

TTP289A-05: THE TRANSPORTATION-LAND USE CONNECTION

Term Paper Assignment

Due Dates:

Meeting to discuss topic	1/21 or 1/23
Problem statement	1/28
Progress report	2/25
Rough draft	3/11
Presentation	3/18 4-6pm
Final paper due	3/20

Description:

The purpose of the term paper assignment is to give you a chance to explore a topic of interest to you in more depth than we are able to in the course. The assignment involves several stages: defining a topic, conducting research and collecting evidence, analyzing and synthesizing the evidence, building a coherent argument, and communicating your argument for a general audience in clear and concise words. Through this process you learn not only from the research and reading you do but also from the thinking you do in constructing your paper.

So what exactly is a term paper? A term paper can take several different forms, but the common characteristics are the posing of a central question, a discussion of that question based on research, and a conclusion. One type of term paper takes a broad-brushed look at a question, laying out all of the issues related to that question. Another paper might focus on specific examples, comparing them and contrasting them to derive a lesson of some sort. Whatever form your term paper takes, it should make a point; it should have something to say.

For this class, I expect that some of you might want to focus on a particular body of research. For example, the question of “induced travel” has gotten lots of attention of late. For your paper, you would gather the various papers published on this topic, read and critique them, and then decide what they all add up to. You might focus on the question of how one best goes about studying the phenomenon, comparing and contrasting the different research methodologies themselves. Or you might focus on the question of the factors that seem to influence the degree to which induced travel occurs, drawing insights from all of the various studies and presenting quantitative evidence when available.

Others of you might want to focus instead on policy, either exploring the different kinds of policies that have been or might be used to address a particular problem, or evaluating in some depth the use of a particular policy. For an example of the former type, you might take on the question of the most effective strategies for getting people to drive less. You might look at the full range of strategies proposed, or compare land use strategies to other kinds of strategies, or look only at various kinds of land use strategies and compare them to each other. To address the question, you could look both at available empirical research and at examples of where and how the different strategies have been applied. For an example of the latter type, you might be

interested in efforts to promote transit-oriented development around light rail stations. You could consider the question of how such developments come about or the question of the key ingredients for success in terms of land uses and design or one of any number of other specific questions. To address this question, you might start with the various reports that have been written on the topic and then examine specific examples - successes or both successes and failures.

Details:

The process of writing a thoughtful term paper is a long one. You cannot start during the last week of the quarter and expect either to learn anything of value or produce anything worthy of an A. I am assigning a series of due dates throughout the quarter to ensure that you are making good use of your time and getting out of the assignment all that you should be.

The hardest part is coming up with an interesting and focused question for your paper, one that is doable in the 10 weeks that you have. The place to start is some issue, question, current event, etc. that really interests you and that, perhaps, was the motivation for you in taking this course. Skim through the readings for the class, search through the paper, get into Lexis/Nexis and plug in a topic or two and see what comes up. You want something specific enough that it's manageable, not so specific that you can't find anything on it.

1. Meeting to discuss topic: Before you come to the meeting, spend some time thinking about what you want to do, and do a little preliminary research. The point of the meeting is to help you get close to the specific question that will be the focus of your paper.
2. Problem statement: In two double-spaced pages or so, describe the topic that you will be exploring. Your statement should include some background on the topic that explains why it is interesting and leads up to the question that you plan to address in your paper. You should also describe the kind of research you plan to do, whether you will look at specific examples, and what issues or aspects of the question you expect to address. Also include 3 to 5 references that you have found that you think will be important for the paper.
3. Progress report: In three double-spaced pages or so, provide a revised version of your problem statement, including a description of the research you've done so far and what you have left to do, plus an expanded list of references. Also include a short outline of the paper, with the key sections you plan to have and the key points within each of those sections.
4. Rough draft: Your rough draft should lay out the entire paper, with the question, the key points you want to make, the evidence and examples you are using to support those points, and a few thoughts about your conclusion. Don't worry at this point about grammar, spelling, etc. The main focus is on the flow of the paper, the logic of your argument. Include citations at this point, or you will regret it later!
5. Presentation: We will use the final exam period for this class for presentations on your papers. You will have about 10 minutes to present. With so little time, you're really going to have to focus on the highlights. What's your question, why is it interesting, what did you find,

what did you conclude. Thinking through your presentation will help you think through your paper as you make final revisions.

6. Final paper: The final paper must be at least 12 but no more than 18 double-spaced pages (12 point font, 1 inch margins on all sides). It is helpful to break the paper into sections, something like: Introduction, Point 1, Point 2, Point 3, Conclusions, References. Be sure to include page numbers. Use a single staple to bind the pages; no fancy covers, please.

Expectations:

I will grade only the final paper, not the various assignments along the way, but I will be providing comments and keeping track of what you've turned in. If you do not turn in all of the assignments, you will not receive full credit for your paper, no matter how well written! I will grade the final papers based on (in decreasing order of importance): the merit of the argument, the quality of the research, and the clarity of the writing. In assessing the merit of the argument, I will be looking for a clear question, identification of the key points raised by this question, effective use of available evidence and examples, and a persuasive conclusion.

I expect students to include appropriate citations in their term papers and written assignments, following one of the standard citation formats. Lots of useful websites are available to help students determine when citations are appropriate and to avoid the accidental plagiarism (for example, this site at UCD: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/avoid.htm>). My rule of thumb is that citations should be provided in two kinds of cases: 1. for the original sources of information that the reader might want to check or confirm herself (e.g. data, key facts, laws or policies, etc.), and 2. for the original sources of ideas that are not the author's own. These rules are intended to protect the author from plagiarism and falsification charges but also to ensure that the author's own ideas are clearly distinguished so that the author receives proper credit and recognition. *The importance of following these rules cannot be overstated! I will not tolerate plagiarism or falsification.*

Citation format is also critical and is getting more complicated as more materials become available on-line. The author-date format is used most widely in transportation journals (i.e. (author year) in the text, with a list of references at the end of the paper) but other formats are acceptable if used correctly and consistently. My general rule of thumb is that you need to provide enough information that the reader could find the item herself. For things like government reports, this includes the agency, the report number, the date, and, if possible, a phone number or email address for the agency. I suggest using the Chicago, APA, or MLA manuals of style, available through the library (<http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/instruc/citing/>).