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 two masters of science in geography (thesis option): a master of science in geography and a master of science in cartography and geographic information systems.

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.

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 completed an undergraduate major in a subject other than geography.

FACILITIES

Housed in historic Science Hall, the Department of Geography offers exceptional facilities for advanced study in geography, cartography, and GIS. The department maintains the University Cartographic Laboratory, the Arthur Robinson Map and Air Photo Library, the Geography Library of 65,000 volumes, a computer lab, several computer classrooms, and laboratory facilities specializing in biogeography, biogeochemistry, paleoecology, geomorphology, and soil research. In addition, the building houses the Wisconsin State Cartographer’s Office, the History of Cartography Project, and the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.

Graduate students may supplement their work in the geography department with study in other departments of the university, and there are frequent opportunities for advanced work in interdepartmental seminars. The location of the state capital at Madison makes possible easy contact with the state agencies, and some federal agencies.

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.

GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic degree programs and the Graduate School. Applicants must meet requirements of both the program(s) and the Graduate School. Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions).

FUNDING

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

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 GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Face to Face</th>
<th>Evening/Weekend</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Accelerated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</table>
Mode of Instruction Definitions

Evening/Weekend: These programs are offered in an evening and/or weekend format to accommodate working schedules. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses and personal connections, while keeping your day job. For more information about the meeting schedule of a specific program, contact the program.

Online: These programs are offered primarily online. Many available online programs can be completed almost entirely online with all online programs offering at least 50 percent or more of the program work online. Some online programs have an on-campus component that is often designed to accommodate working schedules.

Hybrid: These programs have innovative curricula that combine on-campus and online formats. Most hybrid programs are completed on-campus with a partial or completely online semester. For more information about the hybrid schedule of a specific program, contact the program.

Accelerated: These on-campus programs are offered in an accelerated format that allows you to complete your program in a condensed time-frame. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses with minimal disruption to your career. For more information about the accelerated nature of a specific program, contact the program.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Minimum 30 credits

Credit Requirement

Minimum 16 credits

Residence Credit Requirement

Graduate Coursework Requirement

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

Overall 3.00 GPA required.

Graduate GPA Requirement

Other Grade Requirements

No other grade requirements.

Assessments and Examinations

A formal thesis is required.

Language Requirement

No language requirement.

REQUIRED COURSES

Breadth Requirements

Most students complete the coursework for breadth requirements prior to entering the program. Students who begin the program lacking one or more of the breadth courses are expected to complete such coursework during the master's program. One course taken for breadth can also be used to fulfill degree requirements. Typically, these courses are not seminars. Students must complete the equivalent of one undergraduate-level course in each subarea (Physical Geography, Human Geography, People-Environment Geography, Cartography/GIS) and one undergraduate-level course in Statistics.

Coursework

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.

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

The Graduate Program Handbook (https://geography.wisc.edu/geography-graduate-student-handbook) is the repository for all of the program’s policies and requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK

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.

UW–Madison Undergraduate

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

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.

PROBATION

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 (https://geography.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Criteria-for-Satisfactory-Progress.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
CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED
15 credits

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

OTHER
We consider all applicants for multi-year guaranteed funding packages. This funding, however, is not plentiful and it is competitive. Decisions about funding are typically made by late February. These funding guarantees (typically two years for M.S. students and three years for Ph.D. students) are most commonly in the form of teaching assistantships and are guaranteed at a level such that students are eligible for health insurance and tuition remission.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES
Take advantage of the Graduate School’s professional development resources (https://grad.wisc.edu/pd) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in geography.

2. Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in geography.

3. Demonstrates understanding of geography in a historical, social, or global context.

4. Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies and practices.

5. Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in geography.

6. Communicates clearly in ways appropriate to geography.

7. Recognizes and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct.

PEOPLE

FACULTY:
Department Chair: Lisa Naughton


Associate Professors: Ian Baird, Holly Gibbs, Erika Marin-Spiota, Morgan Robertson, Robert Roth, Keith Woodward