

## Introduction to Geography

# Term Paper Guidelines

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### **Description**

Each student will write a paper on a topic of his or her choosing. Students may work individually or in pairs. The content of the paper will be developed incrementally throughout the course through collaborative discussions during class. The purpose of this paper is to help students relate the geographical ways of thinking introduced in the course to topics of personal interest, and in doing so, develop research, writing, and critical analytical skills.

### **Topic**

The topic can be anything the student chooses, however it is the responsibility of the student to demonstrate how geographical knowledge and analysis is useful in understanding the topic. Examples of suitable topics and possible ways of exploring them will be given in class and posted to the course website.

### **Length**

The final paper length is expected to be 1,500-2,500 words, not including a bibliography.

### **Format and Style**

Papers must be typed in a 12-point, Times family font (Times or Times New Roman), with double line spacings and 1-inch margins. Formatting should follow the APA style:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

### **Content and Structure**

The paper should briefly introduce your chosen topic and clearly state a thesis that describes the purpose or argument contained in your paper. You should very briefly (no more than 1 page) describe the topic as though it was being presented to peers who are mostly ignorant about the topic. The body of the paper should use geographic analysis to critically think about one or more aspects of the topic. For example, you might discuss how spatial variations or interactions shape the processes involved in your topic; or how

place-specific physical landscape, political, economic, cultural, and social variables are influencing factors; or how factors in one place have uneven consequences for different populations across space and time. This might entail the use of maps/spatial analysis, quantitative data, analysis of current affairs, policy analysis, media critique, or anything else that would enable others to better understand the chosen topic. Finally, the paper should include a discussion of how the topic is relevant within contemporary society and pose questions or topics for further research.

### **Sources and References**

You must use at least 4 sources of information (not including data or graphics).

**At least two** of your sources **MUST** be from academic (preferably geographic) sources. These can be journal articles or books; blogs and websites do not count!

In-line citations are **REQUIRED** for all information—including direct quotations, summaries, and paraphrasing—in the text of your paper that is not original. A bibliography containing all of your references must be included at the end of your paper.

Wikipedia is **NOT** a valid source. Most articles on Wikipedia include citations with references to their source information, which you may use.

Websites used as sources should follow the guidelines discussed in class.

### **Assessment**

Papers will be assessed based on geographic content and analysis as well as mechanics. Refer to the grading rubric for a breakdown of the grade.

If you struggle with writing mechanics, it is highly recommended that you visit the Academic Support Center for Excellence, have a peer proof read your paper, or meet with me individually to work on making your paper more readable and comprehensible.

### **Dates**

March 21, 11:59pm: Description of topic, brief outline and bibliography due via email

April 11, 11:59pm: Final term paper due as an email attachment