

# GEO 435.101 Research Methods in Geography

1:25 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, LSCB 018

Dr. Carol Sawyer

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**Course Webpage:** <http://www.southalabama.edu/geography/sawyer/geo435.html>

**Office Hours:** 9:30 am – 11:30 am Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:30-11:30 am Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 pm Tuesdays, *or by appointment*

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of GEO 435 are to help students develop an understanding of Geography as a profession, the professional ethics associated with being a scientist, and career opportunities open to geographers. The course will introduce students to the scientific research aspects of Geography, including problem statements or research hypotheses, types of data and data collection methods, and the statistical and graphic analysis of data. In completing this objectives, students will expand upon and strengthen each student's computer competency, particularly in working with spreadsheets and giving presentations.

**PRE-REQUISITES:** Junior or Senior standing (i.e. student should be within 3 semesters of graduation), Statistics 210 or equivalent, CIS 150 or have passed computer proficiency exam

## GENERAL LIST OF TOPICS

Becoming a Professional Geographer & the Geography discipline	Nature of Scientific Research
Problem statements and research hypotheses	Formulation of the Research Design
Collecting background information	The study area
Measurement and data collection	Data Analysis
Discussing your data	Presenting data, working with visual aids

**TEXTBOOK:** We will be using *Key Methods in Geography*, edited by Nicholas J. Clifford and Gill Valentine. (ISBN: 978-0761974925), in the paperback (2<sup>nd</sup>) edition. Additional readings from other textbooks and articles will be handed out in class or posted on the course website. It is the student's responsibility to read all assigned readings in preparation for the exams.

**ATTENDANCE and CLASSROOM POLICIES:** Students are expected to be on time and *stay* the entire time for ALL classes. Please keep in mind that missing any class, excused or not, will likely have a detrimental affect on your grade. Please adhere to the policy on classroom etiquette; these include no talking during the lecture, reading the newspaper or other non-course related material, coming late, sleeping, texting/messaging, or leaving early. Turn off all cell phones and any text messaging devices and put them away! Texting during class will result in you being asked to leave the class.

**EVALUATION AND GRADING POLICIES:** Grading is from course attendance, activities and exercises, presentations, participation, and two examinations.

- Thirty-five percent of the course grade will be based on 2 exams: a midterm and a final. The final exam will be cumulative. The exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.
- Attendance (10%) will be taken each time the class meets. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet when it is passed around the room.
- Forty-two percent of the course grade is from activities and exercises completed both inside and outside of the classroom. These activities include using different methods to collect data, working on a computer to collect and input data, designing a research plan, and presenting information to the class. These exercises will be assigned throughout the semester.

- This is an active course - you are expected to participate in collecting data, answering questions, assisting with a design of a research project, and help your fellow classmates. Five percent of the course grade is acquired from participation; however, other grade components are likely to also be affected if you do not participate in the course.
- A term paper, worth 8% of the course grade, is due on November 20<sup>th</sup>, by 5 pm. It can be turned in either via email or placed in my mail box in the department's main office. Papers turned in past the deadline will be considered late. Further instructions on the paper will be given at a later time.

**Final grades** are strictly based on the following scale: 100-90=**A**, 89-80= **B**, 79-70=**C**, 69-60=**D**, 59- **F**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Component</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Exam 1	15	Research methods paper	8
Final Exam	20	Participation	5
Activities & Exercises	42	Attendance	10

**MAKEUP EXAMS AND LATE WORK POLICY:** Make up exams must be scheduled as soon as possible. You should email me when you miss an exam and arrange a time to take it **BEFORE** the next class meeting if at all possible to schedule a makeup exam. All legitimate excuses require written validation. Valid excuses include: illness (your's or a dependent's), a death in the immediate family, or participating in a university-sponsored event. Only exceptional excuses from work-related absences are accepted. Make up exams *will be different from the original exam*. Late assignments lose value at a rate of 10% per day. If you cannot attend class to turn in your assignment on time, either give it to a classmate to turn in for you, deliver it to the office ahead of time, or email it to me before class.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** The University of South Alabama provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, students with bona bide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodations. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify me and provide certification from Disability Services (Office of Special Student Services). OSSS is located in room 270 of the Student Center (460-7212).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY:** All members of the academic community are responsible for supporting freedom and openness through rigorous personal standards of honesty and fairness. The University of South Alabama is committed to the fundamental values of preserving academic honesty as defined in the Student Handbook: The Lowdown. Plagiarism is using somebody else's ideas in your writing without correctly identifying such sources. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty undermine the very purpose of the university and diminish the value of an education and must be avoided. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from receiving a zero on an exam or assignment to probation and expulsion.

**CHANGES:** The class schedule is tentative and may be changed if necessary. Students will receive at least 48 hours notice **by university email** if possible.

**Important dates:**

Monday, October 5 <sup>th</sup> : Midterm
Friday, November 20 <sup>th</sup> , 5:00 PM: Papers due
Monday, November 30 <sup>th</sup> : Class presentations
Monday, December 7 <sup>th</sup> : Final Exam 1:00 – 3:00 pm