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## GEOG 3311 Rural Geography Instructions and Grading matrix for policy brief

**Policy brief:** For this assignment, you will write a policy brief on the topic of your choice. You are not limited to any specific topic, though it must relate to the themes we have/ will cover(ed) in class, and you must approach your topic from a geographic perspective with a focus on rural issues. Your policy brief must be analytic not descriptive; it should raise critical questions about an issue and not simply describe it. This means you will need to explore 'how' and 'why' questions. A brief that is thrown together at the last minute will not earn a strong grade.

For ideas about possible paper topics, I recommend that you refer to your course material think about the class discussions, brainstorm with class mates, and ponder current affairs debates. The **important thing** is to write about something that you find intriguing! If you are unsure about the relevance of your topic, please discuss with me.

**Remember** the objective of this assignment is to show you can identify an appropriate topic and research question or policy issue that is focused in scope and is clearly geographic, and then effectively communicate your arguments in writing. Keep this in mind when you are researching potential topics and throughout the writing process.

**Primary data and fieldwork:** The use of primary data sources, including fieldwork-based studies are welcome. However, please do not interview or survey anyone to gather data, even informally, as it would require ethics approval from the University, a process that is beyond the scope of this course.

**Requirements:** The brief should be 4-5 pages in length *excluding* your bibliography with standard word processing font style, size and margins.

You are welcome to include a modest number of graphics or maps if they help to communicate your ideas. Use these only if they help build/illustrate your argument. All images **must be cited, and be directly referred to in your text** (you will lose marks if your paper does not EXPLICITLY refer to the images, graphs contained within--see notes on plagiarism below). Images do not count toward the minimum number of pages.

You may use a variety of sources for this assignment (e.g. newspapers, articles, books, films, blogs). **However, your essay must include a minimum of 5 sources, at least 2 of which must be articles or chapters drawn from scholarly peer-reviewed journals or books.** The best papers will exceed this minimum. These sources MUST be cited within the body of your paper *and* referenced at the end of your paper.

### Research and Writing Goals

- Demonstrate critical engagement with topics of rural geography.
- Demonstrate independent thinking and sound logic by developing a persuasive line of argument related to your chosen topic.
- Demonstrate ability to communicate your ideas with coherence, clarity and style.

A strong paper will have a focused argument, and will develop the issue through a number of examples and references to source material. You should consider each step of the research and writing process as important stages in getting you to *refine your topic and arguments* as well as to improve your writing style.

## Grading Matrix

Name:					
Topic	Poor	Needs help	Average	Good	Outstanding
Well defined thesis/issue					
Development and logic of support arguments					
Engagement with course themes					
Originality of ideas					
Well researched/use of evidence					
<b>Policy brief:</b> appropriate recommendations, based on evidence provided					
Writing style (clarity, flow, transitions)					
Grammar, paragraph and sentence structure					
well organized and follows a logical sequence					
Material included is relevant to the overall message/purpose well,					
Visual aids are well prepared, informative, effective, and not distracting					
Information is well communicated					





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