Assignment - Project Topic Interests and Spatial Questions

Assignment 1 - Interests and Spatial Questions

**Format:** Text document. Place on Student Work Zone section of the wiki by midnight (11:59) of due date or e-mail to Barbara

The goal of this assignment is to get you thinking about how the exploration of geographical and spatial relationships can help you to understand issues or answer research questions. GIS is not just about mapping information, it is about exploring the roles played by geography, the environment, and/or spatial relationships in issues of interest to policy-makers, researchers, and community members. For some issues, geography may be of no relevance, for others it might be one of many factors, and for some issues it is critical. Often the role of space, geography, and environment is complex and uncertain (e.g., in health). As in any other issue or research project, the questions we ask about geographical/spatial relationships should be based on evidence and a sound theoretical framework.

Describe at least two* topics or ideas for projects that you would be interested in pursuing in this course. For each project topic:

1. Write a brief (1-2 paragraph) summary of each topic
2. List at least 2 spatial/geographic questions relevant to each topic and explain why you think these may be significant or interesting questions
3. Provide at least 2 references that have helped you to think through this topic and its significant geographic/spatial questions. For each reference briefly explain how it has helped you think about the topic (do not simply copy the abstract). At this point these references do not have to be from peer-reviewed journals, but it will be very helpful for you to review the peer-reviewed literature now or in the near future. Peer reviewed articles will often go into more detail regarding theoretical models, data sources, methods of analysis, results, and limitations than non-peer reviewed articles. Please put your citations in APA format.
4. If you know of existing data sources (GIS, tabular, maps, or other) to support the projects, please also list these, and indicate whether you have free access to them. If you don't know of any data sources, that's ok for now!

*Note: If you already have a well-defined research project on which you want to work in the GIS class, you are exempt from the “2 ideas” requirement. Do all of the above but for item #3, provide at least 6 citations from peer reviewed journals along with a brief explanation how each will inform your project to show that you are well acquainted with the research literature for your topic and the need for spatial analysis.

Good sources for finding literature:

- GIS Application Areas - a list of research areas and examples of how GIS is used in each - maintained by the Tufts GIS Center
- See Barbara's Tips for your GIS project literature search
- Databases of articles (e.g., Scopus, Environment Complete, Academic OneFile, Web of Science, Expanded Academic ASAP) - see the Tisch Library UEP Research Guide for good suggestions of article databases, including links to all of the above.

Get help from the library reference staff
I would highly recommend that you talk with a reference librarian - Regina Raboin is the reference librarian for UEP and Environmental Science. Regina is expert at helping students and faculty, and can provide insights to even the most experienced researcher.