GEOGRAPHY, M.S.

The Department of Geography is a leader in the field of geography and offers exceptional opportunities for graduate education. The department has been consistently rated as one of the best in the country and, for over 100 years, has been the training ground for generations of geographers. The department's strength is reflected in its ability to attract top-caliber students, compete for significant research funding, and publish foundational scholarly work. The department maintains strength across the full spectrum of subfields within the discipline, and is organized into four major thematic areas: physical geography, people and environment, human geography, and cartography/GIS.

Department faculty and graduate students represent a diverse community within which a wide range of perspectives, approaches and research strategies is accommodated. The faculty has long been recognized nationally and internationally for outstanding contributions to geography and beyond. Many graduate students have gone on to prominence within government, industry, and academia and some of the most influential names in geography received their training in Madison.

The department offers a master of science in geography; a master of science in cartography and geographic information systems (including an online-only, non-thesis named option titled GIS development); and a doctor of philosophy in geography. The department also offers a capstone certificate in geographic information systems for students not currently enrolled in a UW–Madison graduate degree program. Capstone certificate applicants are admitted as University Special students through the Division of Continuing Studies (http://guide.wisc.edu/nondegree).

Graduate students at the M.S. level are expected to acquire a broad foundation in geography in addition to specializing in one or more areas of concentration. (Students pursuing the GIS development option in cartography/GIS focus on GIS and web map programming skills to bring to the workforce.) Students who earn the M.S. degree are prepared to continue on for the Ph.D., or for applied positions in government agencies, planning organizations, environmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private industry.

The Ph.D. degree is founded primarily upon specialized advanced training and research. Students may specialize in a single subdisciplinary area or a combination of areas and are expected to engage in research leading to a dissertation that makes an original and significant contribution to geographic knowledge and ideas.

Currently 69 students are enrolled in the graduate program: 7 are pursuing the M.S. in geography, 13 are pursuing the M.S. in cartography/GIS, and 49 are completing the Ph.D. The department takes in roughly 10–15 new graduate students each year. In recent years, about half of all incoming graduate students have majored in a subject other than geography, and a third arrived having already received a master’s degree from another institution.

FUNDING

Roughly half the department’s graduate students receive financial aid in the form of fellowships, teaching assistantships, or research assistantships. Most forms of financial assistance include eligibility for health insurance coverage and remission of tuition.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.S.

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

30 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

16 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT

Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 total credits) must be completed in graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level attribute are identified and searchable in the university's Course Guide (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions, coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE

No credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework as defined above taken as a UW–Madison Special student. coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credits

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED

GEOG 765 Geographical Inquiry and Analysis: An Introduction (1 credit) + GEOG 766 Geographical Inquiry and Analysis: Techniques (3 credit); two geography graduate courses 300-level and above: one can double count for breadth, cannot include seminars; two (3 credit) geography seminars with two different faculty members.
OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT
3.0 GPA required

PROBATION POLICY
The Department of Geography expects graduate students to progress through a sequence of benchmarks within prescribed time periods. These benchmarks constitute a reasonable rate of accomplishment for full-time students holding teaching or research appointments. The department recognizes that individual circumstances vary, and not all students progressing toward their academic goals will hit the benchmarks exactly. Thus a student’s progress is considered unsatisfactory only after a period of time elapses following an unmet benchmark. A student not making satisfactory progress is placed on probation. For detailed information about these benchmarks and triggers for probationary status, see the department’s Criteria for Satisfactory Progress (http://www.geography.wisc.edu/graduate/Criteria%20for%20Satisfactory%20Progress.pdf).

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE
Committee must have a minimum of three members, two of whom must be graduate faculty (or former graduate faculty up to one year after resignation/retirement) and two of whom must be affiliated with the geography department.

ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS
A formal thesis is required.

TIME CONSTRAINTS
For program-specific time constraints, please see Probation Policy above.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
No language requirement.

ADMISSIONS
The department evaluates applicants to its graduate program on the basis of previous academic record, Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, letters of recommendation, and personal statement. The personal statement of research interest is very important to the department in imagining how the student might benefit from pursuing research with the faculty.

Students are accepted in the fall semester only. The deadline for applications wishing to be considered for financial aid is December 15 of the preceding year. (Applicants to the online professional masters named option in cartography/GIS can apply as late as the summer prior to courses beginning. Students in the GIS development named option are not eligible for departmental or university financial aid.) Contact the department for other admissions deadlines.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
• Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in geography.
• Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in geography.
• Demonstrates understanding of geography in a historical, social, or global context.
• Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies and practices.
• Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in geography.
• Communicates clearly in ways appropriate to geography.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
• Recognizes and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct.

PEOPLE
Faculty: Professors Naughton (chair), Cadwallader, Cronon, Kaiser, Mason, Naughton, Olds, Turner, Williams, Zhu; Associate Professors Marin-Spiotta Robertson, Woodward; Assistant Professors Baird, Gibbs, Huang, Moore, Roth, Young