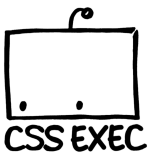


Gearing Up for 402 2024/25 Term 1: Notes

What is COGS 402?

- Solo capstone project, meant to draw together knowledge and skills gained from entire COGS degree
 - Can work with others or as a part of a larger project, but lead the actual project by yourself
- Important to have a supervisor lined up before taking COGS 402!
 - Supervisor can be anyone (from any department at UBC or external) but some people are better suited to provide guidance for 402 project, so recommend choosing someone who has clear sense of what 402 looks like
- Recommend having an idea (or a few ideas) prior to taking COGS 402 that you can check in with instructor about when starting the courses
- **Main requirements:**
 - **Reflection of skills/knowledge gained as COGS student, be clear to peers and instructor that there is COGS element**
 - Not every element has to be linked in COGS, just have to be able to draw broad scope back to COGS learning (i.e. COGS research methods or application of COGS aspects in different fields)
 - **Unique, original project**
- **Approaches:**
 - Most common/easiest project: traditional research project with lab
 - Product design, often working with external industry partner (or internal with UBC)
 - Working in clinical contexts
 - Art projects
- **Gradables:**
 - Presentation (~10 min)
 - Write-up (about process of 402 project and drawing connections to COGS degree)



- Think about these when choosing and working on 402, since this is not just a project but also something you will need to draw back to your academic progress
- **COGS 402 course structure** (generally the same across different terms)
 - Instructor (COGS chair usually) is meant to be coordinator
 - **Initial session:** (week 2 or 3)
 - ~3-4 min presentation about research topic
 - Narrowed down topic/idea, not necessarily fleshed out
 - Should definitely have a supervisor by now!
 - Supervisor agreement (paperwork for supervisor)
 - After initial session, work primarily with supervisor except for optional check-ins with instructor
 - **Presentation session:**
 - ~10 min presentation to peers and instructors, peer-graded
 - **Submission:** (~ one week after end of term)
 - Submit final presentation, write-up, supervisor evaluation
- If working with industry partner or doing paid work, it's important to avoid conflict of interest!
 - Need to define separation between paid work and 402 prior to starting
 - Cannot be paid for 402 work!
- **Logistical questions about your specific COGS 402 plans → contact the course instructor for the term you're taking it in!**
- **Questions about COGS 402 waitlist, registration, etc → contact COGS advisor (Colleen)!**

Amy (6th year PSYC Science, took COGS 402 over the summer)

Project Summary

- Prenatal sexual wellness is already under researched, and lots of peoples' first instinct to find information is to go online. What quality of information are they getting?
- Refined research question, wrote ethics, designed methodologies for affirming quality, set up project for future researchers

402 Process

- Started cold emailing professors and graduate students early on, not necessarily for 402 but just to get involved
 - Email content: what you've learned, what you're interested in, some ideas for research projects
 - Pitch your work for their interests, design email around their research
 - Put your interests into their domains, even if it's not their area of expertise
 - "I have a requirement for a thesis project, 4 months, I'm looking for a supervisor."
 - "I'm willing to do volunteer work to be a part of your lab to see if our interests align and there might be a project we can work together on."
 - "If our interests don't align, do you know anyone else who might share some of my research interests?"
 - Lots of professors gave recommendations for other people
- Emailed supervisor early on, supervisor had grad student interested in digital information and sexual wellness, so they reached out to ask if still interested
- Done with lab (UBC Sexuality and Wellness Lab)

Logistics

- Done during the summer, did not take any other courses
 - Recommend having some kind of other commitment to take mind off of 402 because it can get quite intense, which makes it less enjoyable
- Go over supervisor contract and come up with an agreement with supervisor on how work should be assessed and what time commitment looks like



- Emailed weekly to-do list to supervisor, checked off items
- Mid-term check-in with supervisor about progress

Challenges/Solutions

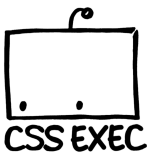
- Originally had more technical data-scraping plans, to pass off for analysis, but since the project would be passed on to students without a tech background, had to make it accessible for next student
 - Cut down on certain areas of the project, wrote up guidelines/tutorials for future students to manage any technical aspects, had to change research question

Impact

- Learned that if you don't have the skills for something, you can probably find someone else who has the skills and can teach you
- Pitch your COGS 402 and COGS degree to people however you want to, there are lots of lenses to apply depending on what you want to go into
 - Could frame as a more technical project, or focus on research aspect, etc.

Recommendations/Tips

- UBC library and librarians are really great resources for lots of areas
- Online forums can also be helpful for questions
 - Be cautious about protecting confidentiality of research
- If working with lab, consider difference in workflow in winter/summer
 - Some labs have designated times for onboarding
 - Also consider possible time needed for training
- Think forward to how supervisors are going to assess you, document everything
 - Sent meeting notes and to-do lists, logged all hours, make sure they have a record of what you did so they can assess you on that
 - Your supervisor is likely busy and cannot be constantly overlooking your progress, so give them reason to think you did a lot of work



Gabriella (alum PSYC Science, took COGS 402 in first term of 3rd year)

Project Summary

- Research project with BC Hospital
- Social robots as companion animals for dementia patients
- Summarized policies, conducted interviews with caregivers and experts, see perspectives, attitudes, concerns
- Submitted technical paper

402 Process

- Loved WorkLearn placement, wanted to do a 402 in that lab, ended up doing it even before COGS 300 and 303
 - When working (as a WorkLearn student) over the summer, went over a lot of policies for social robots and vulnerable patients
 - Didn't choose the specific project, but liked the field

Logistics

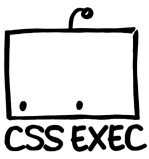
- Took with 4 other courses, part time job, and volunteer work
 - Manageable but make sure you have clear timelines for your 402 because work can pile up
 - Utilize the whole semester to full capacity rather than waiting until later on in the term

Challenges/Solutions

- Must be able to back up all of your decisions in research, so you must also think very carefully about all of the decisions you're making

Impact

- Name and work was attached to much larger project
- Got to present at conferences and publish paper
- Got Co-op position
- Learn what kinds of research you like/don't like



- Experience to build portfolio and resume, even if not immediately useful to career
 - Not everyone has an opportunity to do a thesis project in undergrad

Recommendations/Tips

- APPLY FOR ETHICS EARLY!!
- Keep in mind 4 months is not a lot of time. Talk to your supervisor about setting up timelines, especially if they've supervised students before, they'll be familiar with these scenarios
- WorkLearn is a great resource for finding potential supervisors

Dorothy (5th year PSYC Arts, took COGS in second term of 4th year)

Project Summary

- Worked with founders for NCIS
 - Private company in Vancouver related to VCL, creates tech products for fishermen and maritime crime
- Mobile app for rural fishermen, focus on UX design
 - Didn't have a lot of choice because NCIS was very focused with specific products
- Contacted fishermen from rural provinces and went in-person to Fisherman's Wharf
 - Perspectives on a mobile app for fishermen
 - What the app would look like
 - How to make the app useful to people in more rural areas who might be less familiar with technology
- Testing and feedback with participants
- Worked with UBC Earth and Ocean Sciences faculty as well

402 Process

- Done through UBC Visual Cognition Lab (VCL)
- VCL co-pilot system: join team as undergraduate, volunteer in research contexts
 - Emphasize you might want to do a 402 project, since they like doing 402 students
 - Put UI/UX as main interest, NCIS was mainly looking at UI/UX, joined that team

Logistics

- Done at the same time as full-time internship and 3 courses
 - Would not recommend – keep in mind heavy workload
 - Started research for 402 a few months prior to taking the course
 - Most design done in the last 2 months

Challenges/Solutions

- Scope of project was too big at first, didn't realize until later on
 - Had to rescope project in last 2 months, resulting in time crunch
- Project topic was very niche, so participants were hard to find and reach out to

- There was some miscommunication with supervisor, causing the last-minute rescope
 - Communicate properly with supervisor with what your topic is!

Impact

- Great way to discover what you want to do as career, especially since so close to graduation for a lot of people, rethought career path
 - Not interested in research
 - Not interested in mobile design
- Great experience, presented to panel of professors for Earth and Ocean Sciences
- Interesting for interviews since its a 4 month project with a lot of inevitable challenges

Recommendations/Tips

- Log every single thing you do so that your supervisor has things to assess you on
- Start thinking pretty much 8 months in advance, not necessarily about ideas for projects but just what you want to work on and what labs you might be interested in
- If doing anything with participant/user outreach, do that early on and make sure you can actually source out people you need easily
- You can be selective about your supervisor and project! Choose a project that you genuinely want to do and enjoy
 - You will be more motivated and put more effort into it
 - Prevent clashes with supervisor (you want your supervisor to like you since they're grading you)
 - Do research on your potential supervisor beforehand
- If you need to change stuff very soon before deadline/might not be able to finish what you originally planned upon, list that in your write-up/paper as challenges, and list original plans for "future developments"



Flora (alum LING, currently doing Speech Language Pathology Masters, took COGS 402 in final term of degree)

402 Process

- Lab with Language and Literacy Education Department
 - Worked as a research assistant before hand
 - There was a larger longitudinal study where some of the tasks done as an RA could be applied to a smaller study as part of the longitudinal study
- Also joined VCL co-pilot, but did not do 402 project with VCL
 - Supervised a VCL 402 project

Project Summary

- Case studies on how Cantonese-speaking parents' backgrounds and attitudes influence their informal and formal literacy practices
- Qualitative study, final deliverable was the research paper
- Chose the topic because interested in language and multilingualism

Logistics

- Took 3 other courses at same time
 - 402 takes up a lot of time!

Challenges/Solutions

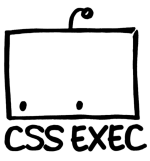
- Had to scale down project at end
- Unfamiliar with methods, took long time to familiarize

Impact

- Did not like qualitative aspect, so now doing more quantitative research
- A lot of tools and knowledge transfer over to Master's degree
- Great for networking; original 402 supervisor is now on Master's thesis committee

Recommendations/Tips

- Time management is super important!
- Make sure you have timelines for yourself, communicate with supervisor



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- Change is okay! Don't be afraid to rescope if something isn't working out
- Don't try to do too much; it's better to do something smaller and well
- Enjoy the process!!! Looking back, it's more about the opportunity to learn than the final deliverable