

College of Arts and Science

Department of Geography

No one knows when the first person knelt down, perhaps along a riverbank, and traced lines in the sand to map routes showing game migration or village locations. We do know that over 2000 years ago people were studying and writing about the world around them. Their involvement with geography — in common ways such as observing the effects that weather had upon their crops and the migration of animals they hunted for food — made geography the earliest discipline to focus on both the natural and human phenomena that makes up the world.

Our Strengths

Geography has come a long way from just mapping and cataloging where everything is in the world. Geography is an integrative discipline that helps us understand the nature of the world and the human place within it by studying the interaction between people and natural environments, the processes that shape that interaction, and the connections between people and places, particularly the interaction needed for human survival. Wars have been launched, and won or lost, because of geographic advantages or disadvantages. Economies rise and fall because of geographic factors such as protective land formations, valued mineral deposits, rain patterns the location and quality of ground water, endangered wildlife habitats, seismic activity, storm patterns, pollution patterns, and many other features of a planet that is constantly changing — sometimes because of nature, sometimes because of human action or inaction.

The geography department at MU is small, yet its faculty is involved in a wide range of research. That means students are, too. The program is structured to give students the skills they will need if they want to work as professional geographers — skills that apply to other fields. They are the basic skills of observation, speculation, analysis, interpretation, and communication.

When geographers talk about “reading the landscape,” they are referring to studying the most important document humankind has created, the artificial and built environment. The purpose is to learn

how to make wiser decisions about land use and land modification — as evident in the natural and humanized landscapes. It is a model for making careful decisions as an informed citizen.

Personal Attention

The size of the department ensures that faculty members know their students. Although two introductory courses tend to be large, all the remaining courses average 25–60 students. These moderate class sizes encourage questions and open discussions. In that kind of atmosphere teacher and student quickly get to know each other by first names.

Majoring in Geography

The major requires a total of 36 semester hours, including 24 hours of core courses and at least 12 hours in one of five emphasis areas.

The core courses include 6 hours of world regional geography, 6 hours of systematic geography (human and physical), 6 hours of technique classes (introduction to geographic information and computer-assisted cartography), 3 hours in a senior capstone seminar and 3 hours of introductory level or higher statistics. The core courses give students the opportunity to experience the basic themes and develop spatial skills to analyze and interpret the human and physical processes of the earth.

Students take at least four courses (12 hours) in one of the five emphasis areas:

Regional/cultural geography, which focuses on the human and cultural diversity of the world by asking the traditional geographic

question, “why are places different?”

Physical/environmental geography, which explores the nature of the physical or natural environment and human interaction with it.

Urban/population geography, which looks at space as organized economically.

Geographic information sciences, or the development of skills in remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial statistical analysis.

General geography, in which a student creates an emphasis area according to special interests.

Two minors are available for students who do not major in geography. One is a 15-hour minor in general geography and the other is a special 15-hour minor in geographic information science: students may earn both provided that coursework is unique for each minor.

Internships

A number of classes have field exercises and field projects that give majors a keener sense of the scope of geography and also can lead to internships.

The geography department provides a number of internships in its Geographic Resources Center, which is an applied geospatial research facility located in the department.

Faculty members also have links with private firms in Columbia, Kansas City, St. Louis and beyond.

Several students have received internships with the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. Other internship placements have been with state govern-

ment in Jefferson City or with local government agencies in Columbia and surrounding communities. In addition, many private agencies, organizations and businesses provide internship opportunities for geography students.

Many geography majors have taken advantage of study-abroad programs in countries throughout the world.

Advising

Undergraduate majors are advised by the director of undergraduate studies. However, faculty doors are always open to students, and professors are glad to talk with students informally before or after class.

The department frequently holds a geography career fair, to invite graduates back to campus to talk about their occupations and discuss how geography is integrated into their work. Faculty members are always ready to talk with students about career options and choices, and representatives of government agencies make presentations focusing mainly on cartography and GIS. The department offers a number of internships and posts information about jobs, educational opportunities and travel abroad.

The Career Center is another important source of information that students are encouraged to consult early and often.

Geography Organizations

The Geography Club, with both undergraduate and graduate members, organizes a variety of club and community activities, including field trips, weekend camping trips and other recreational and educational excursions.

The club has been a major source of volunteers for hosting the yearly State Geography Bee finals. Members also have adopted a two-mile stretch of highway as part of the state's Adopt-a-Highway program.

Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU) is an international honor society in geography that promotes professional training through academic experiences in addition to those of the classroom. Initiates must have completed a minimum of 3 geography courses, have a B average in geography, must rank in the upper 35 percent of their class and shall have completed at

least three semesters or five quarters of college course work.

Value of a Geography Degree

Geographers perform vital services in the fields of research, business, government and education. Many geographers find rewarding careers in such fields as urban and regional planning, cartography, geographic information sciences, teaching, real estate and law. Some conduct market research to identify sites for new stores while others help communities determine where new facilities should be built. They assist in addressing resource and pollution issues. They chart cost-effective shipping routes and provide valuable information to government policy makers. Geographers work for the federal government and international agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations. Whatever their occupation, geographers use their skills to gather, to process and to present geographic information to make decisions, and they add to the overall understanding and knowledge of the world.

Missouri Admission

The University admits students on the basis of their chances for success here. The main criteria are the high-school curriculum, test scores and class rank.

Applicants are expected to have followed a college-preparatory program with at least 17 units of credit, as follows (one unit equals one year):

Four units of English

Two units emphasizing composition or writing skills are required; one unit may be in speech.

Four units of mathematics

Acceptable courses include algebra I, geometry, algebra II, precalculus/trigonometry/analytic geometry, calculus and math analysis. Courses such as computer math, programming, consumer math and accounting are not acceptable.

Three units of science

At least one must be a laboratory course, such as earth science, biology, chemistry or physics. Courses such as general science and agricultural science are not acceptable.

Three units of social studies

Examples are world history, American government and principles of democracy.

Two units in a single foreign language

One unit in fine arts

To learn more about geography, get involved in volunteer clean-ups with neighborhood or environmental groups and become a member of the National Geographic Society, which publishes *National Geographic Magazine*.

How to Apply

For information about applying to the geography program, call or write:

Director of Undergraduate Studies

Department of Geography

University of Missouri

8 Stewart Hall

Columbia, MO 65211

Phone: 573-882-8370

Fax: 573-884-4239

E-mail: geog@missouri.edu

Web site: www.geog.missouri.edu

For information about applying to MU, call or write:

Office of Admissions

230 Jesse Hall

Columbia, MO 65211-1300

Phone: 573-882-7786

800-225-6075 (toll free in Missouri and Illinois)

Fax: 573-882-7887

E-mail: mu4u@missouri.edu

Web site: www.missouri.edu

The University of Missouri does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability or status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era. For more information, call Human Resource Services at 573-882-4256 or the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

