Geography

Geography is the study of distributions, patterns and movements across space, both physical and social. Human geographers study the geographic patterns of various human activities: economic, political and cultural. Physical geographers focus on the geography of physical processes and their effects: the geography of weather and climate.

At Ohio State, students choose from four specializations:

The Environment and Society (E&S) specialization focuses on understanding the reciprocal relationships between social and environmental processes. Social processes such as land-use decisions, racial inequality and poverty, and political decision-making are closely linked to biogeophysical phenomena.

Urban, Regional and Global Studies (URGS) examines a range of social, economic, political and cultural forces that are both immediate and distant: the globalization of production and finance, technological change, migration, transnational social movement politics, social conflict and war, and other forms of political conflict around race, gender and class.

Students in the Climate and Physical Geography (CPG) specialization study the interactions between the Earth’s surface, at local and global scales, and the atmosphere. For example, events in the Pacific Ocean such as El Niño or La Niña affect the global circulation and can change the location of the jet stream or the number of hurricanes over the Atlantic Ocean.

Students in the Spatial Analysis (SA) specialization develop GIS and spatial analysis skill sets that are crucial for today’s society and have many uses ranging from emergency management, business location and retail analysis, transportation modeling, crime and disease mapping, and natural resource management.

Pursuing Geography at Ohio State

Students interested in societal aspects of geography (human geography) should take as many high school courses as possible in social studies, geography and history. Those interested in climate and geographic information systems should also take as much mathematics and statistics as possible in high school.

All freshman applicants are considered within a competitive admission process; find admissions criteria at go.osu.edu/admissions.

Upon admission to the university, students can declare a major in geography within the College of Arts and Sciences. Students entering the CPG specialization should currently be enrolled in, or starting, the calculus sequence in mathematics.

Geography Requirements

The geography program requires that students complete all courses in their major track with a grade of C- or higher, with an average GPA of C. All specialization require at least ten courses. Students in the URGS or E&S specialization earn a Bachelor of Arts upon successful completion of college. Students in CPG or SA specialization earn a Bachelor of Science. These latter Bachelor of Science tracks require the completion of the calculus series (Mathematics 1151 and 1152), and the CPG specialization should also take additional mathematics, physics, chemistry and computer programming courses.

Co-Curricular Opportunities

The department offers to its undergraduate majors an internship program. This allows them to gain work experience and make valuable contacts for the future while at the same time accumulating college credit. Once you have twelve hours toward your major in geography then you will be able to apply to any of the variety of agencies that have expressed willingness to take students from the department. Approximately one third of all undergraduate majors in geography participate in an internship.

Honors & Scholars Programs

There are five honors courses in geography that reflect the diversity of the field. These include Geography 1900H, Introduction to Weather and Climate; Geography 2750H, World Regional Geography; Geography 2400H, Economic and Social Geography; Geography 3901H, Global Climate and Environmental Change; and Geography 3600H, Space, Power, and Political Geography.

Honors students are exposed to research in various ways. About one third of our Honors students choose to complete a senior Honors thesis. Numerous faculty members also actively incorporate research opportunities into their course structures. Laboratories in the various technique courses that undergraduate majors take—Introductory Geographical Information Systems, Cartography and Introductory Geographical Analysis—add to these opportunities.

For more information, check these web sites:

Geography: geography.osu.edu
College of Arts and Sciences: artsandsciences.osu.edu
Ohio State: osu.edu

Admissions: undergrad.osu.edu
Multicultural Center: multiculturalcenter.osu.edu
First Year Experience: fye.osu.edu
Career Prospects in Geography

The ability of URGS specialization graduates to analyze and to integrate various aspects of the Earth’s human and physical environments makes them attractive candidates for positions with planning and development agencies at the federal, state and local levels. Retail chains, financial institutions, insurance companies, real estate and industrial firms employ geographers to collect and analyze data that relate to the firm’s production and distribution of goods and services, or they may employ geographers to identify appropriate locations for new or expanded facilities.

Graduates from the E&S specialization have a variety of career options including working for environmental and protection agencies, state Departments of Natural Resources and Conservation, and for a range of non-profit agencies working both in the United States and overseas in areas of environmental protection, development and the protection of indigenous ways of life.

There are numerous high-paying jobs, with private companies and government agencies, for students with training in computer-based cartography and the use of geographic information systems. This is a major growth area. Students in the CPG specialization have job opportunities in the recently modernized National Weather Service, with private forecasting firms or in television.

With respect to salaries, those with geography degrees do especially well. When the data were last compiled four years ago, the average annual salary of those who had graduated five years earlier from the department was the highest for any program outside the physical and applied sciences.

Curriculum Sample*

This is a sample list of classes a student will take to pursue the URGS track in geography. Since university students need more than specific education in a narrow field, they also will take classes to complete General Education (GE) requirements. Because GE courses come from a variety of academic areas of study, this course work helps students develop fundamental skills essential to collegiate success and allows them to tailor these courses toward their interests. Note: This sample represents one of several possible paths to a degree in geography. Consult the departmental web site, geography.osu.edu, for details on each specific specialization.

Freshman Year:
- Survey course 1
- Human Geography 3
- Math 3–5
- Foreign language 8
- Data Analysis 3
- Economic and Social Geography 3
- GE courses 10
- **Total hours** 31–33

Sophomore Year:
- Cities and Their Global Spaces 3
- Space, Power, and Political Geography 3
- Elements of Cartography 3
- Foreign language 4
- GE courses 15
- Minor or elective courses 3
- **Total hours** 31

Junior Year:
- Undergraduate Professionalization Seminar 3
- Internship 2
- Geographic Inquiry 3
- Fundamentals of Geographic Information Systems 3
- Geography of Development 3
- GE courses 9
- Minor or elective courses 6
- **Total hours** 29

Senior Year:
- New Worlds of Latin America 3
- Geography of Transportation 3
- Life and Death Geographies 3
- GE courses 6
- Minor or elective courses 12
- **Total hours** 30

*This curriculum is for the URGS specialization. Many more courses are available than are shown here, and the SA, CPG and E&S specializations vary greatly. Each student’s individual plan will be determined with the assistance of the student’s advisors.

**Revised December 2013.** For the most up-to-date information on the geography program, please visit [geography.osu.edu](http://geography.osu.edu).

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