

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

OHIO UNIVERSITY

Graduate Handbook

2008-2009

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Introduction

Welcome to the master's degree graduate program of the Department of Geography at Ohio University! The Graduate Committee has prepared this handbook in order to provide a convenient source document to assist you in completing your graduate program and to state clearly major policies and procedures affecting students in the Department. Please become familiar with its contents, and refer to it now and later, as questions arise. If you need assistance beyond what is in the handbook, see the Chair of the Graduate Committee and /or your advisor. In addition, you should read the section in the Ohio University graduate catalog on the Geography Graduate Program. For more general guidance of expectations as a member of the Ohio University community, please read the Ohio University Student Code of Conduce for the current year; it is posted on-line at University Judiciaries. Please note that Academic Misconduct is also posted at University Judiciaries separate from the Code of Conduct.

Graduate Program

The Department of Geography offers a number of possible specialties at the graduate level:

- Agriculture/Cultural-Political Ecology
- Biogeography
- Climatology/Meteorology
- Cultural-Historical
- Economic Development/Globalization
- Environmental/Resource Management
- Geographic Techniques, including Cartography, GIS, and Remote Sensing
- Gender and Development
- Geomorphology
- Land Use Planning
- Urban Geography

You have the option to choose a **thesis** or **non-thesis** track in the program. A thesis usually requires two years and a non-thesis five quarters. Graduate students may only register for classes at the **500 level or above**; 400 level courses and below are not graduate courses.

Thesis

In the thesis track, you must complete a total of **65** credit hours; this includes 15 thesis credits and 50 course credits at the graduate level. At five credits per class, this is ten classes; at least seven of these must be in Geography (this INCLUDES the required courses). Hours in GEOG 504, 505, 585, 593, 690 and 694 are excluded from the count. Other classes on campus, such as OPIE (English language coursework) are also excluded. It is the student's responsibility to know if each course counts toward the degree or not. We encourage students to take classes in cognate fields; for example, if you are interested in historical geography, you may take some classes in History. Or if you are interested in biogeography, you may take relevant courses in Plant Biology. Students may register for thesis hours (GEOG 695) only after completing GEOG 675 and when they are actually working on their thesis problem/proposal; usually this is not until the fall term of your second year in the program. You may take more than 15 credit hours of thesis, but you will be credited for a total of only 15 hours when the thesis is finally finished. The thesis committee is composed of the major advisor and two other faculty members from the department. You may choose one additional committee member from outside the department (usually from the cognate field). You may also select one of the emeritus professors in our program; however emeritus faculty cannot serve as a thesis director or as one of the main members of your thesis committee. The student must successfully defend the proposal, and then the final thesis, in front of this committee. It is expected that the members of the thesis committee remain the same from proposal to defense. Substitutions should be made only under exceptional circumstances. Proposal and thesis defenses are normally open to graduate students and faculty. The advisor, in consultation with the committee members, will decide when to excuse all audience members.

Students following the thesis option should make every effort to select a thesis advisor early in their program (mid-winter quarter of the first year). Ideally students will defend their proposal by the end of the first year. This schedule allows students to use the summer to collect data and conduct research. Alternatively, the summer may be used to prepare for a proposal defense in September. Thesis track students **must have a proposal defended no later than the end of the fifth week of their fourth quarter, excluding summer**. For most students this is the mid-point of the fall quarter of their second year. Students who have not defended a proposal by this time will be placed automatically in the non-thesis track. This time frame will help you complete your degree on a timely basis.

Students must follow the instructions of his/her advisor on length and content of the proposal, but normally the proposal is approximately 10 pages that includes an introduction, statement of research question/hypothesis, methodology, significance, time-frame, and references cited. Once the advisor agrees, the proposal should be distributed to each committee member **at least one week prior to the scheduled proposal defense meeting**.

The thesis defense will occur only after the advisor has approved the thesis and agrees that it may be distributed to the thesis committee. The student is

responsible for finding a time and place for the thesis defense; scheduling a 2-hour block of time is recommended. Consult with the Administrative Associate (Margaret Delaney) to find a room and time. After the meeting time and place has been decided, the Administrative Associate will notify the rest of the Geography community of the defense. The thesis must be given to the thesis committee **at least 10 days prior to the scheduled defense**. Note that defenses should occur during the academic year (September 1 to June 10). Students should not assume that faculty members are available during the summer for defenses.

Once the committee approves your thesis, you must supply one copy to the Geography Department and two copies to Alden Library. Increasingly, many students are submitting electronic copies of their thesis on CD in Portable Document Format (PDF Adobe Acrobat). You may also choose to submit bound paper copies. Whether paper or electronic, you must abide by specific format guidelines. The Office of Graduate Studies posts on-line information help you format the thesis.

Non-Thesis—Comprehensive Examination

This track requires the completion of **75** credit hours. This track requires that a minimum of 60 credits must be in geography; 15 more credits may be in a cognate discipline. GEOG 504, 505, 585, 593, 690 and 694 are excluded from the count. You must develop a program of study that covers three areas. The areas must include at least one systematic and two techniques or two systematic and one technique. Systematic areas include specializations within human, physical, environmental and area studies, while the technique areas include GIS, remote sensing, cartography and quantitative methods. Your non-thesis faculty advisory committee will be composed of three departmental members from the selected areas. This committee must approve your program and each committee member must write one exam. Your committee should meet by the end of your first year to discuss your program of study and to help you prepare for your **comprehensive examination**. Holding this meeting will help you progress quickly through the program. If a student switches to non-thesis during the fourth quarter of classes (normally fall of the second year), then the non-thesis committee must meet during that quarter to determine the three areas of specialization. The committee must approve the three areas of specialization at least one quarter before the exams are administered. It is expected that students take coursework from each committee member. A faculty member may agree to supervise directed readings to help you prepare for the examinations, but directed readings are designed to supplement courses, not replace them.

A set of written exams over the three selected areas completes the degree. The student must complete at least two courses in the area selected before he/she can take an exam in that area. The exams on the three chosen areas are to be taken within one week, with one per day. For example, a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday schedule might be typical with one exam on one topic each day. Each exam is to take no longer than three hours. The exact format will be decided by each committee member in consultation with the advisor.

Required Classes

The Department has three classes required of all students in the program, and they **should be taken the first time offered**. They are: **History of Geographic Thought (580)**, **Research and Writing (GEOG 675)** and **Quantitative Methods (GEOG 571)**. The Quantitative Methods class assumes that you have had an undergraduate statistics class equivalent to our Introduction to Statistics in Geography (GEOG 271). If you have not had such a class, you should attend our GEOG 271 in the fall term before taking the Quantitative Methods class. This class can be taken for graduate credit (under the GEOG 690 number and with permission of the instructor), but it will not count toward the credit hour requirement of the program.

In addition to the required courses, you must also take **at least two seminars** totaling at least 10 hours of credit. Although the department does not specify which seminars to take, these should be seminars that allow you to do some preliminary work on your thesis topic or to become more familiar with your systematic/technique areas. With committee approval and a record of this in your file, one of the two seminars can be taken outside the department. If possible, these should be completed no later than the fall term of your second year.

Advising

Graduate students will be assigned an academic advisor by the Graduate Committee at the beginning of the program and during the welcome interview. This interview is to assist the Graduate Committee to become acquainted with you and to develop a preliminary program of study. The assigned academic advisor is to assist in selecting classes, advise on any deficiencies noted in the welcome interview, to examine options, to answer questions, and to offer general academic and curricular advice. You will have this advisor until you choose a thesis/non-thesis advisor. Your thesis advisor should be from the systematic subfield or techniques area of Geography upon which your thesis focuses. Faculty members must agree to assume the responsibilities of advisor. The advisor for non-thesis track students should be one of the faculty members from three areas selected.

Registration

Fulltime students carry a load of 15-18 graduate credits per quarter. The Geography Department requires that all students receiving any financial aid must carry a minimum of 15 graduate credits. This applies to students supported by the department or by other units in the university (such as the Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development - ILGARD).

Grades and Standing in Program

You were accepted into the program because we are confident that you have the skills and work effort to complete the degree in a timely manner. We expect you to do well in your classes and that you will earn high grades. The following are guidelines to help you understand the academic expectations.

Unconditional admission to the program requires an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) or better, or compensating evidence of the ability to perform at the graduate level. To remain in good standing in the program you must maintain this level of performance as a minimum. If your overall GPA drops below 3.0, you will be placed on probation immediately. At that time, you will have one quarter (or the equivalent of 15 graduate credits) to raise your overall average above the 3.0 mark. Failure to do so will result in your being dropped from the program. Students on probation cannot receive any financial aid from Ohio University.

The lowest acceptable grade is a C (2.0). However, any student receiving more than one grade of C (at any time in her/his course of study) may be dropped from the program. A formal meeting with the student and the Graduate Committee will be held to discuss the grades and the issue of removal. Any of the three **required courses** in which a student receives a grade lower than a B (3.0) cannot be credited; the student must repeat the class and earn a grade of B (3.0) or better. Grades below C (2.0) will be considered the functional equivalent of an F (0.0). A student who receives a grade below C (2.0) can be dropped from the program, at the discretion of the Graduate Committee. If the student is allowed to remain in the program with a grade of less than C (2.0), the course and the hours in which the grade below C (2.0) were earned will not count toward the credit hour requirement for the degree.

During the Spring Quarter of your first year in our program, the Graduate Committee will conduct a review of your progress toward your degree objective. The purpose of this review is to make certain that you are making satisfactory progress toward the completion of your degree and that you are on pace to fulfilling all the requirements of our program in time. Working with your graduate advisor, the committee will:

1. Examine your grade report paying particular attention to courses completed and your GPA
2. Identify Incomplete (I), Progress (PR) and course grades below B (3.0)
3. Ask for comments and recommendations from your advisor regarding your ability to complete the degree, and
4. Request a timetable for completing I or PR grades if any were noted.

Following this review, your status in our program will be communicated to you in the form of an **Annual Letter of Review** from the Graduate Chair. In this letter you will be informed regarding your standing in our program. Students in good standing are making progress toward their degree. Students in poor standing are not making adequate progress based on their annual review. Students who are

receiving financial assistance from the department in the form of a Graduate Assistantship and judged in poor standing will lose financial support. All students judged in poor standing may be terminated from the program on the advice of the Graduate Committee.

Financial Fees and Assistance

Fees for full-time graduate students per quarter, effective Fall, 2008-09

Instructional	\$2613In-State
General Fee	\$513
Medical Fee	\$338
Technology Fee	\$65
Legal Fee	\$8

www.ohio.edu/finance/bursar/athenstuition.cfm

Graduate Students are subject to the fees detailed above each quarter. Note that financial assistance from the Geography Department waives the Instructional fee, but **each student is responsible for the other fees**. A student can waive the Medical fee if the student has medical insurance from another medical plan. The General and Technology fees cannot be waived, although students on a GA or RA will receive a partial waiver of the General Fee. For 2008-098 students will receive a \$205 waiver, which means that each student will owe \$308 per quarter.

Please note that you must enroll for at least one credit hour any quarter in which you receive any kind of services from the University. This can be expensive if you leave campus and have to return for a thesis defense or to take comprehensive exams.

The Department of Geography offers three forms of **financial assistance**: (i) a Graduate Recruitment Scholarship stipend (GRS); (ii) a graduate assistantship (GA); and (iii) a research assistantship (RA). Only students admitted unconditionally may receive financial aid, although not all unconditionally admitted students receive aid.

Graduate Recruitment Scholarship (GRS) stipend is a tuition scholarship. The GRS will cover resident or non-resident tuition costs (instructional fees) for each quarter it is awarded. The student is still responsible for all other fees as described above. Recipients of the scholarship must work eight hours per week. In general, students are assigned as graders for large courses. Only students who are recruited into the Geography Department are eligible for this award. Students who have received any other financial assistance from the Department are not eligible.

Graduate Assistantship (GA) is both a tuition scholarship and a stipend. The tuition scholarship pays for the instructional fees each quarter. The student is responsible for all other fees as described above. The student is obligated to work for twenty hours per week for the three terms of the academic year. Most students admitted into the program will work as Teaching Assistants (TA), who perform lab instruction, lead discussion/or groups and field trips, grade assignments, assist in classroom instruction, and perform other duties. Faculty members in charge of the TAs will mentor and supervise each TA. The present award level is \$11,175. A few students will hold non-teaching Graduate Assistantships with assignments outside of the Geography Department. Our students have held GAs with the Institute of Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD), the Voinovich Center for Leadership and Public Affairs, and Facilities Management.

Research Assistantship (RA) is both a tuition scholarship and a stipend. The tuition scholarship pays for the tuition fees each quarter. The student is responsible for all other fees as described above. The student is obligated to work for twenty hours per week for the three terms of the academic year, and in addition may provide summer support. Research assistantships are dependent on faculty grants and award levels vary. RAs provide research assistance for faculty research projects. At a minimum, RAs receive the same level of support as GAs.

Financial aid is not automatically renewed for the second year but will be determined when the annual performance review is completed. Unless there are performance problems, the normal expectation would be to continue aid for the second year.

Students receiving a stipend must complete their work requirements. Failure to complete assigned work will result in a reduction or stop in pay. If students voluntarily leave the university without finishing required work assignments, their pay will be adjusted according to amount of work completed.

Office Space

Graduate Assistants serving as Teaching Assistants (TAs) have first priority to the carrels in the Graduate Room (Room 102). The Chair of the Graduate Committee will decide the priority, in the event of conflict about access.

Code of Conduct

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on exams, falsifying information, etc.) are unacceptable forms of behavior. When a faculty member judges that plagiarism or academic dishonesty has taken place, action will be taken against the student committing the offense. The first action will be by the faculty member, who may refer the student to University Judiciaries. Additional action by the Graduate Committee is possible, which may include referral to

University Judiciaries. The actions may range from failing the course to being dropped from the program.

When a student is accused and judged guilty of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, he/she may follow the usual appeal route of the department. See the Chair of the department for the procedure. Also, see the Student Code of Conduct at University Judiciaries.

Operational Procedures and Issues

There are a number of departmental operational items and procedures that graduate students need to know:

Keys

Keys to the building and to the Graduate Room are available. These are to allow you access to the department during the evenings and weekends. The keys are available in the departmental office and require a deposit.

Departmental Office

Personnel in the departmental office are available to assist graduate students, but the requests should be for official purposes and related to departmental duties.

Mail

All graduate students will have a mailbox in the main graduate office (102). The TAs will have an individual box, while others may have to share. These boxes are for professional, university, college, or departmental mail and not for private communications.

Photocopying

Graduate students may use the departmental photocopying equipment, under the following guidelines. If the material to be photocopied is to be used in conjunction with your teaching responsibilities, then the department will cover the cost. If it is for a class you are taking, or for personal use, then you must pay for the photocopies, at a rate to be determined yearly.

Committees

Graduate students can elect to serve on a variety of departmental committees. The exact openings will vary, but a list is available from the chair of the department.

In addition, all graduate students need to pay close attention to the university regulations and procedures, especially regarding the Student Code of Conduct, Student Code of Conduct Procedure, and Statement on Sexual Harassment; Graduate students and Teaching Assistants in particular need to maintain a sense of professionalism. Personal relationships with faculty or students that you supervise should not occur. The University Statement on Sexual Harassment states "An instructor shall not supervise nor grade the academic work of a student with whom the instructor has or begins a consensual sexual relationship." Such interactions can

compromise your ability to learn effectively, participate fully in our program, and successfully realize your personal goals.

If at any time you feel that you are being subject to harassment of any type, or that you are being asked to perform tasks beyond what is reasonable to expect given your graduate appointment, you should contact the Graduate Chair, Department Chair, your advisor, or University Authorities, such as the Office of the Ombuds, immediately.

Contacts

Graduate Committee

Chair: Brad Jokisch 593-1143 jokisch@ohio.edu
Members: Geoffrey Buckley 593-9846 buckleyg@ohio.edu
Yeong Kim 593-9179 kimy1@ohio.edu

Student Representative: TBA

Geography Department Administrative Associate: Margaret Delaney 593-1140
delaneym@ohio.edu

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