

Geography 4800
Fall 2026 Geography Capstone
T, TR 2:20pm – 3:40pm ENV 391

Professor	Mara Hedrich
Office	Environmental Science Building (ENV) 325K
Office hours	T, TR 1:50pm – 2:20pm in room ENV 325K OR by appointment/Zoom
Call or Text	(469) 667- 5819
Email	Mara.Hedrich@unt.edu (**Always refer to this syllabus before you send an email**)
Email and Text Policy	When you email or text, please make sure to use “GEOG 4800” in subject line and sign message with your full name.

Required Textbook

Reading Materials are posted on Canvas.

PowerPoint Presentations

PowerPoints are available on Canvas before the material has been covered in class.

Description: This is the synthesizing capstone course designed for geography seniors. While much of the course will focus on developing and writing a research proposal (prospectus), the skills gained in this process are transferable to any career path. In addition to research development, students will receive in-depth instruction on career preparation. This includes engaging in mock interviews, crafting geography-related interview answers, and honing essential interview skills. Students will also curate their professional profiles, ensuring they are well-prepared to enter the workforce or pursue further academic opportunities. The course is designed to not only advance students' research capabilities but also to equip them with the practical tools necessary for professional success in geography-related careers.

In this course, students will engage in extensive literature research to identify and refine their areas of research interest, leading to the formulation of specific research question(s). The course is designed to culminate in the development of a comprehensive research prospectus, which will serve as a foundational document for future research endeavors.

The primary goal of this course is to bridge the gap between the structured learning environment of undergraduate education and the independent research required for success in geography-related careers and graduate programs. By the end of the course, students will have gained valuable experience in critical thinking, research design, and academic writing, all of which are essential skills for professional development in the field of geography.

This course can therefore be seen as a professional development class, equipping students with the tools and confidence needed to pursue advanced studies or to enter the workforce as competent and skilled geographers. The emphasis on independent research prepares students to tackle real-world geographical challenges and contributes to their growth as self-reliant and capable researchers.

Objectives: Students will be able to: identify relevant geographical research problems; find and evaluate relevant literature sources; create a research prospectus; develop writing and presentation skills; and have the skills to obtain a career or graduate program.

Attendance/Absences

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your

attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

Only the instructor can excuse a student from a course requirement or responsibility. When conflicts or absences can be anticipated, such as University sponsored activities and religious observations, the student should inform the instructor of the situation as far in advance as possible and provide the regular documentation. For unanticipated or emergency absences when advance notification to an instructor is not possible, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible by email and provide the regular documentation.

If students do not contact the professor in a timely manner with proper documentation before or after each absence, the privilege of submitting makeup work, presentation, etc. will be revoked resulting in a zero for each assignment.

****Importantly, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, notify your academic advisor and notify me via email. Arrangements will be made based on your situation.**

While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important. **

Floating Mental Health and Wellness Day: Students are encouraged to take care of their mental health. Students may take **ONE** mental health day during the semester, no questions asked. Notify the instructor in advance to arrange deadlines or class activities. Students may **NOT** have a mental health day on the day of their scheduled presentation. Failure to communicate with the instructor prior will be met with consequences including receiving a grade of zero. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor before missing class.

Grade Breakdown	Total Points
Exercises	20%
In-Class Experiences	10%
Presentation Critiques	5%
PowerPoint Presentation of Proposal	25%
Prospectus	40%

Letter Grade Structure

A: 89.5% - 100%

B: 79.5% - 89.4%

C: 69.5% - 79.4%

D: 59.5% - 69.4%

F: < 59.5%

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

Exercises: 20 Percent

Several exercises will be conducted through the semester.

Each exercise is designed for students to achieve timely progression towards course goals.

Upload the exercises to Canvas as a **Word** file by the due date.

Students caught cheating, facilitating cheating, dual submission, or plagiarizing will receive an "F" for the course.

In-Class Experiences: 10 Percent

Students will lead and/or engage in class activities and discussions.

Several activities are posted on the tentative schedule on the syllabus. Others will be impromptu (not scheduled).

Presentation Critiques: 5 Percent

Students will attend **ALL** 'PowerPoint Presentation of Prospectus' sessions and provide a critique on three (3) presentations per session.

Critique Documents will be available on Canvas prior to presentations and hard copies will be furnished the day of. Each document will contain prompts such as topic, literature review, presentation style, etc.

This is a unique learning environment where students will not only learn from one another, but also provide support by attendance and participation. As geographers, we are here to help each other learn and advance in research, careers, and academia.

Critiques are due each day when presentations conclude.

PowerPoint Presentation of Proposal: 25 Percent

Semester coursework will lead students to present their PowerPoint presentation of the proposal.

Presentations should be 15 minutes, with an additional 5 minutes for questions/comments.

Students will incorporate any feedback on the presentation into their prospectus.

Students are expected to be present for every meeting of this class until prospectus presentations conclude.

Once presentations begin, students are required to attend **ALL** presentation sessions. Students should not arrive late or attend one presentation in a session, then leave. This is designed to help students identify the strengths of their peers' research and presentations, as well as areas where improvements can be made.

Upload your presentation to Canvas as a pdf or ppt file by 11:59 p.m. of the due date.

Prospectus: 40 Percent

The research prospectus takes the research plan and fleshes it out into a complete written work. Remember that proposals are used to evaluate whether a project should be allowed to go forward or whether it should be funded. Thus, the proposal is not a collection of facts about a topic, but an argument that you are making about the utility and validity of the research, as well as your competence as the project director. Why should a company, municipality, advisor, or funding agency put time and money into this research project and into you as the project director?

The prospectus should be 15+ pages of text, double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point font, and contain 15-20 literature citations.

Upload the prospectus to Canvas as a **Word** file by 11:59 p.m. of the due date.

Make-up Work

You are responsible for managing your time and keeping up with the course. Make-up work will only be allowed if students contact the professor in a timely matter with proper documentation before or after each absence.

Students not in compliance will lose the privilege of submitting makeup work, presentation, etc. will be revoked resulting in a zero for each assignment.

Moreover, it is the student's responsibility to make sure you have a reliable Internet connection when completing online work. Late materials will not be accepted due to Internet issues at your location. They will also not be accepted just because you "forgot" to complete the assignment.

SPOT (The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT.)

This short survey will be made available near the end of the semester. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations" with the survey link. Please look for the email in your UNT email inbox.

To encourage students to do evaluations, completing the course evaluation is extra-credit. Every student who completes a SPOT and submit the screen shot of the completion confirmation through Canvas link will **receive 3 points toward your overall final grade. Just doing the evaluation without submitting your screenshot does not count. Be sure to NOT send any of your responses – those need to stay anonymous.*

Diversity Statement

Students are expected to show respect for the instructor, each other, and all guest presenters. No racism, sexism, homophobia, or other hateful speech will be tolerated.

I want to create a safe and positive learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). To help accomplish this:

- Let me know if you have a preferred name and/or set of pronouns.
- Don't hesitate to talk with me if you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class. I can be a resource for you or direct you to needed resources.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Student Resources

Whether you're struggling to finish your last year or balancing college and a career, college is a transitional phase for most of us. Money may be tight, and we may face obstacles we hadn't anticipated. If you're hungry, sick, or housing insecure it's hard to focus on getting the most out of your education. Below I've listed some resources available for common issues, but there are many more resources on campus and in the community. Please feel free to talk to me about any of these resources or if you need help with an issue not addressed here.

Mental Health

For many of us college is when we learn to self-soothe our stress and manage our time wisely. This alone can be quite difficult. Add in substance abuse, eating disorders, dysfunctional relationships, trauma, depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, ADHD, autism, and/or schizophrenia and things can quickly escalate out of control. Young adults are especially vulnerable to developing severe mental illness, serious diseases that get worse without management. The resources below offer individual, group, and couples counseling or medication. Seeking help for mental health issues before they get worse is a responsible step toward adult self-care and future stability.

- UNT Counseling and Testing (Short-term counseling and referrals)
 - Chestnut Hall #311
 - (940) 565-2741
- UNT Psychology Clinic (Longer-term talk therapy)
 - 1611 W. Mulberry St. (Chilton Hall)
 - (940) 565-2631
- UNT Psychiatry (Medication, no talk therapy)
 - Chestnut Hall
 - (940) 565-2333
- S.U.R.E Center
 - Substance Use Resource and Education Center
 - Provides self-assessments and connections to both on and off campus recovery options
 - <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/sure-center>

Hunger

As college prices soar and student employment options diminish, the Government Accountability Office estimates that 30% of college students are food insecure. You do not have to go hungry. The resources below can offer some relief.

- UNT Food Pantry
 - Any current UNT student in need can visit the Food Pantry 8am-7pm Monday-Thursday and 8am-5pm on Fridays during the long semesters.
 - Students will check-in at the Dean of Students Office front desk in the Union, Suite 409.
 - Students may go directly to room 366 from 5pm-7pm, Monday-Thursday
 - There is also a pantry located at the Discovery Park in Room A160 next to the College of Engineering-Office of the Dean. The Discovery Park location is open Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm.
- Our Daily Bread
 - 300 West Oak Street, Suite 100
 - (940) 566-1308
 - <https://www.ourdailybreaddenton.org/>
 - Our Daily Bread is a community soup kitchen with no requirement to prove income or need. You can just walk in, no questions asked. They provide:

- Breakfast Monday-Saturday
- Snack packs for Sundays
- Lunch Monday-Saturday
- Occasional dinners

Various

- UNT Legal Assistance
 - StudentLegal@unt.edu
 - (940) 565-2614
 - <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>
- Nest Watchers
 - Draw on the UNT student population to find babysitters so you can attend class or study
 - Students have undergone background checks
 - <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-activities-center/programs-and-services/nest-watchers>
- Student Money Management Center
 - Learn to budget and make the most of your student salary.
 - Emergency aid available
 - <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-money-management-center>
- Student Veteran Services
 - Help with VA benefits, enrollment, graduation <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-veteran-services>

Accessibility and Accommodations (Phone 940-565-4323) <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. If you seek accommodation, first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify your eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to me to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in this course. You may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation.

Class Disruptions are defined as activities that distract the instructor or other students from the course content. Such activities include talking or whispering, cell phones ringing, tardiness or whispering about another tardy student, noisily preparing to leave the class prior to the end of the period, etc. As a college student, you are considered a responsible adult. Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the University of North Texas college code of student conduct. Disruptive students will be asked to leave the class. *Repeat offenders may be withdrawn and reported to the Dean of Students Office (DOS).*

Student Conduct Policies Remember that you have agreed to follow the UNT Code of Student Conduct. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Such activities include talking or whispering, cell phones ringing, tardiness or whispering about another tardy student, noisily preparing to leave the class prior to the end of the period, etc. As a college student, you are considered a responsible adult. Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the University of North Texas college code of student conduct.

If students cannot comply with classroom etiquette, the student will be asked to leave AND will not have the opportunity to submit makeup work. Students will receive only one (1) warning. If it happens again, the student **will be dropped from the course with a grade of 'F' (failing) and a violation report will be filed.** "The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc." The Student Code of Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

Rule #1: Be on time and do not leave early. Students that must leave class early are expected to inform the instructor before class begins and to sit where their departure will not disturb others.

If there is an extenuating circumstance, notify me within seven (7) days before/after the incident. Students who arrive late or leave early without notifying the instructor and fail to provide documentation pertaining to the reason, will not be eligible for makeup work.

A repeated problem will result in the student being dropped from the class and reported to the Dean of Students Office (DOS).

Rule #2: Turn off all non-medical electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops (except to take notes), etc. Remove headphones and earbuds. Do not work on unrelated assignments, surf the net, or spend time on social media during class. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and will not be eligible for makeup work.

A repeated problem will result in the student being dropped from the class and reported to the Dean of Students Office (DOS).

Rule #3: Don't sleep or talk to neighbors during class. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and will not be eligible for makeup work.

A repeated problem will result in the student being dropped from the class and reported to the Dean of Students Office (DOS).

Rule #4: **Have fun, learn cool stuff about Geography and prepare for an awesome career in the field of Geography!**

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that UNT holds. *Cheating, facilitating cheating, plagiarizing, dual submission, or utilizing AI* in this class is **ABSOLUTELY NOT TOLERATED** and is a serious breach of academic standards. Cheating, facilitating cheating, plagiarizing, dual submission, or using AI outside the instruction of the course will be punished severely and will result in a student receiving an 'F' (failing) for the course and other measures. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs and The Dean of Students for further penalty. All efforts for this course must represent only the student's own work, unless otherwise stated in the directions. Use of unauthorized materials or assistance is grounds for failure in the course.

According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: (a) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (b) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (c) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; (d) dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or (e) any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. Altering a returned test and claiming a grader or scanning machine made an error is also considered cheating. The term "plagiarism" includes but is not limited to: (a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. To view UNT's academic conduct policies: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/fs/resources/academic/integrity>

AI Use in This Course

AI tools may be utilized by the instructor to provide examples in assignment feedback and during the review of final papers. Additionally, one assignment will involve students drafting a section of their paper, using AI to assist with revisions, and reflecting on the process. These activities are designed to enhance students' understanding of writing and editing techniques while promoting critical engagement with AI tools.

Students are encouraged to use AI tools only as directed and within the scope of assigned activities. Any unauthorized use of AI to write assignments or the final paper without the instructor's approval will be considered a violation of academic integrity and may result in a zero for the assignment and/or further disciplinary action per university policies.

TENTATIVE Fall 2026 Schedule

**** Subject to change by the instructor as needed. Any updates will be announced in class AND posted on Canvas. ****

Dates	Topics & Reading Materials
Week 1 Aug 18	Selfie Ice Breaker.pdf Introduction & Syllabus.pdf I. Your Passion Project.pdf Research Prospectus Requirements.doc
Aug 20	II. Where To Begin.pdf Example Research Projects.pdf In-class Experience: Discuss Project Ideas <i>Discuss Exercise 1. Interests and Project Ideas</i>
Week 2 Aug 25	III. Asking Questions, Finding Answers.pdf Topic Help.pdf In-class Experience: Writing Sprint with Prompts
Aug 27	In-class Experience: Small Group Discussions About Passion Project Ideas
Sunday, Aug 30	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #1 Interests and Project Ideas
Week 3 Sept 1	How to Write a Research Prospectus.pdf <i>Discuss Exercise 2. Literature Review Outline</i> How to Conduct a Literature Review.pdf https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/writing_a_literature_review.html
Sept 3	In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of Literature Review Outline In-class Experience: Literature Review Scavenger Hunt
Week 4 Sept 8	<i>Discuss Exercise 3. Problem Statement and Methods</i> How to Write a Problem Statement.pdf Research Foundations Workshop: Building Paragraphs, Outlines, and Literature Reviews In-class Experience: Paragraph Development with AI Enhancement
Sept 10	In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of Problem Statement and Methods In-class Experience: Reverse Outlining
Sunday, Sept 13	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #2 Literature Review Outline
Week 5 Sept 15	Tips for PowerPoint Presentations.pdf How to Prepare for Presentations: 3MT Presentation Presenting a Thesis in Three Minutes <i>Discuss Exercise 4. Interview Questions & Resume or CV Draft</i> <i>Discuss Exercise 5. LinkedIn Profile</i>
Sept 17	In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of Interview Questions and Resume In-class Experience: Prospectus Speed Review. Four Reviewers. Four Perspectives. One Better Prospectus.
Sunday, Sept 20	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #3 Problem Statement and Methods
Tues, Sept 22	Due by 2:20pm Arrive Prepared with Both Documents Read
Week 6 Sept 22	Readings: Science relies on constructive criticism. Here's how to keep it useful and respectful.pdf Constructive criticism that works.pdf In-class Experience: Constructive Criticism Workshop
Sept 24	In-class Experience: 'Elevator Speech' of your Prospectus (2 mins or less) – come prepared!
Week 7	Career Development Workshop: Interview Prep, Resume, & Networking (<i>See Canvas for Materials</i>)

Sept 29	In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of LinkedIn Profile
Oct 1	In-class Experience: Mock Interviews (<i>Career Center Advisors as Guests</i>) 3 Bonus Points towards course grade for Attending a Resume or Interview Session in the Career Center
Sunday, Oct 4	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #4 Interview Questions & Resume or CV Draft
Sunday, Oct 4	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #5 LinkedIn Profile
Week 8 Oct 6, 8	Discuss Exercise 6. Prospectus Presentation Rough Draft In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of Prospectus Presentations In-class Experience: Progress Showcase
Week 9 Oct 13	Discuss Exercise 7. Prospectus Rough Draft In-class Activity: Data and Methods Workshop
Oct 15	In-class Experience: Interactive Assessment of Prospectus Papers In-class Experience: Peer Review Speed Dating
Sunday, Oct 18	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #6 Prospectus Presentation Rough Draft
Week 10 Oct 20, 22	In-class Experience: Citation and Integration Game In-class Experience: Peer Editing Workshops
Week 11 Oct 27, 29	PowerPoint Presentation of Proposal Sessions 1A & 1B All students must fully attend every session Students are required to write a brief critique on 3 presentations
Week 12 Nov 3, 5	PowerPoint Presentation of Proposal Sessions 2A & 2B All students must fully attend every session Students are required to write a brief critique on 3 presentations <i>*All critiques will be graded and returned*</i> <i>Students need to be in attendance to receive materials</i> Session 2B critiques will be copied after class and materials will be dispersed
Week 13 Nov 10, 12	Students are to take time to complete all necessary materials Contact the instructor for assistance – I am here to help!
Sunday, Nov 15	Due by 11:59pm Exercise #7 Prospectus Rough Draft
Week 14 Nov 17, 19	Students are to take time to complete all necessary materials Contact the instructor for assistance – I am here to help!
Week 15 Nov 23-27	No Class Thanksgiving Break
Week 16 Dec 1, 3	Students are to take time to complete all necessary materials Contact the instructor for assistance – I am here to help!
Tuesday, Dec 3	Due by 11:59pm Prospectus Due