

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
Department of Geography**

**GEOG 5800  
Research Design and Geographic Applications  
Dr. Murray Rice**

## **Research Plan: Expectations**

The following is a basic summary of what I expect you to include in your research plan, which is the written component of your term project for this course. This document refers to the “research plan draft” option for the project that I talked about at the beginning of the semester. Expectations are slightly different from the below if you choose to pursue the “research report” option – please see me if you plan to take that alternate option.

- **TITLE PAGE**

The draft proposal should have an interesting title. “Research Plan for GEOG 5800” is not an interesting title.

- **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- **ABSTRACT (150-200 words)**

The abstract should summarize the research problem, methods proposed and major findings. Since you have not collected any data, you will not report on findings in this abstract although you can identify the nature of anticipated findings, given the literature you have reviewed.

- **INTRODUCTION (300-400 words)**

This section should acquaint the reader with the general area of inquiry. What is the general context of the proposed research? Why should the reader care to read any further? The introduction should become progressively more specific as you work into it, culminating (at the end of this section) in a general indication of the kind of problem(s) to be addressed in your research.

- BACKGROUND/PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE/LITERATURE REVIEW (800-1000 words)

This section is based on the full-blown literature review you completed earlier in the course. The literature review included here should be a summarized and edited version of your earlier work. The main idea in this section is to show how your research fits into what has been done before and why your study needs to be done.

A good literature review:

- a. delineates the known from the unknown;
- b. develops a line of argument; and
- c. lays the groundwork for the study or analysis to come

You will want to consider the following in the section you include in your paper (this may represent further development past what you include in the stand-alone literature review you hand in for this course):

- What perspectives are present in the literature that relate to your research topic?
  - What theoretical perspectives predominate?
  - What methodological approaches predominate?
- Where is the primary empirical focus of attention? (i.e. where are studies being done?)
- What omissions, biases or limitations can you observe in the entire **body** of work?
- What particular works do you find enlightening? (why? - either by their theoretical understanding, their methodological approach, their empirical focus)
- Overall, what is the status of the research in this field? What work remains outstanding?
- Where does your study fit in? How will your study “advance” our understanding of this topic?

- STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM and RESEARCH QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES (200-400 words)

Following from and based upon the literature review above:

- What key question(s) will you address?
- What hypotheses will be tested (if applicable)?
- How do these question(s) and/or hypotheses relate to the research that has already been done (that you have just reviewed)?

- DATA COLLECTION METHODS/STUDY DESIGN (400-600 words)

- What kind of data will be used and why are they appropriate data for the problem at hand?
- If you will obtain your data from a third party (e.g. a government department, a professor who has already collected a dataset, a business), talk about the dataset: its good points (advantages), its limitations (disadvantages)
- If you intend to collect your own data, how do you propose to go about it? (What is your sampling strategy, data size?)
- What sampling and measurement techniques do you propose to use?
- What are the variables and how will each one be measured? What are the validity and reliability of these measures?
- Consider developing a draft of your data collection instrument (such as a survey if you are using one). If you do such a draft, place it in an appendix.

- POST-COLLECTION ANALYSIS (400-800 words)

Once you have collected your dataset, how will the analysis of that dataset be carried out? Are there specific programs or tests that you will use? How will your analysis help you meet your stated objectives? This section could be combined with the preceding “data collection/study design” section to form one “research methods” section.

- SIGNIFICANCE and ETHICS OF PROPOSED RESEARCH (200 words)

This section should attempt to forecast some possible results from the project and to identify the importance of such results. Who might use the results you obtain, and why will your results be useful? You should also indicate what ethical issues (e.g. use of human subjects, environmental impacts, other) you will confront and how they will be addressed (do you need to complete an ethics review for Research Services?). Ethical issues may or may not be something you need to extensively address, but you should (at minimum) mention here whether this is a consideration for your study.

- TIME LINE AND BUDGET (table)

Provide a table that indicates your prospective time line and itemize your costs. Include all the requirements for the degree in your time line (course work, colloquia, ethics review, data collection, etc.). Justify your expenses using standard expense rates and indicate how your funding will be obtained.

One issue in particular to address: how will the results be communicated to professionals, researchers and/or the public (e.g. conferences, published paper(s), etc.)? Ensure your plans for dissemination are included in the time line and

budget. Results dissemination is important, otherwise there is little point in doing the work.

- LITERATURE CITED (perhaps 10-20 citations, but this can vary a lot depending on your specific field and the nature of the research that has already been done)

This is an alphabetical list of the references cited in your paper, NOT an annotated bibliography. List only those materials you have used in creating your research plan. List and organize your references in a format consistent with a major geography journal (Annals of the AAG, Professional Geographer, etc.).

- APPENDICES (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

Here is where you should include a copy of your data-recording instrument (e.g. a questionnaire), if you have completed your design of one (or a draft). Other long items (such as extensive listings of variables or database characteristics) could also be included here.