

Instructions for the Term Papers

Selection of a topic: You can select any topic that is relevant to the course content. You should select a topic that you are passionate about. However, I will appreciate it if you let me know your topic before you start working on the term paper. My suggestion is to select a topic that has local interest (but I will accept other topics as well). If you can't come up with a suitable topic then pick from the list that I provided (also posted online). You can also set up an inquiry-based experiment and present the results in the form of a research paper.

Length of the paper: The length is not as important to me as its content. The term paper should be an in-depth analysis of a topic that we haven't fully covered in the class. Consider your paper to be an article that you have written for a professional journal (which should give you an idea about its length and quality of writing!). The paper should not exceed 10 typed pages including illustrations and maps.

Format of the paper: As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, you should follow a format used in any of major geologic professional journal, such as *Geology*, *GSA Bulletin*, *Environmental Geology*, or the likes. Please consult a journal for format. Your paper **should contain the following sections** (items): Abstract, Introduction/Background, Results/discussion, Conclusions, and Bibliography (make sure to refer to the appropriate reference in the text of your paper). Here is an outline of various sections that you should include in your paper:

Abstract: Shouldn't be more than a couple of paragraphs. You will summarize what you have studied, why you have studied this topic (i.e. the importance), what are your major findings, and major conclusions. It is better to write the abstract last (but put it before other sections).

Introduction/Background: Here you introduce the importance of your topic. First you summarize what is already known about the topic, and then you guide your readers to the purpose and scope of your report. This section shouldn't be more than one page long.

Results/Discussion: Here you present your findings based on either literature search or field data. You explain what you think of your observations and offer your interpretations. This section should be about two-page long and should contain all diagrams and charts (if any).

Conclusions: Here you summarize what you have learnt or what your major conclusions are. This section shouldn't be more than a paragraph.

Bibliography: Here you list all sources that you have used in your paper. The list should be in alphabetical order by last name or book title followed by year of publication and publisher. Make sure to cross-refer the bibliography by last name of author(s) and year in the body of the text of your paper. Published journal articles and books should be your primary sources for bibliography. You can use some Internet sources in the bibliography along with published sources, but the Internet sources have to be authentic (i.e. governmental organizations or known academic institutions). Consult a professional journal in geology if you have any question about the format of the bibliography.

Due date and oral presentation: The paper will be due on or before your oral presentation in the class. I will not accept a late paper. If you can get the paper to me at least two weeks before your scheduled presentation, then I will make suggestions for improvement, in which case I will assign grade on the final paper.

Questions?: If you are not sure about any aspect of the term paper, you should ask me questions.