

Capstone Experience in Geography

GEOG 4800 [2362, section 100], 3 credits
MWF 12:55-1:50, Gordy Hall 301, Fall 2024-2025
This course will utilize Canvas

Instructor: Dr. Jim Dyer
Office: 367 Clippinger
Office Hours: MW 11:45-12:45 & 2-3, or by appt.
Email: dyer@ohio.edu

In this course, students apply and integrate knowledge and techniques from previous coursework to complete a comprehensive geographic research or applied project under the mentorship of geography faculty. Students review literature, set their work in context, investigate various approaches, collect and analyze data, and learn skills for professional presentation of their work.

In GEOG 4799, you selected a faculty mentor, identified a research question, and sources of data to address that question. In GEOG 4800, you will analyze your data and present your findings as both a scientific paper and poster. The course is organized around the basic structure of scientific papers in Geography:

- **Introduction:** sets your work in context; what we know about the topic, what you are studying, and why it's important.
- **Methodology:** describes how you will accomplish your objectives: it describes your data sources, and how you will be analyzing your data. This section also provides an overview of your study area.
- **Results:** describes (but doesn't interpret) your major findings.
- **Discussion:** explains the meaning of your findings, and how they inform our understanding of important issues raised in your Introduction.

On the "Important Deadlines" chart below, you can see that we will work through these sections sequentially. I will grade each section you turn in, and offer comments and suggestions for improvement. Towards the end of the course, you will assemble your revised sections into a final paper. Note: there are obvious advantages to beginning the revision process when you receive each graded section, while it's fresh in your mind. Procrastinating until the end of the semester may mean you don't address all the suggestions, and your final work may not be your best effort.

The poster contains the same elements as your paper, but as a summary of key points (similar to the abstract of a scientific paper). Its goal is effective visual communication of your project's main takeaway points. The final exam period for GEOG 4800 will consist of a display of all student posters, reviewed by Geography faculty (and other students). Since a poster summarizes the project, you will have the opportunity to answer their questions and provide greater detail about your study.

Learning Objectives

- Apply geographic knowledge and skills to a contemporary research problem.
- Demonstrate an understanding of research design by reviewing literature, developing geographical research questions, using appropriate research methods, conducting analysis of data, and communicating research results.

The capstone research project is more ambitious than previous class assignments; you will gain first-hand experience in conducting geographic research. Its intention is for you to develop a deeper sense of your own interests and expertise, that you will be able to draw upon in future job searches, career plans, or graduate school.

General Education

Completion of GEOG 4800 satisfies the BRICKS Bridge: Learning and Doing, and Capstone: Capstone or Culminating Experience, which is a requirement for graduation. Passing Capstone is also a requirement for all Geography majors.

Readings

There is no required textbook for this class. All necessary materials will be made available through Blackboard.

Grading

Assignment	Points
Introduction, Formatted References	25
Methods	25
Results	25
Discussion	25
Final Revised Paper	100
Finalized Poster	100
TOTAL POINTS:	300

Group members will receive the same grade for each assignment, barring information I'm aware of to the contrary. (See "Expectations" below.)

Grading Scale (as percentage earned on total points available):

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
≥93	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	≤59

If you suspect that you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please provide written documentation from the Office of Student Accessibility Services about the accommodation that you will need. If you are not yet registered as a student with a disability, please contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services.

Late Assignments

Notify me via email when you upload a late assignment, so I know it's there. You will be permitted a total of 3 days of extensions, no-questions-asked. The extension can be applied to one assignment, or split up among 2 or 3. After that point, the maximum points available for each assignment will be reduced 10% per day. **Extensions do not apply to the Finalized Poster – that is a hard deadline.**

Attendance

Given the course's emphasis on student research, individual meetings will be arranged with the instructor throughout the semester to discuss project specifics. For this reason, the entire class will not convene on all scheduled class days. However, assume class will meet at the regular time unless an announcement is made otherwise. Attendance is mandatory for scheduled class sessions and individual meetings. After a second unexcused absence, student grades will be reduced 3% for each subsequent absence. You must attend the poster presentation during the final exam period to pass the course.

Expectations

- Work to your potential, and turn in your best work.
- Tell me if you are unclear on expectations for an assignment. We will meet often to discuss your project. I want you to perform to the best of your ability, and at the end of the meeting I'll assume we're on the same page. Don't be hesitant to say "I don't think I get it." In other words, talk to me if you have questions with, or feel overwhelmed by, any assignments.
- Continue to work with your faculty mentor. S/he should not be surprised by anything on your final poster!
- Groups are functioning well, and individual members are pulling their weight. If this is not the case, let me know so we can try to remedy the situation.
- Monitor your "ohio.edu" e-mail for correspondence related to the course, and respond as necessary in a timely manner; sign your name at the end of the message.
- Pick a time and sign up for meetings when the call goes out.
- Stay engaged with the material during class, especially regarding use of cellular devices. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, laptop computers are not permitted during class.
- Don't present the ideas or the writing of someone else as your own. If you are unsure, ask. Plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment, and may be reported to the Office of Community Standards and Student Responsibility for further action. (Students may appeal any academic sanctions through the grade appeal process.)

Tentative Schedule; dates subject to change

- Class meetings will provide necessary background, guidance, and expectations for the various components of the research project. In addition, several class periods will be dedicated to post-graduation concerns: cover letters and the job search, applying to graduate school, etc.
- “*Scheduled meetings with groups*” will take place during regular class time, using a sign-up procedure (Calendly, on Blackboard). I realize that some “groups” are single students. Meetings will take place in my Clippinger office (or a nearby conference room if necessary), or via Teams.
- Blank cells in the schedule are set aside as time to work on projects; this is a time-intensive assignment, so take advantage of these blocks of time. All group members are available at these times, and additionally I am available for meetings – utilize me as a resource!

Put these dates on your calendar or planner! And watch email for updates!

Key:	University holiday/break: No class	In-class lecture topics
	Assignments due	<i>Scheduled meetings with groups</i>
	Post-graduation informative session	<blank> = project work/meeting time

Week (beginning)	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 1 Aug 26	Course structure. Research questions revisited. The Introduction	More on the first assignment (Intro and References) <i>3 scheduled 20-minute meetings (during Office Hours)</i>	<i>3 scheduled 20-minute meetings</i>
Week 2 Sep 2	No Class: Labor Day	<i>9 scheduled 20-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	<i>3 scheduled 20-minute meetings</i>
Week 3 Sep 9	Introduction, formatted Reference due. Methods overview and assignment.		
Week 4 Sep 16	<i>6 scheduled 30-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	<i>6 scheduled 30-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	
Week 5 Sep 23	<i>6 scheduled 30-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	Feedback on Introductions, and on Methods discussions. First thoughts on “posterizing” your paper	
Week 6 Sep 30	Methods due. Results overview and assignment.		
Week 7 Oct 7	<i>Scheduled 20-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	<i>Scheduled 20-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	No Class: Fall Break
Week 8 Oct 14	<i>Scheduled 20-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	<i>Scheduled 20-minute meetings (includes Office Hours)</i>	
Week 9 Oct 21	Required Career Network Workshop: <i>Resume Preparation</i>	Results due. Discussion overview and assignment.	
Week 10 Oct 28	Required Career Network Workshop: <i>Networking</i>		
Week 11 Nov 4	Required Career Network Workshop: <i>Interviewing</i>	Discussion due. Poster design	
Week 12 Nov 11	No Class: Veteran’s Day	Turn in design sketch; Poster creation	
Week 13 Nov 18	Final papers due.	No Class: Thanksgiving Break	No Class: Thanksgiving Break
Week 14 Nov 25	<i>Grad School discussion, for interested students</i>	Draft of posters due; display and peer feedback. Preparing for presentations	
Week 15 Dec 2	Group presentations + feedback	Group presentations + feedback	Group presentations + feedback.

Final posters due Monday December 9th by 5 pm. FINAL EXAM PERIOD: **Friday December 15th 10:10 am - 12:10 pm.** Posters will be displayed publicly during this time. Attendance is mandatory and required to pass the course.