

# **GPHY 504: RESEARCH DESIGN I**

(Formerly known as Introduction to Geographical Research)

**Fall Semester 2019**

**Wednesdays 9:00 – 9:50 a.m.**

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## **Course Overview**

### **Course Description**

*Research Design I* is a one-credit course that is part of a required two-course sequence with the two credit course *Research Design II* (GPHY 505) offered Spring Semester. The overall aim of this course sequence is to help students broaden their understanding of the diversity of empirical, theoretical, and methodological approaches within the discipline of Geography and allied sciences. Further, the intention is to provide a launching point for gaining the necessary background and skills in geographic inquiry and for producing meaningful, significant, and rigorous research that is worthy of a graduate degree.

### **Objectives**

GPHY 504 has the explicit objective of assisting graduate students in developing a strategy for undertaking a significant research project. This semester you will be expected to situate yourself within the discipline of geography and to complete the course with a research topic in hand. In *Research Design II* (GPHY 505), you will develop your own research proposal for a thesis, dissertation, professional paper, NSF grant, or other major research project. By the end of the academic year, students will be expected to formally present their proposals to their colleagues and members of their graduate committees.

In order to succeed in developing a viable research topic and preparing a sound proposal supported by the committee chair, students must communicate with their advisor/chair of their committees from the very beginning and at critical stages of the research planning process. If you do not yet have a research advisor, you must find one by the third week of class, as his/her input will be an important part of the work that is undertaken for this course.

### **Topics and Structure**

We will first look at the discipline of Geography and the array of interests and concerns of geographers. We will approach Geography as a highly diverse discipline and seek to identify the major trajectories of research within this dynamic, integrative, and synthetic field of study. This background is intended to help students find ‘their place’ in Geography and to identify areas of substantive interest. The success of this course depends on each student’s identification of an area of research and disciplinary focus.

We will have sessions to highlight the major sub-fields and theoretical engagements while also examining the nuances of academic inquiry, writing and scholarship. By November, you should be in a solid position to craft a prospectus (i.e., a mini-proposal) to guide your research. This prospectus will help to support the development and structure of your full research plan (e.g., thesis or dissertation research or grant proposal). You will also be expected to give a presentation on your prospectus to the other students.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course you will have the following capabilities:

1. Build the theoretical and conceptual foundation for preparing a solid research agenda.
2. Understand the general trajectories of research in contemporary geography and allied sciences, including the ability to frame scientific investigations in relation to the systematic branches of your subdiscipline.
3. Demonstrate skills in academic writing, research, and oral communication.
4. Engage with a learning community of graduate students and faculty by sharing ideas, exchanging theoretical and methodological insights with each other and supporting the research enterprise.

## **Course Policies**

### **Class Attendance and On-time Appearance**

Attendance is required. Class attendance is essential to your success in the course. Excessive lateness disturbs everyone else – please appear on time.

### **Open Door & One-on-one Discussions**

Please feel free to stop by during office hours or when my door is open to ask any questions you may have regarding the class. Please use this opportunity when needed.

### **Accommodations**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

### **Academic Integrity**

“All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.” All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at: [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).”

## **Readings**

Please make sure to read the assigned text(s) before class. This will aid in understanding the material that will be presented during the class period and in the formulation of any questions about the material that you may have. Assigned articles and book chapters will be available for download on Moodle. We will be drawing upon the following required texts:

Gaile, G.L., Willmott, C.J. (eds). 2005. *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press. [Available online <http://www.univpgri->

[palembang.ac.id/perpusfkip/Perpustakaan/Geography/Geografi%20manusia/Geography%20di%20Amerika.pdf](http://www.univpgri-palembang.ac.id/perpusfkip/Perpustakaan/Geography/Geografi%20manusia/Geography%20di%20Amerika.pdf)

Richardon, D. et al. 2017. *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell. [Available in the Mansfield Library]

Turabian, K.L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Wulf, Andrea. 2015. *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World*. New York: Vintage Publishing.

## **Activities and Expectations**

### **Class Discussion and Participation**

You are expected to attend class and to participate in class discussions. Some weeks will involve extensive class discussion while others will not; nevertheless, you are expected to do the assignments and reading and to be prepared to engage in a discussion every week. You should also be prepared to talk about the status of your progress, as we will use any additional time at the end of class for students to get feedback from each other. In addition, you are expected to give feedback and suggestions to other students on their disciplinary orientations and proposed research activities.

### **Discussion of the Readings**

You will participate in our weekly discussions of assigned readings. As part of this aspect of our course, you will be responsible for identifying and digesting key readings that align with your areas of interest. These readings might include, for example, a “Presidential Address” from the *Annals*, encyclopedia entries, and review articles from key journals that summarize the state of research in your sub-field.

### **Research Prospectus and Presentation**

The primary written product of this semester will be a research prospectus that pertains to your topic and helps to conceptually frame your own avenue of inquiry. The prospectus (approximately 8-10 pages) should follow the format that we will be discussing in class. This assignment will include a reading list that draws together relevant works by geographers and researchers in allied disciplines. Early in the semester you need to agree on a research topic with your advisor and begin developing a reading list that is appropriate for your topic. There will be a large range in the specificity of students’ work at this stage in the research process. You will be expected to provide a 20 minute oral presentation of your project.

## **Looking Ahead**

- Late September: Meet with your advisor and discuss your research interests. Ask him/her how to best acquire a background in your intended field of study: He/she may recommend theses or dissertations that are related to your interests. Ask about relevant authors in your field of research, about important professional journals, and about seminal works (books, articles) that you should know (the “Must Reads” or MRs).
- Regularly (i.e., several times per week) develop the habit of reading articles from important professional journals in the field of Geography such as *The Professional Geographer*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Geographical Review*, *Progress in Human Geography*, *Progress in Physical Geography*, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *Geoforum*, *Economic Geography*, *Mountain Research and Development*, *Health & Place*, and/or those pointed out by your advisor.
- Attend at least one thesis defense during this semester or academic year.

## **Additional Information**

- For assistance with writing, please consult the on-line resources of the UM Writing Center, Liberal Arts 144 <http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter>
- Please consult the Dean of Students’ website for the Student Conduct Code <http://ordway.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode>.
- Use the website of the Graduate School to thoroughly familiarize yourself with relevant policies and procedures, <http://www.umt.edu/grad/>.
- Utilize the resources and information presented on the Department of Geography listserv.

## **Work Evaluation and Final Grading**

Your grade in the course will be based on a series of assignments and activities as follows:

Weekly class discussion and participation	20%
Identification of seminal works/review articles	10%
Prospectus	50%
Oral presentation of prospectus	20%

## **Grading Scheme**

93-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	<60	F
		83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

## **Schedule of Meetings**

<b>August 26</b>	<b>Monday Morning Special Session: Managing the Literature</b>
Topic:	A tutorial using reference management software (Mendeley) led by guest William Henry, former Geography graduate student
<b>August 28</b>	<b>Geographical Inquiry and the Graduate Research Experience</b>
Topic:	An introduction to our semester plan, details of the course organization, and a brief overview of what research is and how it fits into the graduate experience.

<b>August 26</b>	<b>Monday Morning Special Session: Managing the Literature</b>
Reading:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turabian Chapter 1</li> <li>• Skim chapters that align with your research interests from the following: <i>International Encyclopedia of Geography</i> [Mansfield Library] <i>Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i> [Mansfield Library or online]</li> </ul>
<b>September 4</b>	<b>Contemporary Research in Geography: A Broad Overview</b>
Topic:	An initial discussion of the major research trajectories in the discipline, including attention to the range of theoretical and methodological approaches that are employed.
Readings:	Introductory Chapter(s), <i>International Encyclopedia of Geography</i> [Mansfield Library] Holt-Jensen, A. 2009. <i>Geography. History and Concepts: A Student's Guide, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition</i> . Los Angeles: Sage. [Chapter 1 on Moodle].
Assignment:	Identify at least three major areas that conceptually and theoretically 'map' onto your interests, academic and professional goals, methodological approach, and research topic. Come to class prepared to discuss substantive issues, types of research problems that are intriguing to you, and theoretical and/or methodological orientations of interest to you.
<b>September 9</b>	<b>Monday Morning Special Session: The Research Design Process</b>
Topic:	An overview of the major elements of the research design process.
Assignment:	Begin to read graduate research prospecti and full research proposals, and consider how you will structure and organize your own research prospectus this semester.
<b>September 11</b>	<b>The Literature Review</b>
Topic:	What is a literature review, and how and where to begin? We will examine how to begin to synthesize the vast literature related to one's research topic as well as how to narrow and refine the scope of research.
Reading:	Turabian Chapter 2-4
Assignment:	Start to outline and conceptually map the substantive bodies of literature within geography that align with your interests; be prepared to share the results (i.e., your conceptual 'map') of you initial thoughts on relevant bodies of literature.
<b>September 18</b>	<b>Towards a Compelling and Convincing Research Proposal</b>
Topic:	An introduction to strategies for writing a compelling research proposal. <i>Seminar guest:</i> Kelly Franklin, Doctoral Student, Systems Ecology Graduate Program
Reading:	Turabian plus readings on Moodle
Assignment:	Continue reviewing a selection of exemplary research proposals. Consider comparing these proposals with the actual completed theses and dissertations that have been filed with UM ScholarWorks in the past 10+years. Note your observations about their strengths and weaknesses to share during the next class meeting.

<b>September 25</b>	<b>On the Proposal Path: Strategies and Suggestions for Writing</b>
Topics:	This session will address the importance of establishing a habit of writing in a regular and disciplined manner, with an emphasis on the thesis or professional paper writing process <i>Seminar guest:</i> Kelly Franklin, Doctoral Student, Systems Ecology Graduate Program
Readings:	Turabian Ch. 7-13, skim Ch. 8-25
Assignment:	Visit with your faculty mentors about the “must reads” in your sub-field and continue seeking examples of exemplary theses and dissertations. Work on building your own bibliographic database of relevant literature.
<b>October 2 - 16</b>	<b>Contemporary Research in Geography: Exploring Fields of Interest</b>
Topic:	Continue to refine your research topic in light of your academic, professional and personal goals. Actively work towards identifying a research problem and refining questions that align with those within your sub-field(s) and substantive areas of interest. <b>Regular class meetings during these weeks are optional.</b>
Readings:	On Moodle and beyond (i.e., identifying readings relevant to your interests); aim to read <i>The Invention of Nature</i>
Assignment:	Be prepared to address these questions: (1) what are the research problems and questions addressed in this field of study? (2) what is the historical development of this field of study and what factors have influenced its development? (3) why are the research questions significant to building knowledge and understanding in this particular area/sub-field? (4) what are the broader implications of the research interventions in my field of study for the discipline of geography and for science and society as a whole?
<b>October 23</b>	<b>Contemporary Research in Geography: Exploring Fields of Interest (cont'd)</b>
Topic:	The focus will be on discussing what you have learned and digested about research problems and questions in your sub-fields as well as how your process of inquiry has broadened or narrowed in light of your own engagement and reflection.
Assignment:	Please come prepared to succinctly summarize your observations about the research problems and questions addressed in your field of study as well as your progress towards refining your research problem and articulating a research project.
<b>October 30</b>	<b>Synthesis of Research Trajectories in the Geographical Sciences and Allied Fields</b>
Topics:	Strategies for defining and refining your research problem and questions
Reading:	Please finish Andrea Wulf's <i>The Invention of Nature</i>
Assignment:	Come to our class meeting prepared to discuss your reactions to and impressions of <i>The Invention of Nature</i>
<b>November 6</b>	<b>Linking Problem Statement, Questions, and Objectives</b>
Topic:	The focus will be on crafting a problem statement and a clear statement of purpose as well working towards defining and refining research objectives and questions.

Reading:	Turabian Ch. 5-6, Moodle readings
Assignment:	Bring in drafts of your problem statement, research question(s), and objectives to workshop with other students during our meeting.
<b>November 13</b>	<b>In Support of Your Research Design Process</b>
Topics:	The intent today is to address resources to support your research design endeavors, including funding and grant opportunities.
Reading:	Readings on Moodle
Assignment:	The first draft of your research prospectus is <b>due</b> .
<b>November 20</b>	<b>Research Project and Prospectus Presentations</b>
Presenters:	
<b>November 27</b>	<b>Thanksgiving ~ No Class Meeting</b>
<b>December 4</b>	<b>Research Project and Prospectus Presentations</b>
Presenters:	
<b>December 11</b>	<b>Final class meeting (9:00-11:00 a.m.) and individual meetings TBD</b>
Topic:	The final class meeting has two major objectives: 1) to review your progress to date; and 2) for you to present your short- and long-term goals for developing your research proposal. This week will be also schedule one-hour individual meetings to discuss your research prospectus and plans for further proposal development.
Assignment:	Final draft of your research prospectus is <b>due December 13</b>