

EAS 590: Human Geography Seminar
Course Outline – Fall, 2007

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Office Hours: By appointment weekday afternoons

Class Time & Location: To be determined

Purpose of the course:

The purpose of this course is to introduce new graduate students to the academic profession. Its primary goal is to ‘demystify’ the academic system as well as to develop the organizational, analytical and writing skills required to be a successful academic. While this course is designed for Human Geography graduate students in EAS, it will be covering concepts and ideas easily generalizable to broader research fields. For that reason, this course is open to graduate students from any department. Course content will be adapted to meet the needs of participating students.

Learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically reflect upon and understand the process of graduate learning, and convey a knowledge about processes of the Academic profession
- Display a core set of time and personal management skills important to the profession
- Discuss and debate in-depth a knowledge of a specific stream of research relevant to the student’s own program
- Critically evaluate research proposals within and outside the students’ primary field of research
- Produce a research proposal of suitable quality to meet graduate program standards

Structure of the course

The course has four primary units:

- 1) On becoming an academic...
 - a. In class exercise: Life in the Trenches
 - b. Assignment 1: Organize your life
- 2) Placing your Research
 - a. Assignment 2: Situating yourself in the literature (presentation)
 - b. Assignment 3: Book Review
- 3) Evaluating Proposals
 - a. In-class Exercise: Components of a good proposal
 - b. In-class Exercise: Developing an Interdisciplinary project & proposal
 - c. In-class Exercise: Mock Proposal Review Committee
- 4) Writing your research proposal
 - a. In-class Exercise: Presenting your proposal (presentation)
 - b. Assignment 4: Peer Proposal Feedback

Course Text:

Kenzer, Martin S. 2000. *On Becoming a Professional Geographer*. The Blackburn Press: Caldwell, NJ. Additional readings will be either supplied or available online.

<u>Evaluation:</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
4 x small assignments (5% each)	20	
Assignment 1: Organize your life		Week 3
Assignment 2: Situating yourself		Week 5
Assignment 3: Book review		Week 9
Assignment 4: Peer proposal evaluation		Week 12
Graduate Journal	30	Weekly entries; Final due Dec 4
Research Proposal	30	Dec 4 (last day of classes)
Class Participation	20	

NOTE: There is no final exam in this course

Evaluation will be completed and expressed in raw marks throughout the course. Grades (A, B, C, D) will be assigned only to the final distribution of marks for the course. Such assignment will be based on a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in this class and remains unofficial until approved by Faculty Council or its designate.

Small Assignments

These assignments are designed to keep students on track in organizing themselves, situating themselves (and their work) in the discipline, and developing critical skills in reading, proposal development, writing, and critique.

Graduate Journal

Students are expected to make at least 2 entries per week to an online journal (about 30-60 minutes per entry) between September 5 and December 4. These entries are to cover students' perceptions of their own learning process, insights into academic culture, and 'free-thinking' linkages between students' academic lives and real-world examples.

Research Proposal

Through the term students are expected to develop a research proposal in conjunction with their supervisors. Students will be given several opportunities to receive guidance and feedback on their working proposals, including a peer-review process late in the term. Final proposals are due in the last week of classes and are expected to be of sufficient quality to pass departmental review processes.

Participation

This course is designed around students taking an active and participatory role in their own education. Therefore students are expected to prepare well and attend class regularly, submit assignments on time, and participate in class discussions and peer feedback exercises.

Why I Teach EAS 590

Taking the big step from undergraduate to a master's program, or from a master's to a PhD, means walking into a new and exciting world. In the past, the academic life has been one shrouded in mystery and full of unwritten rules and unknown expectations. However the academic world is just like any other culture – there are norms of behaviour, sets of expectations (most of them quite realistic) and, most importantly, skills that students can develop to set

themselves up for success. This course is very much designed along the lines of “things I wish people had told me when I started grad school”. I draw on the opinions of previous grads and current faculty members (some of them your own supervisors!) to help students understand how the academic world works and what they need to do to succeed. Graduate school should be an exciting, stimulating, and (yes, I can say it) enjoyable experience. My job in this course is to help you learn about what will be expected of you over the next 2-4 years, what skills might need development in your own repertoire, and what you – as an individual – think is important for your own growth and development as a new ‘academic in training’. We’ll talk about organizational tricks and tips, the writing process, student-supervisor relationships, proposal writing, and how external funding works. Finally, we will develop strategies for explaining to young children that you are in “Grade 18” and answering the ever-popular family dinner question, “you mean you’re *still* in school? Shouldn’t you have a job by now?” Through this course I hope to help you, with your supervisor, ensure you complete your graduate program on time, with the greatest ease, the least hassle, and the most success. It’s a great journey!

My Teaching & Learning Philosophy

By graduate school, I assume that students are here because they are bright, are hard workers, and have a keen sense of inquiry. I encourage you to read broadly, bring questions and insights to class, and for us all to learn very much *with* each other as much as *from* each other.

Legally-Required Statements

“Policy about course outlines can be found in 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.” (GFC 29 Sep 2003).

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/wecretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” (GFC 29 Sep 2003).

No student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as their own.

No student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has been obtained by the Student or which as previously been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.