor: Professor Becky Mansfield, faculty, Department of Geography. **Email:** Mansfield.32@osu.edu

Office: 1054 Derby Hall. Available to meet before class or by appointment, in-person or Zoom.

See the course Carmen for all course materials. If you need assistance with Carmen, please contact *OSU Tech Help and Support*: <https://ocio.osu.edu/help>, 614-688-HELP (4357)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research design and proposal writing are challenging tasks. They require us to articulate how our research is *interesting* and *important* (both topically and conceptually), while also requiring us to show the *logical connections* among our topic, concepts, object of inquiry, research questions, necessary evidence, and methods. Yet even as students are required to produce compelling research proposals, the research design process is also strangely cloaked. Many texts on research design, for example, leap from literature review to data gathering and analysis, skipping over what are arguably the most important (yet difficult) parts of research: producing a conceptual framework, constructing an object of inquiry, defining questions (or hypotheses or objectives), and identifying necessary evidence to answer those questions. This course fills in these missing steps, focusing on the things that make a research project compelling. We do this in three ways.

First, the course provides information, tips, and perspective on practical skills for designing research, such as the structure of research proposals, finding and using literature, writing, and ethical review.

Second, the course addresses broad questions about what counts as valid knowledge in geography. These are philosophical, ethical, and political questions about what knowledge is, what it is for, whose knowledge counts, and so forth. The goal here is to explore these issues in the context of research design: how questions about knowledge affect how one approaches the literature, frame objects of inquiry, pose questions, identify necessary evidence, choose methods, etc.

Third, the course helps you develop your own research project. Rather than producing a fully formed research proposal, the goal is to have you identify and refine your *research problem*: the object of study at the heart of your research design. Applying the skills and knowledge you learn in this class to your own research will hopefully get you a little further along with regards to completing a coherent and compelling thesis or dissertation that makes the sorts of contributions you desire.

Note that the course schedule (below) has several weeks after Spring Break that are listed as To Be Decided. I have left these open so that as a group we can decide on topics for those weeks: things we haven't covered, or things we have touched on but as a group we want to delve into further. (Ethics? Generalizability? Situated knowledges? Mixed methods? Sources of funding?) I will be expecting each of you to contribute to choosing content for those weeks.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Readings:** Please do all readings prior to class. To prepare for discussion, you will submit reading responses and (occasional) related activities. The readings and specific prompts will be provided in Carmen. As noted above, I will also be expecting you to help choose readings (or other activities) for the final weeks of the course.
2. **Your research:** You will work on your research in stages, focusing on situating your work in the literature and defining your research problem (whether empirical, theoretical, or methodological!).
 - a. **Initial research statement.** A write-up of your current ideas for your research.
 - b. **Area of specialization literature review.** Based on independent reading, choose and describe your area of specialization, the history of this part of the field, and the themes and questions within it that are interesting and useful for your research.
 - c. **Presentation.** Based on your literature review, teach the rest of the class about your area of specialization and what you see as the important themes and questions.
 - d. **Draft conceptual framework.** Move from the broad focus of the literature review to a narrower focus on the specific concepts and ideas that will help frame your research, including how the existing literature provides tools for your research and how you see your research contributing to this literature. Incorporate information from your literature review but be more focused and go deeper (read more!) on relevant concepts and ideas.
 - e. **Draft problem statement.** Based on your research statement, literature review, and conceptual framework, you will identify your “research problem.” Defined by you, the research problem incorporates your conceptualized object of inquiry, your questions (or objectives), and necessary evidence. As such, it provides the link between literature and methods. *Incorporate relevant parts of your research statement, area of specialization, and conceptual framework—revised as necessary to fit your evolving research design.*
 - f. **Final problem statement.** Revise everything based on the feedback you receive.
 - g. **Work logs:** In most weeks that do not have explicit assignments related to your proposal, you will turn in a log that describes the work you have been doing toward your research. Each week’s log should add on to the previous weeks (rather than submitting a stand-alone paragraph each time).
3. **Workshop:** At the end of the semester, you will share your draft problem statement with the other students, and you will read and comment on everyone’s work. Workshops are for learning to give and receive constructive criticism. Please enthusiastically comment on what works well, gently point out spots that don’t work so well, and make suggestions for improvement. The goal is to help each student do their best work (it is not to make other students do the work as you would do it!).
 - a. **Discussant.** You will be assigned as the main discussant for one other student’s work. This means introducing their work and providing broad comments. You will provide written comments to that student by the day after class.
 - b. **Workshop participant.** You will prepare comments to share orally on all other students’ written work.

GRADING

My working assumption is that all students will get A's in this class. My expectation is that, as a graduate student, you will complete all the assignments, on time, and with care; this includes attending and participating in all classes. This expectation affects my approach to grading. For assignments associated with your contributions to each week's class, I generally provide neither a grade nor feedback. I try to check in with you if assignments are missing or late—but your grade may be lowered whether I speak to you or not. And I generally provide feedback if there is a problem with the quality of your assignments or participation—your grade will be lowered if there is an ongoing problem. For assignments associated with your proposal, I provide extensive written feedback, but not a grade; I will let you know if I have concerns that might lower your final grade.

Attendance is required. If you miss a day, you must complete an essay (2-3 pages, single spaced) on the seminar readings for that day. The essay must not just summarize but raise substantive issues. On workshop days, you must provide substantive written commentary to all the presenters in that day's workshop. Essays and commentaries for missed classes will be due the following week, at the beginning of class. If you do not turn in your essay/provide commentary, I will lower your grade by one step (e.g. A to A-, or A- to B+).

Regardless of how well you do on other parts of the course, you will fail if you do not turn in the final written version of the research design document or you miss more than three class sessions.

That said, if there is some issue in your life that is making attendance (and active participation) difficult, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can determine if alternative arrangements are appropriate and possible. I can be flexible about assignments and due dates.

GENERATIVE AI POLICY

The assignments in this course exist not just for you to demonstrate that you have done something (e.g., a reading) but are part of the learning process: you will deepen your understanding of course material and your ability to apply this material through doing these assignments. AI cannot replace your own engagement with the material and the assignments.

Given this, I prefer that you not use AI. I am more interested in your unique ideas and engagement, even if imperfect, than in what ChatGPT or Bard (for example) have to say.

Some of you may choose to use AI anyway. But just as with an internet search, **you may not simply cut and paste from what AI generates without proper care and attribution. Doing so will be considered academic misconduct. If you use AI for an assignment, you must say you have done so and include the prompts you used.**

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Week 1, Jan 10: Introduction/ About research design

No Assignment

Week 2, Jan 17: Overviews of research design in geography

Read: Wentz 2014 (chapters 4, 7, 9, 10—all short), Clifford et al. 2023 (chapter 1)

Optional reading: Foss and Waters 2016 (chapter 9, on writing)

Due: Initial Research Statement

Week 3, Jan 24: Reading research proposals

Read: Provided proposals

Due: Work log; Write-up of discussion with advisor about proposal expectations

Week 4, Jan 31: What is geographical research and knowledge?

Read: Lovell et al. and Rosenberg (Introduction to the book and Part 1 of The Routledge Handbook of Methodologies in Human Geography); Oswin 2020, Faria and Mollett 2020, Eaves 2020 (commentary and responses on An Other Geography); Hamilton 2020

Due: Work log

Week 5, Feb 7: “The literature”: literature reviews, journals, etc.

Read: Wentz 2014 (chapter 5); there will be extra activities associated with this reading

Due: Work log

Week 6, Feb 14: Rethinking “the literature”

Read: Latour 1987 excerpts; Mott and Cockayne 2017; Giesecking 2020

Optional: CLEAR lab on citation and reading (partly in collaboration with OSU alum Deondre Smiles)

Due: Work log

Week 7, Feb 21: Approaches and objects of inquiry: beyond divides

Read: Harvey 2006 excerpts; Lawson 1995; Lave, Biermann, and Lane 2018

Due: Area of Specialization (due Friday, Feb 23)

Week 8, Feb 28: Presentations on Area of Specialization

Due: Presentation

Week 9, Mar 6: Perspectives on validity and generalizability

Read: Montello and Sutton 2013; Gobo 2008

Due: Work log

Week 10, Mar 13: SPRING BREAK

No class or assignment

Week 11, Mar 20: Topics: TBD based on class interest

Read: TBD

Due: Draft Conceptual Framework

Week 12, Mar 27: Topics: TBD based on class interest

Read: TBD

Due: Work log

Week 13, Apr 3: Topics: TBD based on class interest

Read: TBD

Due: Draft Problem Statement

Week 14, Apr 10: Workshop: Written Problem Statements

Due: Comments on peers' work

Week 15, Apr 17: AAG IN HAWAII

No class

Due: Work log

Week 16 FINALS WEEK, no class

Due: Final revised product

DISABILITY SERVICES

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer

to the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site](#) for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief. Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

COUNSELING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of these conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

DIVERSITY

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are

committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

HARASSMENT

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.