Course Goals
This course prepares students to successfully design and communicate what they wish to do for their graduate research. The focus of the course is on the development of a research proposal, which requires a comprehensive and critical review of the literature, development of a manageable research question, determining and developing an appropriate and ethical methodology to address the question and the communication of the research project. The end result is the development of a preliminary proposal, suitable for a general audience, presented orally and in writing at the end of term. The various components of a proposal are considered in a practical manner to enable effective research leading to the thesis. The course is designed to introduce students to:

- The identification of manageable research problems
- Responsible and ethical methodologies
- Efficient approaches to the literature and library resources
- Selecting appropriate research design and methods
- Practical implementation of data collection and analysis.
- Oral and written communication of research

Approach
The course is structured to work through the components of a proposal to allow development of an effective research plan. Much of the course will be practical and hands-on, and you will learn to assess and critique each other’s work in a constructive manner. A 10 minute oral presentation will be made to the class on the morning of Tuesday March 31, followed by a short written proposal due by April 14th. These contributions should be targeted at the general geographer rather than a specialist audience. A subsequent more technical proposal is submitted to the supervisor early in the summer.

Class schedule
10:30-12:30 pm TUESDAYS SSC 1059
Evaluation

All assignments must be double space and at least 12-point font.

One Page Problem/Question (1-2 pages).................................10%

Literature Review (5-6 pages + references)..............................10%

Methods/Study Area (2-3 pages + references).........................10%

Review of Proposal...............................................................10%

Presentation (10 minutes – 7 minutes +3 minutes of questions)..30%

Proposal (maximum of ten pages)...........................................30%

All written assignments will be submitted electronically as a Word document. They must be double-spaced, 12-point font and adhere to page number restrictions.

1. **One Page Problem (10%)**: In 1-2 pages provide the reason for doing the proposed research and the specific questions you will address. You need to convince me that your research is worth doing.

2. **Literature Review (10%)**: This is a 5-6 page document (plus references – you must have at least 15 peer-reviewed publications) that provides the context for your research project. It should show me how your research fits into the “bigger” picture and provide me with an understanding of where your research ideas are coming from.

3. **Methods/Study Area (10%)**: This is a 3-4 page document (plus references) that provides details of how you will do your research. In some cases you will need to explain why you have chosen the geographical region/area for your research.

4. **Review of Proposal (10%)**: As well as preparing a research proposal, you will be asked to contribute to the development of the successful completion of your peers’ research proposals. This will be done through academic peer review. You will be asked to read two of your peer’s proposals and provide ~1 page of feedback on it.

5. **Presentation (30%)**

   An oral presentation will be made on the morning of March 1st using appropriate supporting media (e.g., PowerPoint). Presentations will be evaluated based on quality of the proposal and presentation. A grading rubric will be provided well in advance of your presentation. Supervisors will be invited to attend.

6. **Proposal (30%)**

   An electronic submission of a written proposal is required by April 14th and targeted at a general geographical audience. Marks will be based on quality of your research question, the overall project design, the validity of the research methods and overall organisation and style. Submissions should be a maximum of ten pages, double-spaced, including references, figures and tables, and utilising Times New Roman 12pt with 2.5cm margins. Appropriate acknowledgement of sources must be made using referencing, quotation marks etc. The formal “Proposal” (Geography 9089) required by the Master’s program is a separate document developed in consultation with the supervisor and advisory committee. It is generally written in greater detail for a more specialised audience and must be approved by the supervisor and committee member for continuation in the graduate programme. All students are advised to consult with the advisor and committee member as appropriate throughout the term. Late proposals will be penalized 10% per day.
Course Texts.

There is no course textbook, but I will provide several readings on Owl. The readings are not mandatory and are to supplement the course lectures. Some books you may find useful include:

   *This book has a lot of useful tips for getting going on writing.*
   *Very useful text for doing research in Geography. Several of the class readings are from this book.*
3. Communicating in Geography and the Environmental Sciences
   *Useful for various types of communication you will be asked to do during your time as a student.*
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| 06 Jan | *Introductions  
*Course Syllabus                                             |                                                                     |
| 13 Jan | *Developing a research question  
*Time management                                                        | Bring a research question  
Readings: Clifford & Valentine and Northey et al. |
| 20 Jan | *Research and Ethics (Wes Kinghorn)                                    | Bring to class: Draft one page research problem                        |
| 27 Jan | *Literature Reviews  
*Academic Review                                                      | Readings: Healey  
Due: one page research question/problem                               |
| 03 Feb | Library skills – Ms. Courtney Waugh                                    |                                                                     |
| 10 Feb | Research Design and Methods                                             |                                                                     |
| 17 Feb | Spring study break – NO CLASS                                           | Due By Feb. 17: Literature Review                                     |
| 24 Feb | More on Ethics (Plagarism and the tri-council policy)  
Data acquisition and analysis                                     | Role Play                                                             |
| 03 Mar | Field Safety                                                           | Due: Methods                                                          |
| 10 Mar | *Presentation skills (Moser and Wes Kinghorn)                          | Returned: all work-to-date  
This is your chance to work on your proposal                           |
| 17 Mar | *NO FORMAL CLASS                                                       | Due: Draft Proposals                                                  |
| 24 Mar | *Draft Proposal Class Reviews                                          | Due: Reviews                                                          |
| 31 Mar | *Proposal Presentations                                                 | Due: Presentations                                                    |
| 14 Apr | *Written proposal due                                                  | Due: Written Proposals                                                |

**Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([http://www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

**Mental Health**

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit the site below for more information on mental health resources:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/).
Western's commitment to accessibility

The University of Western Ontario is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.