

*Assignment #1 is due **February 26 at 10:00 am**. To be submitted via Quercus.*

Guidelines for Assignment #1
READING AND INTERPRETING ACADEMIC ARTICLES

One of the objectives of GGR223 is to introduce different approaches to understanding environment-society relations. The three broad categories of analysis introduced in the course are: governance, political economy, and socionatures. The course project involves research and analysis of an 'object' that you will select from a list we provide. The three assignments are designed to guide you through this project. Assignment #1 provides an opportunity to develop analytical skills useful for reading and interpreting academic articles. For Assignment #2, you will choose your 'object' from a list we provide, identify source materials, begin thinking about themes, and make preliminary connections between evidence and arguments. For Assignment #3, you will write an essay building on the work you did for Assignment #2 that reflects ongoing engagement with themes from the course and responds to feedback you received. More details on Assignments #2 and #3 will follow.

For Assignment #1, you will choose one of the following three articles:

- Branch, A., & Martiniello, G. (2018). Charcoal power: The political violence of non-fossil fuel in Uganda. *Geoforum*, 97, 242-252.
- de Silva, S., & Srinivasan, K. (2019). Revisiting social natures: People-elephant conflict and coexistence in Sri Lanka. *Geoforum*, 102, 182-190.
- Paiva Henrique, K., & Tschakert, P. (2019). Contested grounds: Adaptation to flooding and the politics of (in)visibility in São Paulo's eastern periphery. *Geoforum*, 104, 181-192.

Links to these articles and the template document for the assignment will be added to Quercus

For your selected article, you will work through the four sets of questions outlined on page 2. These questions focus on different aspects of 'active reading' and interpretation of academic writing. The strategies introduced through this assignment are useful for gaining deeper understanding of different genres of social science readings (e.g., journal articles, policy papers). More importantly, these skills can help you with your own writing, be it in university or other professional settings.

The questions vary in difficulty. Some may seem relatively straightforward, while others may seem challenging. To answer these, you will need to read your article multiple times, with an eye on different aspects of the article – e.g., overall structure, connections between sections, and logic of argument within paragraphs and sentences. The questions also focus on the ways sources are used as evidence by the author. We will provide links on Quercus of different "how to" guides for working with academic articles.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:

Use one article selected from the list above to respond to the following questions using the **template document** specific to your article provided on Quercus. Answer these in full sentences, using your own words and paraphrasing. Do not use direct quotations unless the question specifies to “cut and paste”. The written assignment you submit should include answers to these questions in full sentences, numbered as appropriate (e.g., 1.a, 1.b, 2, 3.a...).

1) Argument of the article

[short answer, 2-3 sentences]

- What is the main point (or argument) of the article?
HINT: The ‘main point’ is not the ‘topic’ of the article, but what the author is trying to illustrate or resolve through the discussion and evidence provided.

2) Context and significance of the article

Provide a one to two paragraph response to the general question “what is the context and significance of the article?” using the following questions to help guide your thinking.

- What idea(s) or ‘dominant explanation(s)’ is the author arguing against?
- What existing idea(s) is the author expanding upon?
- What ‘gap’ is the author trying to fill in existing research?
- What is the scope of the analysis in terms of primary regional focus and time period?
- According to the author, what is the significance of the article more broadly, beyond academic debate and research?

3) Analysis of structure

*The **template document** identifies the main sub-sections of the article. For each sub-section identified in the template, provide a one paragraph response to the following questions:*

- What is the author explaining or illustrating within the sub-section?
- What is the role (or function) of the sub-section within the overarching/overall argument? Think here about its structural relationship to the other sub-sections of the article.

4) Use of evidence

*The **template document** identifies two examples of source citations in the article including a page number. For each source citation respond to the following questions/prompts [1-2 sentences each]*

- a) Cut and paste the full bibliographic citation for the source as it appears in the bibliography.
- b) What is the genre of the source used and who is the author/creator? (e.g., book, journal article, webpage, government report...) If it is not obvious, you may need to search online for hints.

Reread the paragraph of the article where the citation appears.

- c) What claim is the author using the cited source to support?
- d) How does the author use the source as evidence to support that claim?

HINT: To respond to this question (d), you will need to refer to page 4 of this assignment handout.

FORMAT:

- o Responses should be in your own words (no direct quotations unless instructed to “cut and paste”)
- o Use full sentences.
- o Title materials on top of page one should include the following (no cover page needed):
 - Department of Geography GGR223 Professor Boland
 - Tutorial: *TA name, section (day/time)*
 - Name: *Your name*
 - Student number: *Last four digits*
- o Use 1.5 line spacing and 11 or 12 point font
- o Borders should be the standard (1” top/bottom, 1” left/right)
- o Include page numbers
- o Reread your answers before submitting to check for grammar, clarity, and flow of ideas

IMPORTANT: To complete this assignment, you will need to download the **template document** file specific to your article. The template file contains the citations that you will need to analyze for Part 4.

REMINDERS and EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Submission:

Written assignments for this class are to be submitted in electronic form via Quercus (.doc, .docx, .pdf only). Email submissions will not be accepted. They are due by **10am on the due date** (February 26 for Assignment #1). Anything submitted after 10am will be considered late. Instructions for submission will be provided in Quercus. For late assignments, see the syllabus (page 5) for information on the late penalties and the *late penalty forgiveness* policy. No assignments will be accepted more than one week after the due date unless the student has obtained prior permission from the instructor in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Academic integrity:

You should also review the rules and expectations on academic integrity as outlined in the syllabus. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor or your TA if you have any questions about how to use and properly cite your sources, such as when to use quotation marks.

Evaluation criteria and other advice:

Keep an eye on Quercus. I will post details there on how assignments will be evaluated. I will also be posting advice based on discussions I have with TAs and students during the coming weeks.

(see page 4 for discussion on use of evidence →)

USE OF SOURCE MATERIALS AS EVIDENCE

There are different ways that authors use source materials as evidence to support claims (Week 5 Tutorial discussion). Common ways of using sources include:

The author uses a source as a 'fact', essentially just restating it, not offering any interpretation:

Examples

Stormwater runoff is the primary source of nitrogen pollution to Tampa Bay, contributing to elevated nutrient levels (Tampa Bay Estuary Program, 2006).

The term 'xeriscaping' refers to a type of landscaping designed for a xeric ecosystem, that is, a dry landscape (Brandies, 1994).

Nassauer (1995) argues that neatness and control were commonly considered signs of good management and stewardship of land.

The author cites a source as an example of a pattern or trend the authors wants to highlight:

Examples

Lawn care companies often claim that the use of organic methods is not a viable option because it is far too expensive and it delivers poor results. One operator, Green Lawn Services, claimed for example that it offers an organic program but only 1% of their customers have chosen it because of its ineffectiveness (Green Lawn Services, 2011).

Environmental organisations have been particularly aggressive in supporting of organic landscapers' associations (see for example, Canadians Against Pesticides, n.d.)

The author directly interprets the cited source (e.g., in terms of storyline, assumptions, emphasis, hidden issues or 'silences', etc.).

Examples

The city report contained brief apologetics on behalf of chemical fertilizers, asserting that farmers "complete the cycle when we return plant nutrients to the soil in the form of commercial fertilizer" (NJAES, 1975).

While talking about weeds as a problem of 'laziness', the *Globe and Mail* article overlooks others factors, such as lack of time and money, as possible explanation for why some residents did not conform to the perfect lawn (Globe and Mail, 2013).

Note that there are other ways of using sources! These are however three general types of 'source use' that students have found helpful when working on writing assignments for GGR223. Being aware of differences like these can be helpful with your writing for other classes and beyond.