DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Geographers analyze space and spatial processes, context, place, location and scale, to understand and act on urgent global challenges around impoverishment, housing, health and well-being, labor rights, racial justice, immigration, sustainability and more. We use interdisciplinary theories and methods and we connect research to action, in close collaboration with policy makers, communities, students and activists.

Highlights

- Geography faculty hold 2 UW Distinguished Teaching Awards and the Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award.
- Geography faculty lead units across campus, including the UW Honors Program; the Northwest Federal Statistical Research Data Center; and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies.
- Geography graduate students have received the UW Graduate School Medal, the UW Distinguished Dissertation Award, and over 35 National Science Foundation fellowships.
- Undergraduate Geography majors have won McNair Scholar awards, Mary Gates Research Fellowships, and prizes from the Washington Association of Geographers.

Education

Teaching and learning in the Department of Geography combines advanced analysis and communication skills with research on urgent social and environmental problems. Students learn powerful concepts, modes of analysis, and quantitative, qualitative, and data visualization methods that prepare them to intervene in the spatial processes shaping our world. Students extend their learning through experiences such as service learning, participatory action research, creative digital scholarship, and internships. Our annual undergraduate symposium shares individual, team, and community-engaged research with audiences from campus and beyond, and our undergraduate journal, Plenum, publishes students’ outstanding research.

Our graduate students win prestigious grants and awards for their research and writing. Many go on to faculty positions at universities around the world. Other M.A. and Ph.D. graduates do research and policy work for local, national, and international agencies, or work as attorneys, teachers, small business owners, activists, founders of nongovernmental organizations, planners, software engineers, and artists.

STUDENTS (Autumn 2020)

- Undergraduate majors: 389
- Master of Arts students: 8
- PhD students: 23

DEGREES AWARDED (July 2019-June 2020)

- Bachelor of Arts degrees: 134
- MGIS degrees: 14
- Master of Arts degrees: 5
- PhD degree: 1

MAJOR STUDENT AWARDS (Since 2015)

- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships
- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Grants
- Ronald E. McNair Fellowship
- Ford Foundation Fellowship
- Fulbright-Hayes Awards
- Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Fellowship
- Chester Fritz Foundation Fellowships
- Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships
- American Association of University Women Fellowship
- Joff Hanauer Fellowship
- Alvord Fellowship in the Humanities
- Mary Gates Undergraduate Research Awards
Research

Geographers are interested in the reciprocal interactions and relationships between people, place, and environments. Our faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates study spatial dimensions of economic, cultural, social, political, and ecological processes. Our research themes, methods, and conceptual frameworks cross disciplinary boundaries and we have long-lasting connections to other units on campus, including the Jackson School of International Studies; the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology; the Simpson Center for the Humanities; the Department of American Ethnic Studies; the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies; and the Department of Law, Societies, and Justice.

Faculty scholarship covers a wide range of inquiry. Recent research projects examine processes of urbanization and migration in China; social and spatial politics of care work; creative poverty politics of homelessness activism; public health geographies and the spatial regulation of gay people's bodies and spaces; environmental, infrastructural and climate justice; humanistic GIS, carceral and labor geographies of food and agriculture; spatial patterns of residential segregation and racial diversity in U.S. cities; and spatial patterns in opioid prescriptions and mortality in Washington.

Outreach

The Department of Geography has an enduring commitment to public scholarship with communities near and far. Our faculty and students are involved in countless community-based research and action projects, educational partnerships, and public service activities. We share our research through online and print media and teach courses that support community-driven research in the Puget Sound region and beyond. We use diverse digital and geovisual media for outreach and advocacy, such as a documentary video short on immigrant detention, a mixed media virtual walking tour of historic LBGT Seattle, online “story maps” for public science education and learning, and many student-led GIS projects for local communities.