Geography 371: Research Strategies in Human Geography

Instructor: Geraldine Pratt Office hours: Thursday 11-12, 3:30-4 and by appointment

 Room 140D

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Teaching Assistants:

 Connie Yang, Office hours: Tuesday 10-12, Room 242

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Class Schedule:

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-3:30pm in Room 147

Discussion Group: **one** of Tuesday 10-11; 11-12; 12-1 in Room 242

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**Course Objectives:**

To enable you to

1. conduct original research,
2. evaluate critically the research design of others,
3. develop an appreciation of how knowledge is acquired,
4. recognize the diversity of methods in geography,
5. identify the appropriateness of different methods for different research questions,
6. know the standards by which each method should be evaluated,
7. work on your research presentation skills,
8. learn to work effectively with others in a group.

And last, and most importantly, experience the excitement and sense of accomplishment of carrying out your own primary research project.

**Course Topics:**

1. Why Study Methodology?
2. Literature Review and Defining a Research Problem
3. Research Ethics
4. Survey Research and Questionnaire Design
5. Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Groups and Other Story-telling Strategies
6. Working with Secondary and Other Documentary Sources
7. Ethnography
8. Evaluation and Participatory Research

**Readings:**

There is no assigned textbook for this course. Required readings are drawn from a variety of methodology textbooks and journals, all of which offer slightly different approaches to ‘doing’ Human Geography. These readings are available through the course site on UBC Connect. I have placed a number of key textbooks on reserve in the GIC. These may be useful to consult when tackling specific methodological issues as you do your group project.

**Course Requirements/Assignments/Expectations:**

1. **Reading Assignments** should be done in time so that class time will be useful. The first reading assignment is for Tuesday January 10.
2. **Group Research Project** [Details for assignments associated with this project on pp. 7-9 of syllabus.]

The major project of this course requires that you formulate, in collaboration with 4-5 other students (and in some cases a community partner), an original research project. This project will draw together all of the skills that you learn in lectures and will be in lieu of a midterm and/or final exam. You will work with the same group of 4-5 students throughout the term. Each member of the group is expected to contribute equally to the research project. There are a number of graded assignments associated with this project, outlined below.

In collaboration with your group members, you will select a topic within the first two weeks of term and then stick with it, developing a research question, embedding it in the relevant scholarly literature, specifying the appropriate methods to explore the question, carrying out a focused research project, analyzing the evidence assembled and then reporting on your project to class.

The project involves in the first instance library research and the creative use of the existing literature as part of clarifying your research question. We place a great deal of emphasis on the written and oral communication of your ideas throughout the term, and this will involve writing and rewriting your ideas throughout the term in order to clarify your thinking and improve your writing skills.

My hope is that different groups will select different methodologies and that we can work directly on your projects as these methodologies arise in class. In other words, this class can function like a studio rather than a lecture course. So, for instance, when we discuss questionnaire design, we can work on some of the groups’ actual questionnaires rather than think about questionnaire construction in the abstract or as a hypothetical case. When we talk about interviews, we can pretest interview schedules and train the interviewers who have chosen this methodology. Those doing archival research or content analysis can guide us through their process. I want the whole class – projects and lectures to feel as real as possible – after all, you *are* doing a real research project.

Group work can be both rewarding and challenging. To help the process run smoothly I would like you to use some sort of document-sharing application, such as google.doc or UBC Wiki (<http://wiki.ubc.ca>). This will allow all individuals in the group to work on and edit the research proposal and project report, and will help to keep everyone in the group up to date with any revisions made to the jointly-prepared text.

*Community-Partnered Research*: There are several options for community-partnered research, most arranged through the SEEDS Sustainability Program at UBC. If there are other community organizations that you can recommend or would like to collaborate with, please discuss with me as soon as possible.

Working on a community-partnered project is not for everyone and excellent, socially relevant and useful research is not always or necessarily done in partnership with a community organization. Course grades are not tied to working on this kind of project. This kind of research typically requires an extra level of commitment, including in some cases meeting with community partners off campus outside of class time (if required – this is not the case with the SEEDS projects) to devise a research question of mutual interest, and to report back to the community organization outside of class time about your research results and their practical implications. At the same time, along with the community benefits, the personal benefits can be substantial. You will know that your research was more than a pedagogical exercise (as important as this is for your education) and will be read and used by the partner organization in ways that potentially matter. You can put this collaboration on your resume.

*Sonic Geographies:* We are fortunate that one of our senior Ph.D. graduate students, Max Ritts, has volunteered his time to work with up to three groups on sound-based methodologies or sonic geographies. At least one of these projects will likely also be a SEEDS project.

 **C. Discussion Groups** (All of these are tied to the group research project.)

The first *four* discussion groups, starting January 10, will be led by the T.A and/or Max Ritts. In the weeks thereafter, this is a time when you can meet with your group to do your project. As of February 7, there is no need to meet in 242 (e.g., you may be in the field doing your research), but the TA will be available in 242 if you need her advice/assistance. This is the time and place when your TA will be available for office hours.

*Discussion Group 1: January 10*

This is the day that you will find and confirm your group and in some cases your topic! If you have not already indicated an interest in the SEEDS or Sonic Geographies options, you are asked to come to the discussion group with 1 or 2 ideas of possible topics, as a way of introducing your interests to the other students in this discussion group. The goal of this lab/discussion group is to break the larger group of @ 20 students in the room into 3 or 4 research groups and for each group to emerge with a topic that they can develop into a research question.

If at least 4 or 5 from a discussion time have identified on Thursday January 5 an interest in working on a sonic geographies project, Max Ritts will be coming to your discussion group. Max can work with only 3 groups in two discussion times only, so it is important to signal your intent to me asap. The same is true for those with an interest in working on one of the SEEDS projects. An interest working on a SEEDS project will also need to be identified prior to the first discussion time to enable the SEEDS partner to join the group.

*Discussion Group 2: January 17*

Come to this discussion group ready to talk to your research group about the library research that you have been doing. (See Written Assignments, pg. 7 of syllabus below)

*Discussion Group 3: January 24*

Today you refine your research question, and begin to think through your methodology with the assistance of the teaching assistant. Sound groups will likely use this hour for a site visit to UBC Farm with Max Ritts.

*Discussion Group 4: January 31*

Finalize first draft of research proposal.

After these initial four discussion groups, you will be able to use this time to work with your group. Your TA will always be available in Room 242 during this time (this is their office hour). You, however, may be in the field collecting data and so you are not required to meet in 242 at this time.

***But please note****: if you do not meet with your TA in 242 during your discussion time, one person from your group is required to send your TA an email briefly outlining what your group has achieved over the preceding week and what you intend to accomplish the upcoming week. In other words, a weekly check-in with your TA is required, although this need not be in person. Ideally, this task of reporting to the TA rotates within the group.*

1. **Reflection Journal** [See details below on pp. 9 of syllabus below.]

This is not due until the end of term but you are advised to start keeping the journal now rather than leaving it until the end of term. You will add and refine reflections throughout the term and it is -- most definitely – not something that you should leave until the end of term.

1. **Confidential Peer Review** (Word limit: 500 words)

Since a significant proportion of the grade is tied up with group work, your confidential peer review of members of your group will help me to assess individual contributions, where relevant. I will ask you to evaluate each member of your group on a variety of factors, including contribution to the project and ability to work with others. If individuals are identified by several group members as not pulling their weight, I will adjust their grades down as much as two full grades (e.g., from an A to a C). Alternatively if particular members of a group are assessed by multiple group members as making exceptional contributions to the group, I will adjust their grade upwards as much as a full grade.

1. **Class Participation and Group Presentation** [Details pp. 8-9 below]

As well as the written assignments it is expected that your group will participate in class by bringing forth some of your methodological issues for class work. In the last weeks of term, your group will make a presentation to the class.

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**Assignments, Due Dates, Grades:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Library Search Diary | January 17 | 5% |
| Attendance Discussion Groups | January 10,17, 24, 31 | 4% |
|  |  |  |
| Draft Research Proposal | Feb 2 | 10% (group grade) |
| Revised Research Proposal | February 16 | 10% (group grade) |
| Weekly Progress Reports to TA  | Feb 7,14, 28, March 7, 14 | 5% (group grade) |
| Class Presentation | One of March 21, 23, 28, 30 | 10% (group grade) |
| Attendance at Class Presentations | March 21, 23, 28, 30 | 4% |
|  |  |  |
| Final Report –Research Project | April 10 | 25% (group grade) |
| Reflection Journal | April 14 | 25% |
| Confidential Peer Review | April 14 | 2% (emailed to instructor) |

**Please note:** Many of the assignments tied to the research project done early in the term are time consuming and it may feel that they are worth little when originally marked, relative to the effort involved. This is intentional, reflecting the fact that they are work in progress that you will improve through revision throughout the term. The early research proposals for instance are built into the final report.

**Policy on Late Papers/Assignments:** Unless you have made arrangements with me (and provided appropriate documentation), all papers/assignments will be docked 1% for every day late.

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**Reading Lists and Lecture Topics (with approximate dates)**

1. **Why Study Methodology?** (January 10)

There are many different views on what social science is or should be, on what empirical research is meant to accomplish, and how it should be carried out. One of the issues that we will consider is whether common principles span the diversity of methods that we will consider. The paper by Bourgois offers a short, vivid, and concrete example of ethnographic research and allows us to think through how this type of qualitative research nonetheless retains some of the fundamental characteristics of the scientific method. Andrea Nightingale demonstrates that mixing different methods is one way of working through the limits of any one methodology, a point that we will return to throughout the term. Please read the Bourgois readings for class on January 10.

Philippe Bourgois 1996 “Confronting Anthropology, Education, and Inner-City Apartheid” *American Anthropologist* 98 (2): 249-265.

Andrea Nightingale, 2003 “A Feminist in the Forest: Situated knowledges and mixing methods in natural resource management” *ACME* 2:1, 77-99.

1. **Literature Review and Defining a Research Problem** (January 12, 17, 19)

These readings offer tips on finding a topic, defining a research question, doing a library search, developing an argument, and writing a literature review.

Kristin Luker, 2008, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an age of info-glut.* Harvard University Press, pp. 76-98 (‘Reviewing the Literature’). [The previous chapter focused on defining the research question is also very useful. The book is on reserve in the GIC.]

Pauline Kneale, 1999, *Study Skills for Geography Students: A Practical Guide.* Oxford University Press, 75-87 (‘Constructing an argument’).[On reserve in GIC.]

Not required but possibly helpful: Robin Flowerdew and David Martin, *Methods in Human Geography*, Pearson Education, chapters 3, 4, 17. [Available on reserve in the GIC.]

**3. Research Ethics** (January 24, 26)

Iain Hay, 2010, “Ethical Practice in Geographical Research” in *Key Methods in Geography* Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French and Gill Valentine eds. Sage: London, 2nd edn. pp. 35-48.

Caitlin Cahill, 2007, “Repositioning Ethical Commitments: Participatory Action Research as Relational Praxis of Social Change” *ACME* 6:3, 360-373.

Michelle N. Meyer, 2014, “Everything you need to know about Facebook’s controversial emotion experiment” *Wired* July 3 https://www.wired.com/2014/06/everything-you-need-to-know-about-facebooks-manipulative-experiment/

1. **Survey Research: Sampling and Questionnaire Design** (January 31, Feb 2, 7)

Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto, 2014, *Fundamentals of Social Research* 3rd edn pp. 158-199. (‘The Logic of Sampling’)(On reserve at Koerner Library.)

Kristin Luker, 2008, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*, pp. 99-113 (‘On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalization’).

Julian Parfitt, 2005, “Questionnaire Design and Sampling,” in Robin Flowerdew and David Martin, *Methods in Human Geography*, pp. 78-109.

1. **Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Groups and Other Story-telling Strategies** (Feb. 9, 14, 16)

Linda McDowell, 2010, “Interviewing: Fear and Liking in the Field” In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, Delyser et al. pp.156-171.

Robyn Longhurst, 2010, “Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups” in *Key Methods in Geography,* 2nd Edn, Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French and Gill Valentine (eds.), Sage: London, pp.103-115.

Not required but useful for when you come to analysis: Meghan Cope, 2010, “Coding Qualitative Data” in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography (2nd edn*) Iain Hay (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 223-233. Also chapter 13, Babbie and Benaquisto).

1. **Secondary Data and Other Documentary Sources** (Feb 28, March 2)

Paul Cloke, Ian Cook, Philip Crang, Mark Goodwin, Joe Painter and Chris Philo, 2004, *Practicising Human Geography*, Sage, pp. 41-61 (‘Official Sources’); 62-83 (‘Non-Official Sources’).

Gillian Rose, 2001, *Visual Methodologies*, Sage, pp. 5-32 (chapter 1 ‘Researching Visual Materials’).

1. **Ethnography** (March 7, 9)

Eric Laurier, 2010, “Participant Observation” in *Key Methods in Geography, 2nd Edn*. Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French, and Gill Valentine (eds.), Sage, London, pp.116-130.

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995 *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-11 (‘Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research’); pp. 66-105 “Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the Page’).

1. **Evaluation and Participatory Research** (March 14, 16)

Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto, 2014, *Fundamentals of Social Research 3rd edn* (‘Evaluation Research’). pp. 344-369.

Caitlin Cahill 2007 “Including excluded perspectives in participatory action research” *Design Studies* 28:3, 325-340.

**9. Class Presentations** (March 21, 23, 28, 30) **Attendance Mandatory**

**10. In-Class Group Work for Final Projects** (April 4 and 6)(Please note: I will be at a conference on April 4 and 6 and will not be available for consultation.)

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**Detailed Description of Written and Oral Assignments**

1. **January 17**: Diary of Library Search and Annotated Bibliography (Individual Assignment: please bring to discussion group) 5%

You are required to do three things for this diary and are expected to bring it to your discussion group.

First, draw yourself a ‘daisy’ as explained in the Luker reading. Put all the items you think your study covers on petals on a daisy, and see where there are overlaps. Sounds a bit silly but it can be a helpful aid to thinking. Second, bring a record of five sources that you have found, recording databases and search terms you have used. Third, develop annotations for 2 of the sources - articles or books (max of 150 words per annotation) that you think are most relevant to the topic identified the previous week. This involves summarising and briefly assessing the text that you are annotating. On the basis of sharing these preliminary bibliographies, your group will discuss what research questions are emerging and how they connect to the existing literature. Additionally, you will have begun to build your group bibliography.

For guidelines for writing an annotated bibliography, see [http://wiki.ubc.ca/Library:How\_to\_Write\_an\_Annotated\_Bibliography](http://wiki.ubc.ca/Library%3AHow_to_Write_an_Annotated_Bibliography)

2. **February 2**: Draft Research Proposal (Group assignment) (2000 word limit) 10%

1. Define your research question.
2. Review the pertinent literature in less than 1500 words. The literature review demonstrates how your proposed research fits into what has been done and makes the case for what your research contributes to the existing literature.

An effective literature review:

1. synthesizes and critically evaluates the existing literature
2. delineates the known from the unknown
3. most importantly, develops a line of argument (it’s not an annotated blibliography)
4. lays the groundwork for the study or analysis to come.

Some of the following questions may be useful to guide your thinking as you develop your literature review: Can you contextualize your research question both in ‘the real world’ and the scholarly literature? Why is this important research to do? What are the stakes? What have previous studies found? Have earlier studies fallen short in some way? Where does your study fit in?

1. End with a brief (500 word) statement of your proposed methods. This will be preliminary because you are in the middle of taking a methodology course! But there needs to be enough detail to indicate that you have a concrete plan of action for the rest of the course. Your TA (and I) will help you establish this plan. The description of the proposed methodology will vary, depending on your research question and chosen methods and we will give you guidance as you develop your thoughts about appropriate methods. The purpose for this section is to identify methods, data sources, sampling strategy (as relevant), ‘variables’ of interest and methods for measuring or interpreting them.
2. **February 16:** Revised Literature Review, Problem Statement and Methodology (Group Assignment) (2500 word limit and minimum of 15 library sources.) 10%

Most groups will need to revise your literature reviews substantially in order to refine your research problem and its relationship to the existing literature. You will likely need to consult with more library sources to do this, and to clarify and refine your research question.

4. **March 21-30**: Class presentations (Group Assignment) 10%

The class presentation provides your group the important opportunity to present your work to your peers. There are three important aspects to this: first, this is an opportunity for you to work on your presentation skills, including powerpoint design; second, it allows you to teach your peers about your research, including about the methodology that your group used to answer your research question; and third, you get valuable feedback on your research, which you can use as you work towards your final report. Given the latter point, your attendance and active participation at class presentations is required. Communication and public dissemination are central to the scientific method – they are not an add-on or extra; and so we will take this portion of the class very seriously.

You should aim for a 15-minute presentation, which is the standard length for a (short-ish) conference presentation. In this presentation, you should introduce us to the issue or problem addressed by your research and where it sits in the scholarly literature, outline the methods that you used and what you’ve found so far. Given that this is a methodology class, it is expected that you end by reflecting on the methods and the research, considering what went well and what you might do differently next time. What did your methods allow you to see and what did they not allow you to get at very effectively?

Those using sound methodologies will present their soundscapes. SEEDS and other community partners will be invited to your group presentations.

5. **April 10**: Final Report (Group Assignment) Details below. 25%

6. **April 14**: Reflection Journal (Individual Assignment) (3000 word **limit**) 25%

You will work on the journal throughout the term and it is evidence that you have done the reading and thought about it in relation to your project; and that you have thought critically about your project as it has progressed. You are just learning research methodologies so it would be strange and even problematic if you did not have many thoughts about how you might do the project differently next time around. I ask you to reflect on three facets of the research experience:

* the process of doing the research;
* your positionality as a researcher as it was relevant to your research process;
* working in a group.

This journal is worth 25% of the grade and is one of the assignments that you do individually. I have posted the grading rubric for this assignment on UBC Connect.

I suggest that you begin by reading the Emerson, Fretz and Shaw reading on *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (found in the section of the reading list on Ethnography). **You should do this as soon as possible**. Your reflection journal is, in effect, a kind of ethnographic journal of your experience in this class in which you **describe** your experience thinking about the readings and doing your research project (e.g., what you read in order to do the research and your experiences doing the research.) Like any ethnography it will also be an occasion to **analyse** this experience. How would you reframe your question? How might you rethink your methods? How did your own positionality affect what you could see or not see, or other aspects of the research? What might you do differently next time? What did you learn about working in a group and how might this experience be improved? For this analysis you are required to cite from lectures and readings: this is where you can demonstrate to me that you have read the readings and come to lectures and thought about both. Not all of the readings for different methodologies will apply but you should show me evidence of having read, thought about and used at least **four** readings from the class reading list.

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**Some Dribs and Drabs**

1. Email policy. I am as addicted to email as anyone and will endeavor to respond to most emails within 48 hours. That said, email is only appropriate for some types of communication: e.g., to let me know that you will not be able to come to class in an emergency, or for a quick clarification. It is not the right medium for discussion the details of your research project. For that, we need the to and fro of face-to-face conversation. You are welcome to catch me after class or to come to office hours for that kind of conversation. If those hours don’t work for you, we can arrange a conversation for another time.
2. Academic integrity involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust, and responsibility, including accurate attribution of work submitted. Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding. This is a great website that can help you to avoid plagiarism: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/>

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**More Details For Preparing the Final Report**

The following guidelines may prove helpful to you in structuring your final report. Also helpful are two chapters in Robin Flowerdew and David Martin’s *Methods in Human Geography* (chapters 17 and 18, on reserve in the GIC). These chapters are on designing and writing a research report.

1. TITLE PAGE

The report should have an interesting title: “Final Report for Geography 371” is not an interesting title.

2. ABSTRACT (500 word limit)

The abstract should summarize the research problem, methods used, and major findings. See page 293-4 of Flowerdew and Martin’s book for tips on writing an abstract. Avoid the passive voice.

Please note: Sections 3-5 need not be separate sections in the report with separate subheadings. One section can flow into the other. This is a stylistic choice. I have separated them here to signal that all of these components should be present in one form or another.

3. INTRODUCTION (@300 words)

The first paragraph or two should acquaint the reader with the general area of inquiry. What is the general content of the proposed research? This is your chance to draw the reader in and entice them to keep reading.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM (@300 words)

What is the problem you are studying and why is it important to study it? What are the objectives of the proposed research?

5. BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW (@1800 words)

The main idea in this section is to show how your research fits in to what is been done before and why your study needs to be done. A good literature review:

1. delineates the known from the unknown;
2. develops a line of argument; and
3. lays the groundwork for the study or analysis to come.

Consider the following:

What is the present state of knowledge in this general area (i.e., the area pertaining to your proposed research)? What have previous studies found? Where have earlier studies fallen short? Where does your study fit in? Where (how) does your study fill a gap in the literature or perform a necessary bit of research that has previously not been done?

6. METHODOLOGY/STUDY DESIGN (1200 word limit)

What ethical issues emerged through the course of the research? Why did you choose these methods rather than others? Why are you using a quantitative or qualitative approach, or some mixture of each? What is the study area? What is the ‘unit of observation’? Any why have you chosen this particular site and unit of observation? If relevant, what was your sampling strategy and what was the response rate? What are the variables or concepts under investigation and how were they measured or studied empirically? What data was collected or used and why is it appropriate for the problem at hand? What are the strengths and limitations of the data? If you collected your own data, how did you go about doing this? For example, if you have done a survey, give details about how you administered it, what variables you have included in the questionnaire, and describe the decisions that you made when you designed your questionnaire concerning question format and order, etc. Or if you did an ethnography, describe the process of ‘getting in’, the types of field notes that you took, and challenges, including ethical dilemmas and concerns about validity. A sound scape or drift will involve a careful description of the methodological decisions you made along the way.

7. ANALYSIS and/or equivalent (1200 word limit or equivalent – if in doubt, check with TA or me.)

The nature of the analysis will depend on your data and methodology. Those partnering with SEEDS will need to pay close attention to the expected outcomes stated on the Research Project Description Forms, which specify expected ‘deliverables’. If you are doing a quantitative analysis you are likely developing some descriptive statistics, possibly cross-tabulating one variable against another. (Chapter 12 in Flowerdew and David Martin’s *Methods in Human Geography* offers some guidance, as will your T.A. and I.) If you are doing a qualitative analysis, Mike Crang’s chapter 13 in the same book offers tips, as does Meghan Cope’s chapter (see reading list in the section, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Groups and Other Story-Telling Strategies; see also chapter 13 Babbie and Benaquisto). You will need to describe how you developed codes and what themes emerged through analysis. If you have created a Soundscape or Sound Drift, this in itself is a major research output but you will also need to provide some analysis of it in this section. If you have developed a map, this is a major research output in itself but you will also want to interpret the map in this section. In the latter two cases, the analysis may be a bit shorter than 1200 words (check with me and/or TA).

8. SIGNIFICANCE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH (500 words)

Consider the significance of the results of your research, both practically and in relation to the scholarly literature. For groups partnering with a community group or SEEDs partner, this should be written in a way that is useful to this group.

9. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS (500 words)

What still needs to be done or what new questions have arisen through your research?

For those partnering with a community group or SEEDS partner, it could be useful to offer some direction for future collaborations with other UBC students in Geography or other departments.

10. LITERATURE CITED (15 sources is a minimum)

List items alphabetically. Consult recent issues of the Annals of the AAG (available online) for guidance on format. You can use any format you wish as long as it is consistent throughout.

11. APPENDICES (where appropriate)

Here you should include a copy of your questionnaire, field notes, interview schedule, coding sheets or other relevant information about data collection and analysis.

*Assessment Criteria for Research Reports*

A- to A+ Exemplary

Coursework in this category will demonstrate the ability to infer relevant ideas, evidence and information from library research sources, and integrate the material with the writers’ own ideas, to arrive at an original and persuasive research problem and analysis. It will demonstrate the ability to understand and interpret ideas, evidence and information. It will demonstrate an appreciation of the complexities and ambiguities of the problem, show the capacity for creative thinking and curiosity, and reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the problem, including their own. The project will demonstrate a novel and creative approach to addressing the research problem. It will also demonstrate that the proposed methods have been carried out in a thorough way and that the assembled data have been analyzed with care. All components of the assignment will be in place and done in an exemplary manner. All coursework in this range will be clearly written throughout with a strong introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and assessment of research implications. The paragraphs will be well ordered, with topic sentences and smooth transitions. The tone will be persuasive. Written work in this category should be free of typos, spelling mistakes, and grammatical errors. Coursework at the lowest end of the range will have some minor errors or be slightly less developed that that at the top of the range. All work in the A- to A+ range will demonstrate an accurate use of citation formats and have an exemplary bibliography that reflects the appropriate depth, range and complexity of research for the topic.

B- to B+ Competent

Coursework in this category will demonstrate a good comprehension of the information, ideas and evidence of library research sources. Work in this category will make a less obvious original contribution to the literature, in the way that the problem is defined, and the research undertaken. Work at the lower end of this range shows evidence of some difficulty discerning what is the most relevant information, ideas and evidence from research sources, and/or have some difficulty understanding or interpreting the research sources, and/or have overlooked some crucial evidence or use evidence inconsistently, and/or exhibit a lack of clarity in the writing, and/or have a poorly-conceived thesis and a weak introduction, and/or lack fully developed methodology, data collection or analysis so that the conclusions remain under-developed. This category is also appropriate for work that demonstrates an exemplary capacity for the critical, creative and strategic integration of ideas to arrive at a solution typical of the A- to A+ category, but is so full of sentence-errors that writing is not clear or persuasive. Work in this range will use citation formats accurately and have a competent bibliography that meets the basic needs of the research.

D to C+ Developing

Coursework in this category demonstrates an emerging ability to understand ideas, information and evidence in the research sources, to define a problem and execute empirical research. Work in this range relies heavily on quoting, paraphrasing and describing the work of other scholars without taking a clear position or point of view. The methodology, data collection and data analysis need considerable development.