

INFORMATION ON THE HONOURS THESIS

GEOGRAPHY 4000 6.0



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY ❖ YORK UNIVERSITY

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ATTACHMENT: HONOURS THESIS APPROVAL FORM

GENERAL INFORMATION

The York University Calendar for AP/SC/GEOG 4000 6.0 Honours Thesis reads: An independent piece of research done under the supervision of a faculty advisor. The thesis must be submitted before the end of classes in the Winter Term; an exact date is established each year. There is an oral examination on the Honours Thesis.

Prerequisites: Fourteen full-course equivalents (84 credits) passed.

The following information is intended as a guide to assist students in fulfilling the above requirements.

N.B.: To be recorded as SC/GEOG 4000.06 (i.e., as a *Science* credit), the Thesis must be on an approved topic in physical geography.

The Honours Thesis is the equivalent of one full course and is normally taken during a student's final year of studies for the Honours degree.

1. Schedule of Work Required

A. *In the Winter Term and in the Summer Term before the final year*

- i. A Thesis Proposal (see below) is to be submitted to the office of the Course Secretary for approval.
- ii. If revisions are necessary to the original proposal, these must be made as soon as possible so that an acceptable proposal is ready by the last day of final exams in the penultimate year.
- iii. Research should begin during the summer.

B. *During the final year*

- i. Research and the writing of the first draft will continue during the Fall Term.
- ii. The Thesis, in first draft, is to be submitted to your Thesis Advisor on or before 13 February.*
- iii. The Thesis, in final form, is to be submitted to the Office of the Course Secretary, *not* to your Advisor, on or before 20 March. Unless there is medical justification, no Thesis will be accepted after that deadline and a grade of F will be recorded.
- iv. The oral examination period shall be from 1 - 14 April. The exact date and time will be arranged by the Thesis Advisor in consultation with the student and the Second Reader. The examiners will normally be the Advisor and the Second Reader. The duration of the oral examination will be approximately one hour. The Advisor is responsible for submitting the grade to the Course Coordinator. On occasion the examiners may find that a Thesis is satisfactory, but that minor corrections must be made and the Thesis resubmitted to the Thesis Advisor in its final form within one week from the date of the oral examination. No final grade will be accepted by the Course Coordinator from the Thesis Advisor until all required changes have been satisfactorily completed.

2. **Subject Matter of Thesis**

The choice of subject matter for the Thesis is initially the responsibility of each student, but is contingent on approval by the Geography faculty.

When choosing a topic for the Honours Thesis, the following procedure may prove useful. First, decide upon the branch of Geography in which you would like to work. Second, choose a specific geographical problem within the selected field. Third, decide upon the time period to which your study will refer. Finally, select a Thesis Advisor (see point 5, below) and consult informally *before* drafting a Thesis Proposal.

*To withdraw without penalty, students must withdraw by the deadline date for withdrawal from full courses announced by the University, and by written memo to the Course Director with a copy to the thesis supervisor.

3. Preparation of a Thesis Proposal

The preparation of a Thesis Proposal is a part of the multifaceted task which lies ahead of you. A well conceived proposal not only informs others of what you intend to do but also provides *you* with a master plan with which to attack the problem you decide upon. Your proposal should clearly indicate that you have thought the problem through and that, while obviously you do not yet know the answers, you are asking the right questions and can see possible means of finding the answers.

A Thesis Proposal should normally contain the following elements, not necessarily in the order indicated:

- a. A tentative title.
- b. A clear statement of the geographical problem to be studied.
- c. An identification of the area to which the study will relate.
- d. A statement of the time period to which the study will refer.
- e. An outline of the steps or stages by which you intend to proceed.
- f. A statement regarding the methods you intend to use, including an outline of anticipated field work and other sources of data, and comments on the nature and availability of pertinent data.
- g. When the Thesis Proposal has been approved by your Advisor, it shall be deposited, along with a signed copy of the HONOURS THESIS APPROVAL FORM (sample attached) with the Course Secretary in N418 Ross.

4. The Research Programme: Some Requirements

- a. Some students will select Thesis topics which involve field studies. If field work is undertaken as part of summer employment, to protect both student and employer the written permission of the employer must be obtained by the student before using data so collected. It may be necessary to collect field data in addition to material collected as part of the terms of reference of a specific summer job.
- b. The student is expected to do a thorough bibliographic study on the Thesis topic, and to read relevant studies by others.
- c. From time to time students will normally be asked by their Thesis Advisor or by the Course Coordinator to give an account of their progress.

5. Selection of a Thesis Advisor

The Thesis Advisor shall be a member of the tenure-stream faculty in the Department of Geography in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. Students should note, in particular, that contract faculty (i.e., instructors who are not members of the tenure stream) are not eligible to serve as Thesis Advisors.

While the primary responsibility for preparation of the Thesis rests with the student, the Advisor will give such assistance as is possible to the student without impinging upon the student's own responsibility. The Advisor is responsible for recommending approval of both the proposal and the final Thesis to the Geography faculty.

6. Selection of Second Reader

The Advisor and student together decide on the selection of a Second Reader by November 1 of the student's Thesis year.

7. Relationship of Student, Thesis Advisor and Second Reader

The Thesis is an independent research project. This is what makes Geography AP/SC/GEOG 4000.06 distinctive among the 20 courses which students take for an Honours Degree.

Advisors differ in how they work with students. At a minimum, the Advisor will discuss the nature of the proposed research topic with the student, covering matters such as the following: the scope of the topic; how to go about doing the research (including source materials and previous studies); design of the research project; organization of material; and ways of analysing and presenting data. While the Advisor will thoroughly read the first draft and criticize it, the student has the responsibility of writing it.

Students writing their first drafts will run into difficulties if they fail to meet the prescribed deadlines. If the first draft comes in late, thorough criticism by the Advisor is not possible and students do not have adequate time to consider the criticism, do more research (even when it is clearly necessary) and make any revisions they feel are warranted. It is the student's responsibility to submit the first draft of the Thesis in sufficient time for a critical reading, so deadlines should be heeded. Faculty members have many university, personal and other responsibilities, and it is unreasonable to expect an Advisor to drop all of them the moment a Thesis is submitted.

The role of the Second Reader will also differ from faculty member to faculty member. In some instances there will be an agreement among the student, the Advisor, the Course Coordinator and the Second Reader that the latter will play a major role in advising on research design and methods, working in close association with the Advisor. Normally the Second Reader will not read the first draft minutely but might skim through it to see how the research is being done. In some cases, the Second Reader may not even look at the first draft. However, students should be in contact with the Second Reader from time to time to report on progress and discuss what is being done.

8. Presentation of the Completed Thesis

a. Length

The primary concern of the student should be with quality rather than quantity. However, as a guideline for length, an Honours Thesis will normally be in the range of 30-50 pages (not including bibliography, figures and tables) of typescript, double-spaced, one side only, on 8½" x 11" or 215 x 279 mm paper. Not included in the 50 pages are: table of contents; lists of figures or tables; the abstract and the bibliography; supporting materials such as maps, photographs, drawings, graphs. Appendices will not be included as part of the maximum count, but the student should note that appendices must be restricted to supporting evidence essential to the Thesis. When in doubt, always consult your Advisor.

b. Format

Format includes such considerations as layout of the title page, margins, pagination, paper stock, layout of table of contents, placement of footnotes, etc. See style manuals recommended below.

c. Style

Style includes such considerations as punctuation, spelling, form of footnotes, form of bibliography, construction of tables, etc. See style manuals recommended below.

d. Maps and Diagrams

All maps and diagrams shall be prepared solely by the student submitting the Thesis and must be of a satisfactory standard. Maps will usually be of page size, but may be folded to page size. Note that all maps, graphs, diagrams and other illustrations (excluding tables) should be numbered as a single series and should be identified sequentially as Figure 1, Figure 2, and so forth.

e. Photographs

Photographs must be of a satisfactory standard, mounted properly on the same quality paper as the rest of the Thesis. Care must be taken in preparing captions for photographs.

f. Paper

The Thesis must be typed or printed on high quality paper, 8½" x 11" in size, and the same quality paper must be used throughout (20 lb bond is standard). The metric equivalent of 20 lb is 40 M.

g. Number of Copies

The only requirement is that the student must submit the *original typescript*. This original must be submitted unstapled and unpunched in a sturdy protective envelope or in a suitable box. Once the final revisions have been made to the thesis, the student is responsible for providing the Geography Department with an electronic copy, which will be made available through the Geography Department's Teaching Resources Centre.

For your own protection, back-up copies of each draft of the Thesis should always be held in safekeeping.

h. Abstract

An Abstract of *not more than one page*, double-spaced (approximately 200 words), is to be submitted and becomes part of the completed work.

9. Style Manuals

Baker, Sheridan. *The Practical Stylist*. Second Canadian edition. New York: Harper and Row, 1986.

Booth, Vernon. *Communicating in Science: Writing and Speaking*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. New York: Modern Language Association. Latest edition.

Strunk, William Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Third edition. New York: Macmillan, 1979.

NOTE: Discuss the selection of a style manual with your Thesis Advisor. There is no single “correct” style. It is important that you use an accepted style consistently. If a small style manual does not answer your questions, refer to *A Manual of Style*, University of Chicago Press, which is a large (ca. 500 pp.), widely used manual.

II

THESIS STRUCTURE AND PAGINATION

COMPONENTS		PAGINATION
Blank Page (no page number)	}	
Title Page (no page number)	{	(Preliminary Material)
Blank Page (no page number)	}	
Abstract (page no. iii)	}	
Preface (purpose, approach, acknowledgements)	}	
Table of Contents	{	Pages numbered at the bottom centre in lower-case Roman numerals, e.g. i, ii, v, x.
List of Figures	}	
List of Tables	}	
Body of Text	}	
Appendices	}	Pages numbered in upper right- hand corner in Arabic numerals, e.g., 1, 2, 5, 10, except first page of each chapter, appendix, bibliography, and vita, which are numbered at bottom centre. Alternatively, all page numbers can
Bibliography	}	
Vita	}	
Blank Page (no page number) can	}	

NOTE: Blank Pages protect the text and are required for binding.

III

AVAILABLE WORKING AREA: TITLE PAGE: ABSTRACT

Attached are samples of the above. The rectangle designating the available working area does *not* appear on *your* Title Page or Abstract. It is provided here as a guide: note how the working area is positioned on each page.

Title Page:

1. Note spacing.
2. Note use of capital letters and of lower case letters in the various components.
3. Fulfillment or fulfilment is optional usage.
4. Breaks in title should be logical.

AVAILABLE WORKING AREA

6 by 9 inches

To allow for trimming when bound

USE 8½" x 11", 20 LB BOND

**THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHY OF THE
SEVEN RANGES REGION OF ONTARIO
1933–1978**

by

RONALD WILLIAMS

Submitted in Fulfillment of the
Requirement of Geography AS/SC/GEOG 4000.06

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

YORK UNIVERSITY

NORTH YORK, ONTARIO

CANADA

1988

ABSTRACT

WILLIAMS, RONALD

THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHY OF
THE SEVEN RANGES REGION OF
ONTARIO 1933–1978

viii and 44 pp.

Honours Thesis, Department of
Geography, York University, North York,
Ontario, Canada, 1988.

(1–3 paragraphs of abstract statement)
(must be on ONE page only)

IV

EXPECTATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT

The standards of grading approved by the Council of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies apply to Geography AP/SC/GEOG 4000 6.0. An interpretation of these standards, as they apply to this course, is included here for information. These are guidelines.

1. Introduction

a. Substance and Originality

What constitutes a good Thesis topic in Geography at the undergraduate level? It should be a topic or problem in Geography which no one has investigated in exactly that way before. The question of “originality” is vexing and is dealt with more fully below. Defining the topic or problem with precision is important. The topic or problem should have sufficient substance that it demands intensive thinking and careful application of geographical methods and skills. At the same time the topic must be defined so that it is manageable in terms of collecting data, time spent on compiling and analysing the data, and the preparation of maps and diagrams and the written text. In brief, the completed Thesis must be a substantial piece of work which demands the best thinking and effort of senior honours undergraduates in Geography.

What about the question of originality? The student normally applies accepted methods to an untouched area of their usual subject matter or to new material or a new situation, so that the Thesis in that sense is an original contribution to knowledge. The presentation of an entirely new technique of analysis, a novel conceptual framework or a new geographical theory would also, of course, be acceptable. These high-order accomplishments, however, are understandably rare, and are not required for success at the undergraduate level (and indeed not usually at higher levels either).

b. Source Material

There must be adequate source material to do a Thesis on the topic defined, and students are responsible for collecting all necessary data. The sources may range from manuscript material deposited in archives and in other places, to published statistics and other numerical sources, to information collected through personal field observation, interviewing and questionnaires. Credit is not given for merely collecting these data; it is what is done with the data which is of importance. However, students will be penalized if there are unexplained and/or inexcusable gaps in the data as collected and presented; if there are errors in the data due to carelessness on the part of the student; and if variations in reliability and/or the appropriateness of the data to the topic are not adequately noted in the Thesis and/or taken into account in the analysis or synthesis.

c. Presentation of the Thesis

The presentation of the Thesis is a critical factor in its acceptance by the Department and in its evaluation. To be accepted by the Department for final examination the Thesis must be in the format prescribed elsewhere in this document, i.e., with the table of contents, list of figures, and so forth all in proper order, and the typing neatly and accurately done.

The prose must be lucid and correct, and the material must be clearly and logically organized. Maps and diagrams must be clearly prepared and well integrated into the text. The scholarly and critical apparatus (i.e., the footnotes and bibliography) must be presented appropriately and correctly.

2. Criteria for Determining Grades

For a Grade of A

(i) *Research*. The source material on which the Thesis is based is complete, appropriate, and accurately compiled. There is no doubt that the student has a full understanding of the Thesis problem, and that the methods are appropriate and applied impeccably. The analysis and/or synthesis must be thorough within the expressed limits of the topic, and the student must show an awareness of the limitations of the approach and of where further work might be done.

(ii) *Literature*. There must be an adequate demonstration of knowledge of the literature pertaining to the research topic. The student should evaluate and criticize previous research work in the area and indicate how his or her research relates and contributes to that body of research. The bibliography must be complete within the scale of the project.

(iii) *Presentation*. The Thesis must have a correct, lucid prose style; the material must be logically organized; the maps and diagrams must be clear, and well integrated into the text, and the footnotes and bibliography must be correct.

(iv) *Consistency*. The level of performance in all the basic aspects outlined above must be consistently high throughout the Thesis. That is, there must be no gaps, weak spots or lapses. Nor should there be additional material or “padding” quite unnecessary to the main argument of the Thesis.

For a Grade of B

The same general categories and comments hold as in the discussion of the criteria for a Grade of A. That is, the student must have fulfilled all the basic requirements of adequate source material, appropriateness of research design, analysis and/or synthesis, showing the relationship of the work to other relevant research, and correctness and clarity of presentation.

However, the work is not done as thoroughly as it could have been, even though the level of analysis is consistently high through the Thesis.

For a Grade of C

The same general categories and comments hold as in the discussion of the criteria for the Grade of A. However, the student is not in as firm control of methods of analysis as he or she could be, and there may be gaps in the research which should have been followed up, including gaps in source material.

For a Grade of D

There are deficiencies in substance and/or approach, the research is not thorough, and there are readily apparent gaps in the Thesis. However, the student is on the right track, and did collect sufficient material to make the study possible, even though he or she has not handled the research well.

To be eligible for a D Grade, the written presentation must still be clear, and the maps and diagrams, footnotes and bibliography correct.

For a Grade of F

Major inadequacies occur in the definition of the topic, collection of data, analysis and/or synthesis, or presentation of material, or else the student has failed to submit the Thesis before the 21 March deadline.

Grades of A+, B+, C+ and D+ are possible.

V

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES

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1. Proposal approved and deposited with Course Secretary prior to enrolment in course.
 2. Second Reader identified by **1 November**.
 3. First draft submitted to Advisor by **13 February**.
 4. Final version submitted to Course Secretary by **20 March**. Unless there is medical justification, no thesis will be accepted after this deadline and a grade of F shall be recorded.
 5. Oral examination held not later than **14 April**.
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