

URBAN GEOGRAPHY TERM PAPERS

FALL 2003

GENERAL INFORMATION

- TASK** Write a research paper on a urban geography topic of your choosing. A hard copy of the paper is due in my mailbox (Ellison Hall 3611) on December 2nd before 4pm. The paper will be graded on both the content and the quality of the writing. The overall composition of the paper as well as the grammar, usage, and mechanics should all be in order in the final version.
- GOALS** The domain of urban geography is vast and it encompasses many interesting topics that we will not be covering during the ten week course. The purpose of the term paper is to supplement the course content by allowing you to identify an urban geography topic and explore it in greater depth. Topics can build on material from the syllabus and lecture, or pull from other interests you might have that intersect with the content of urban geography. If you have questions please discuss them with me before you go too far.
- STYLE** The paper should be approximately 15 pages, typed double-space and set in a standard size font (for example, 12 point, Times New Roman). The paper should be ordered into the following sections: (1) Title Page, (2) Abstract, (3) Main Body, (4) Bibliography, (5) Endnotes, (6) Tables, and (7) Figures. The 15-20 page limit *only* includes the Main Body. That is, sections 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 are not part of the page count. Also note that tables and figures should not be imbedded in the text. The paper should properly cite a wide range of external resources including books, academic journal articles, or periodicals. Over-reliance on web-based sources will be penalized. The bibliography and citations in the paper should use standard formatting following the *MLA handbook for writers of research papers* (Achttert and Gibaldi) or *A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations* (Turabian). Both books will be on reserve in the RBS.
- LOGISTICS** The term paper will become unwieldy if you leave the research and writing to the last week of the quarter. To help make the research a pleasant and rewarding experience, I have set a series of deadlines that break the paper into smaller, more manageable steps. On October 6th you will turn in a proposed paper title and a 100 word abstract describing the proposed topic. On October 29th you are required to hand in a complete annotated bibliography for the paper. The annotations should briefly describe the nature of the resource and its relevance to your topic in one or two sentences. A complete draft of the paper is due on November 21st and the final version is due on December 2th.

RESEARCH-WRITING PROCESS GUIDE

1. Selecting a topic:
 - Find a subject that interests you.
 - Do you find the topic fascinating enough to hold your attention during the research phase?
 - Does the topic build on existing academic interest you have?
 - Do you have moderate- to strong-opinions related to the topic?
 - Limit the scope of the topic to something that is manageable within the page limit.

2. Gathering sources:

Literature searches:

- Online catalogues (MELVYL, PEGASUS)
- Edited volumes, identifies core sets of authors working on topic.
- References from references.
- Academic journals: *Journal of the American Planning Association, Planning, Urban Geography, Urban Studies, Housing Policy Debate, Cityscape, Professional Geographer, Association of American Geographers, Regional Studies.*

Government data sources:

Federal data sources

- Bureau of Census (www.census.gov)
- Bureau of Economic Analysis (www.bea.gov)
- Regional Economic Information System (CD-ROM in govt. pubs.)

Local/regional data sources

- Planning departments, NGOs, Regional Associations of Governments, Port Authorities, Chamber of Commerce.
- State agencies: demographic or economic development units.

3. Working bibliography:

- Preliminary, ongoing record of all sources of information you use in your paper.
- Organizes and tracks the sources of information.
- Choose a bibliographic and reference style and be consistent throughout the paper and bibliography.
- Notes either kept separately or work towards an annotated bibliography.

4. Taking notes:

- Annotations in book or article (if you own it or make a photocopy)
- Quotes, paraphrasing, summarizing, outlining
- You may want to use index cards or a spiral notebook
- Use some consistent organizational style.

5. Brainstorming-discovering-organizing ideas:

- Free association or brainstorming to figure out how much you know and how you have digested the material.
- Mapping - clustering, listing, outlining to identify topics, supporting topics, concepts, and ideas and their interrelationships.

6. Outlining:

- Organize your ideas from number 5.
- Culminate in a sketch outline as a tentative structure to paper
- Will the structure work as a composition?

7. First draft:

- Continuous writing, not worrying about grammar, spelling, or details.
- Main thing... push forward through each section of the outline.
- Physical environment is important; find a location that is quiet and where there will be no

interruptions. Also, find a place where you can spread out your material.

8. Revisions:

- Writing is an iterative process.
- Revisions target different elements: strategy, composition, style, grammar, mechanics.
- Keep the drafts as separate word processing files (e.g. G108 draft 11-1.doc, G108 draft 11-5.doc)

9. External review:

- Have a friend read your paper and make comments.
- Read a friends paper and make comments.

10. Final edit:

- Make sure all the details are in order. Both computer and visual spell checks to catch any typos.
- Are all of the citations and the bibliography in order?
- Are the page numbers correct?
- Are the tables and figures in final form?

THE COMPILATION AND USE OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Using tables and figures in an undergraduate paper can become burdensome and awkward. I do not expect you to collect and tabulate your own data for the paper. If you do have rudimentary skills in spreadsheet analysis or experience with statistical software you can try to carry out your own analysis and produce your own tables or figures. If not, you should not feel compelled to include tables and figures in your paper. They should only be included to the extent that they add to or clarify the arguments you are making. You can use tables or figures from other sources as long as you provide a citation to the source.