B.A. IN GEOGRAPHY

Geography is about the relationship between people and the environment. It provides important insights into the spatial transformations associated with globalization, environmental change, migration, health, development, and many other contemporary processes. The Department of Geography has a strong commitment to social justice and public scholarship, and provides a rich undergraduate experience for those who are passionate about exploring our world and understanding the social and spatial processes that shape it.

Geography seeks to understand the complex processes that result in the patterns, trends, and impacts of urbanization, migration, trade, and development. Geographers use ethnographies, statistical analysis, databases, scholarly research, and observation to construct models, maps, and other tools for understanding, and to address pressing social and environmental issues.

ADMISSIONS, ADVISING & STUDENT RESOURCES

Please see our Undergraduate Programs section for information about declaring the major in geography, career paths, scholarships, and other student resources. If you are ready to declare the geography major, please [complete this form](https://geography.washington.edu) to begin the major declaration process. If you have additional questions, please contact an adviser via the Advising page.

GEOGRAPHY MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Geography is an open major, which means there are no prerequisites or special admissions requirements. The requirements for geography majors are as follows:

- **Breadth:** One course from each of the four tracks: Cities, Citizenship, and Migration; Environment, Economy, and Sustainability; GIS, Mapping, and Society; and Globalization, Health, and Development (20 credits). These “broad track” courses offer a great introduction to the discipline of geography to get you started in the major. Check out the [three-quarter planner](https://geography.washington.edu) to find interesting courses you might like to take, then review the [list of Geography courses by track](https://geography.washington.edu) to understand how those courses will count in the major.

- **Depth:** Four upper-division courses in one of the four tracks listed above, at least two of which must be 400-level (20 credits).

- **GEOG 315:** Explanation and Understanding in Geography (5 credits). This course covers the beginning steps in the research process. Students develop basic library and writing skills as preparation for future research methods classes and independent research. Recommended preparation includes 10-15 credits of prior GEOG curriculum coursework.

- **Methods:** One course from among GEOG 317, 326, 425, or 426, or other courses approved by petition to the Geography Advising Office (5 credits).

- **Electives:** at least two GEOG courses at the 200-level and above (10 credits).

Total required: 60 credits.

Students are encouraged to take appropriate elective courses outside the Department of Geography in fields that support their concentration. Such courses appropriate to various concentrations will be available on lists supplied by Geography advisers, or may be recommended by a faculty member. Students should be aware that 300- and 400-level courses in other departments are likely to have prerequisites. With the exception of STAT 311, courses taken in other departments do not count toward the required 60 GEOG credits.

A combined total of 5 credits of Internship (GEOG 496) and Independent Study (GEOG 499) may be counted towards the required 60 geography credits.
No single course may be counted toward more than one degree requirement.

The Major Planner Worksheet can be a helpful resource when planning out your courses.

THE GEOGRAPHY B.A. IS AWARDED UPON:

- Completion of all geography major requirements as noted above.
- Completion of all General Education requirements for the College of Arts & Sciences.
- Completion of a minimum of 180 credits, with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above (final 45 credits must be earned in-residence), and a cumulative departmental GPA of 2.0 across all geography courses that are counting for major requirements.
- Submission of graduation application by the end of the third week of the quarter you intend to graduate.

GEOGRAPHY TRACKS

The major is organized into four tracks. Students majoring in geography select one of the four tracks to specialize in by taking four upper-division courses in that track, at least two of which must be at the 400-level.

CITIES, CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION TRACK:

Why do people move, and where do they go? What are the constraints and opportunities for migrants as they settle and integrate in new cities and new nations? How are cities formed and what are the forces that impact their economic and cultural development? The courses in this track focus on themes of urbanization and human movement, emphasizing the importance of labor and housing, as well as cultural processes and historical forms of discrimination that shape where people live and work. Students in this track will develop an understanding of the intersections of power and place as they pertain to migration and immigrant life, citizenship and belonging, and the production of urban space.

ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY TRACK:

The courses in this track study the reciprocal and often contradictory forces of economic activity, environmental policy, and sustainability. Using such key geographic concepts as scale, place and location, these courses analyze relations between such complex processes as: land use, labor markets, corporate location, international trade, energy policy & consumption, environmental regulatory policy, resource use and food systems.

GLOBALIZATION, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT TRACK:

How does globalization shape life and death around the planet? How can development initiatives address global health disparities? Providing geographical answers to such questions, this track traces the extraordinarily uneven effects of global trade, global finance, and market-led development on food systems, health and the geography of impoverishment. By putting global health challenges in a global socio-economic context, the track simultaneously highlights how social movements and social organizing can make a difference, including differences in formal policies effecting human well-being directly as well as innovations in the ethics of care. Courses in the track provide frequent opportunities for service learning as part of the goal of helping students engage with real world challenges. All our classes also approach these themes through a geographical lens: charting global-local relations and the links between nature, society and political-economy in particular places. This geographical approach in turn enables us to explore how nutrition, health, and development are intertwined with other processes ranging from the personal experiences of migrant farm workers, to urban and regional redevelopment, to global financial reforms. Specific questions that frame our classes include: What are the links between life and debt (GEOG 123)? How have sixty years of development increased in-country inequality (Geog 230)? How do global disease etiologies reflect other global interconnections (Geog 280)? How does agricultural modernization relate to hunger (Geog 371)? And what are the implications for food security, health security and developmental security when they are re-framed in terms of geopolitics and the global security challenges of international relations (Geog 375)?

GIS, MAPPING AND SOCIETY TRACK:

In the courses that comprise the GIS, Mapping and Society track, students learn to use GIS, web-based geospatial applications, and database management systems for problem solving in relation to a diverse range of societal concerns, such as those within the other Geography tracks. Students learn a range of analytical
and critical methods for cartographic representation, spatial analysis, geovisualization, and database management. Further, students learn about the politics, ethics and values of mapping and geospatial technologies, and integrate their social and technical skills to undertake projects with research partners in the region.

For more details, please see the list of Geography courses by track.

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