ABOUT

EDUCATION

The Department of Geography combines advanced theoretical analysis and interpretation with research on real-world problems. Our students are deeply engaged in community service through internships, service learning, and senior projects, which center upon questions of environmental and social justice. Our undergraduate majors employ social and political theories; develop the ability to create and analyze maps and other forms of geovisualization; gather, analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data; and write clear and compelling research reports and papers.

Our annual undergraduate research symposium features undergraduate research projects conducted by individuals and research teams. Our undergraduate research journal, Plenum, publishes outstanding undergraduate research articles. We have pioneered longitudinal assessments of student learning in the undergraduate major, including portfolio reviews, capstone course design and evaluation, and dependable strengths assessment. We continue to rework learning objectives and outcomes in our undergraduate curriculum.

Our graduate students engage in original field research and are regularly awarded prestigious grants and fellowships to fund their research and writing. They subsequently take up teaching and research positions in the academy as well as in the public and private sectors at the international, national, and regional levels.

RESEARCH

Geography faculty are interested in the reciprocal interactions and relationships between people and the environment. Our research themes, methods, and conceptual frameworks cross rigid disciplinary boundaries and over the years we have forged numerous long-lasting connections to other departments and units on campus. These include strong ties with the School of Public Health; Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies; the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology; the Law, Societies, and Justice Program; the Jackson School of International Studies; and the Simpson Center for the Humanities.

Faculty scholarship reflects these interdisciplinary affiliations, with prominent research projects covering a wide range of inquiry. Recent research projects include mapping the geographies of carbon emissions and consumption, examining processes of urbanization and migration in China, understanding the locational choices of UW immigrants, comparing middle class poverty politics across the Americas, examining the spatial regulation of gay people’s bodies and spaces in pre-AIDS Seattle, investigating the militarization of environmental conservation in Guatemala, mapping children’s educational politics, and a multidisciplinary collaboration examining the processes or urbanization in American cities.

Numerous faculty research projects involve both undergraduate and graduate students in their design and implementation. We are a relatively small unit and enjoy close collegial relationships and a good faculty student ratio.

OUTREACH

Our faculty and students are involved in a wide cross-section of community-based projects, issues, and educational partnerships, with over 50 community partners in the public and private sectors.

Numerous faculty engage with youth and the K-12 education system as researchers or through the development of critical pedagogy workshops and learning modules. Others do outreach by discussing their work with community organizations and through public media. Acting as consultants and volunteers, faculty participate in social surveys and community mapping.
In 2014, faculty launched a relational poverty network including key community organizations, researchers, and teachers in Seattle and across the Americas and held an international conference on the UW campus. Relational poverty shifts from thinking about ‘the poor and poor others’ to relationships of power and privilege. Researchers work across boundaries to foster a transnational, comparative, and interdisciplinary approach to poverty research that incorporates marginalized voices to ensure innovation.