

Proposal for Addressing the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Requirement
MS and GEA PhD, Department of Geography, College of Natural Resources and Environment
to be implemented beginning Fall 2014

Prepared by Lisa Kennedy, Graduate Program Director Geography MS,
James Campbell and Korine Kolivras, Program Directors, GEA PhD

I. Introduction

To address the *Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies Resolution 2012-13B*, which aims to include a scholarly ethics and integrity component in graduate education, the Department of Geography will implement the plan outlined below beginning in Fall 2014.

Required Topics:

1. Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code.
2. Proper use of professional conventions in citation of existing research and scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgement of contributions to the work.
3. Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities.
4. Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct.

Optional Topics Relevant for our Program:

2. Fair use of publications, software, and equipment.
3. Appropriate research protocols involving human subjects; Institutional Review Board.
4. Guidelines for maintenance of confidentiality (and, where relevant, anonymity) in research
5. Guidelines for determination of authorship.

II. Action Plan

The Geography Department proposes to address ethics and integrity and fulfill the requirements through the following activities:

MS Program

- (1) All new MS students will be required to attend the GTA workshop (GRAD 5004, 1 cr.) during orientation week, which will contribute to training on *Required Topic 3*: ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities.
- (2) In their first semester, all MS students will take required course, Geographic Theory and Research (5014), which includes content (readings, lectures, group discussions) that addresses the *Required Topics*, especially 1, 2, and 4, along with some of the *Optional Topics*. Classroom activities devoted to this training will equal or exceed two hours, and students spend considerable additional time outside class on readings and writing assignments that provide background on the topics and practical experience. For example, 5014 students practice proper citation of scholarly work (part of *Required Topic 2*) through writing assignments that are assessed by the instructor, who provides feedback.

- (3) During the fall semester, we will use a minimum of two of our departmental seminar periods (Current Geographic Research, GEOG 5004, 1 cr. hr.) to address *Optional Topics 2, 3, 4, and 5*, and some aspects of the *Required Topics*. Ideas and material will be presented to the students by the Graduate Program Director, another appointed faculty member, or a panel of faculty, and then reinforced through group discussions, case studies, and critical analysis of hypothetical situations. *Optional Topics 3 and 4* (human subjects, IRB, confidentiality) will be covered by a faculty member with experience with the Institutional Review Board.

Note on (2) and (3): We have been addressing most of the *Required and Optional Topics* listed above in our GEOG 5014 course and in our department graduate orientation for many years so have a strong base of resources and structure already in place. We will also begin to reference the resources and web links provided by the Graduate School concerning Scholarly Ethics and Integrity, such as the "Ethics Commons" <http://ethicscommons.wordpress.com/research-ethics/authorship/> and others on <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/ethics>.

GEA Program

- (1) All new PhD (GEA) students will be required to attend the GTA workshop (GRAD 5004, 1 cr.) during orientation week, which will contribute to training on Required Topic 3: ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities.
- (2) In their first semester, PhD students will participate in Geographic Theory and Research (5014), for those portions that address the Required Topics, especially 1, 2, and 4, along with some of the Optional Topics. Classroom activities devoted to this training will equal or exceed two hours, and students will spend considerable additional time outside class on readings and writing assignments that provide background on the topics and practical experience. For example, 5014 students practice proper citation of scholarly work (part of Required Topic 2) through writing assignments that are assessed by the instructor, who provides feedback.
- (3) During the fall semester, PhD students will attend departmental seminars devoted to discussion of Optional Topics 2, 3, 4, and 5, and some aspects of the Required Topics.

III. Summary and Documentation

MS Program

All MS students will receive training on ethical standards in teaching and mentoring from required participation in the 1 cr. hr. GRAD 5004 (GTA workshop) course. Through participation in required Geography courses, 5014 and 5004), all MS students will participate in a minimum of four hours of faculty-directed classroom learning activities focused on scholarly ethics and integrity, along with several additional outside-class hours on reading and practice (with instructor feedback) to support learning. MS students will complete these requirements during their first year of study in our program. The Plan of Study for the Geography MS program already contains GEOG 5014 and 5004 for semester

one and will be modified to indicate that GRAD 5004 is also required. The plan of study will then provide evidence of training in ethics and integrity, and compliance with the resolution.

GEA Program

Compliance of PHD (GEA) students will be tracked by doctoral advisors, in coordination with GEA coordinators and with departmental faculty serving as instructors, as noted above, and reported on the programs of study as required by Graduate School Policy.