

# GEO 6118: Contemporary Geographic Thought

Fall 2024

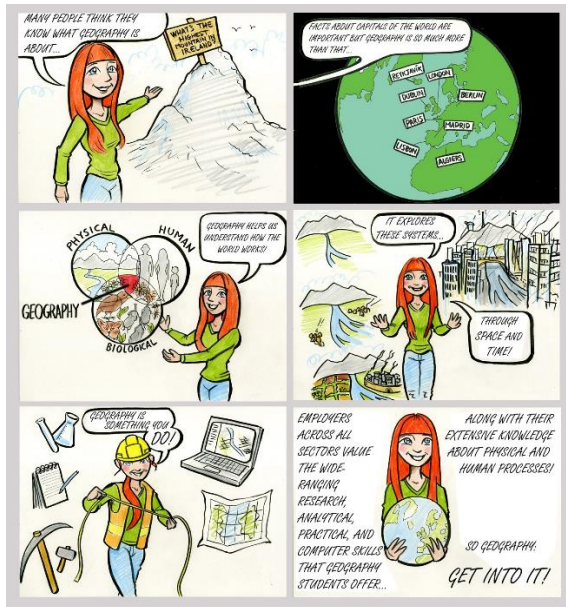
Meeting times: Fridays 9:40-12:40 am

TUR 3018

Instructor: Dr. Jane Southworth

Email: [jsouthwo@ufl.edu](mailto:jsouthwo@ufl.edu)

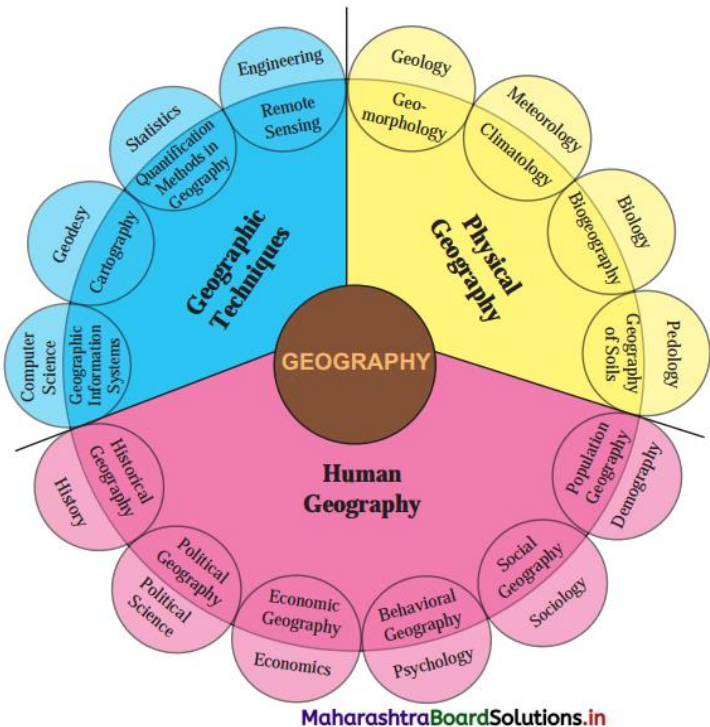
Office Hours: By appointment



## WHAT IS GEOGRAPHY?



DRAWN BY ALLAN CAVANAGH



### Course Description:

The central aim of the course is to learn what it means to be a geographer, and more specifically what it means to be a UF-trained geographer.

### Overview

Geography describes a long running conversation about the earth and humanity's place on it, and a tradition in "earth-writing," to take the word literally from its Greek roots, that began long before any of us were born. What counts as geographical knowledge, and the acceptable means of producing it, has itself changed over time, and in relation to changing historical, institutional, and geographical contexts. As students and novice producers of geographic knowledge, you enter this long running conversation; it is the premise of the course that it is worthwhile for you to examine, both generally and in specific ways related to your own research interests, what has been said before, how it has been said, and why. The course is thus meant to raise questions. What practices have been formative in the development of geographic theories and ideas, what methods, values, and philosophies have defined geographic thought and practice, and how have these changed over the course of the modern discipline's development? What are the implications of this history today?

The seminar explores the making of Geography, geographers, and geographical knowledge, focusing on the western geographical tradition from the nineteenth century to the present. We will examine key ideas, debates, institutions and discourses that have shaped the modern discipline, but also attempt to keep in view the broader historical, social, and political contexts in which different models of science have taken shape. A special focus on a more integrative view of

Geography – and less the traditional human/physical divide will be attempted, via in part, the incorporation of two key texts: Couper makes abstract theory explicit and connects theory with the practices of geographical research and Holt-Jensen who attempts in his text to keep "the fragmented landscape of geography together in one-piece" and so talks about the science of Geography and not human versus physical. Given the diversity of UF Geography this is essential in the teaching of this course.

As such then, this seminar is devoted to excavating and defining the foundations of contemporary geographical thought. We ask: what does it mean to think geographically? What constitutes geographical thought? How can we define geographical thought when its practitioners think and do such diverse things? **Overall, this course is intended to “make geographers” out of you. This means that at the end of the semester you should have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the discipline of geography to have preliminary answers to the following questions:**

- 1) Where do my interests, strengths, and weaknesses fit in the context of the discipline of geography?
- 2) How has the discipline evolved over the past 100+ years, and how does that history shape the approaches that geographers use/choose?
- 3) What are “valid” (supported, contextualized) approaches to the study and practice of geography today? What are the easy and hard roads of participation in the discipline?
- 4) How is geography situated within the academy, and how does that shape my future possibilities?

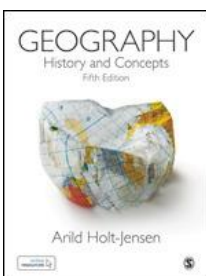
These are big, hard questions. Geographers differ as to the answers. In addition to having your own answers to these questions, you will be expected to understand competing perspectives on the shape of the discipline, to defend them (at least provisionally), and to be able to argue for and against them. In other words—and this is perhaps the central point of the course—it is not enough for you to justify why what you already care about is geographic and/or important. You must substantively understand why and how other scholars/ practitioners, with alternative approaches to the practice of geography, justify their own work as well. In addition to being able to answer these sorts of questions, there are some important kinds of embodied knowledge that the course is designed to help you develop. The sorts of reading, writing, presentation, and discussion in which you will engage this semester are sometimes designed to be usefully uncomfortable rather than maximally efficient. In addition to the substantive content of the course, we will spend some time discussing the practice of being a scholar in geography. This course covers a large and complex topic, and as a result, the reading load is unavoidably heavy.

The goals of the course are:

- To develop better understanding of both the history and breadth of the discipline, including knowledge of major approaches and how they have changed over time.
- To move beyond the silos of our subdisciplines to identify things that have united and divided these different approaches—and how that might change in the future as we continue to shape the trajectory of the discipline.
- To read the work of UF faculty and understand the research foci of UF Geography – as you will carry this department's traditions and expertise with you after graduation.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

### **Book 1: Required**



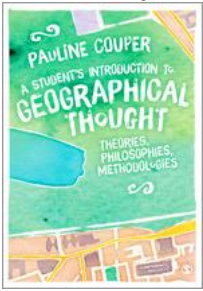
"Geography: History and Concepts" 5<sup>TH</sup> EDITION BY [Arild Holt-Jensen](#)

<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/geography/book260586#resources>

ebook = \$33.00, paperback [ISBN: 9781526440150] = \$41.00

Also available on Amazon.com

## Book 2: Required



"A Student's Introduction to Geographical Thought: Theories, Philosophies, Methodologies" by [Pauline Couper](#)

<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/a-students-introduction-to-geographical-thought/book242349>

ebook = \$38.00, paperback [ISBN: 9781446282960]= \$47.00

Also available on Amazon

## Format and Requirements

The seminar focuses on: (1) close reading and discussion of texts, as well as research articles and book chapters in the history and philosophy of science and geography; (2) key papers selected by faculty to represent the focus areas of research in UF Geography; and (3) research articles written by UF geographers, selected by these faculty as their most important contributions.

The primary course requirements for each student include:

- (1) leading discussion **once** during the semester (30-45 minutes at beginning of the class) and for this week **developing a classroom activity** (45-60 minutes) that will help illustrate some facet of the readings (have fun here!);
- (2) creation of a **weekly summary** of the main points of each week's readings;
- (3) suggested **additional readings** on the history and philosophy of geography to add to those assigned, with a brief discussion of each and description of why selected;
- (4) engaged discussion in the class environment;
- (5) in class activities and homework assignments (often group work);
- (6) a set assignment/activity on UF's focus area; and
- (7) reading at least one paper per faculty member listed as assigned within each topic/week.

There is no final paper or exam in this course but rather attention and focus is on the reading assignments, understanding and synthesis of material, development of an understanding what UF Geography and Geographers do, and contribution to weekly discussions.

The seminar format is meant to create an environment for critical evaluation and discussion of course texts and topics. Instead of lecturing (although I will begin most weeks with a brief set of comments), the instructor is there mainly to structure the course through the reading list, to help guide or direct discussions, raise questions, exchange ideas, and to explain and facilitate the assigned activities and homeworks. The success of a seminar, then, depends largely on the quality of the class discussions and on our abilities (and at times, perseverance) in engaging with course texts both individually and collectively. This requires a commitment for reading weekly texts before class (expect ~ 100-200 pages per week combining journal articles and book chapters, and set aside time accordingly), and, with the acknowledgement that some will tend to participate more than others on a given topic and in general, an effort to participate actively and generously in class discussions. I also encourage you to raise questions about issues arising from course readings that concern you or which may be confusing.

## Detailed Course Requirements

There are seven (7) requirements for this class. Note all work will be submitted in Canvas.

**First**, each student will be expected to lead discussion once during the semester. This involves a critical reading of materials presented for each week, together with an ability to synthesize those readings and draw out the major issues and points of contention. This does not mean a droll recounting of the minutiae of a paper but an ability to provide

critical insight into the main ideas presented, to compare and contrast them with other ideas, and to evaluate which seem to present better, more useful, or more coherent insights into what we are discussing. What do you need to create?

- Such a task will require putting together a discussion sheet that is to be distributed to other students in the class. Think of what are the 4 or 5 big ideas that come out of the week's readings and use that as a springboard for generating discussion. The student leading a particular week's discussion will email the discussion points to the class and instructor no later than 5 pm two days before class (i.e. Tuesday by midnight). This will give us all time to contemplate the questions/discussion points. Make sure you keep a copy for yourself to which you can refer in class.
- Beginning the class, the discussion lead will lead the class in a discussion of the papers/books assigned for that week. This will NEVER be a summary of the readings but rather a discussion of themes, commonalities, and discussing the key questions you stated on your sheet. While YOU are responsible for leading this 30-45 minute discussion to begin the class you should expect EVERY student present to join in on the discussion.
- In addition to creating and sharing the discussion sheet prior to class and then leading the seminar discussion period, you will also be responsible for **developing a classroom activity** (45-60 minutes) that will help illustrate some facet of the readings (have fun here!). If materials are needed (printing handouts, markers, flashcards etc.) please inform Dr. Southworth (jsouthwo@ufl.edu) of these needs by the end of the day Tuesday so she can be sure to be prepared. There are also lots of fun resources on types of activities you can develop online, that you can then apply to the CGT topic. This activity will be a major focus of each week's time in class so make these GOOD! Note: ***Every classroom activity must be unique, for example: once someone has run a discussion, then no other person or group can choose that activity. This way the activities will stay fresh. There are loads of online websites to assist with activities.***

**Second,** each student will prepare a précis/summary of the main points of each week's readings, to be handed in at the end of each class (this summary will be useful for you during the class discussion and for you to keep for qualifying exams etc.). This précis/summary is to be limited to NO MORE THAN 3 PAGES, typed and double-spaced, 12-point font. This limited length will force you to be concise and precise in your writing. You will receive either a "Satisfactory" or an "Unsatisfactory" for each of these summaries. Again, this is not to be an "author X said this but author Y said that" account. I want you to think about the key issues that come out of the readings, where there are points of intersection between them and where there are points of discord. This is an important skill to learn as a graduate student for when it comes to writing for a broader audience (i.e., publishing).

**Third,** based on the topics presented for the Geographic Thought Topic of the week, provide 2 additional 'supplementary' readings you would recommend to help provide additional insights, contrary viewpoints, missing themes etc. For these readings you will submit 1 page maximum with the citation of each paper, and a brief description of what the paper discusses and what you feel it could contribute to the topic at hand (i.e. why you picked it!). You will also submit the pdf's of these papers. For these additional citations you must consider the diversity of the author(s). Geographic Thought courses are heavily criticized for focusing on 'old white men' literature! Note for this course one of the two main textbooks is written by a female STEM author. As such, for the 2 additional citations you must look for diversity (you should consider gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, race, location/focus and culture) and state the diversity of the authors selected in your text. This will help us to very clearly address the issues of bias in our selections. At least 1 paper selected (and ideally both) will present this diversity of authorship.

**Fourth,** you must come to each class session prepared, having completed all the readings in advance, and you must contribute to the ongoing discussion and engage in the assigned classroom activities. You will receive either a "Satisfactory" or an "Unsatisfactory" for each week for discussion engagement.

**Fifth,** based on weekly topics, the student designed **class activities** (which will become homework for completion if not completed in class) will be completed. These activities will ideally help bring Geography to life for you, force you to engage with other students and to consider the presentation and 'face' of Geography to the outside world. As such, these activities may engage technology, require the creation of videos, posters, blogs or other types of visual and media engagements.

**Sixth**, depending on which faculty members are listed in a given week, the student will read at least one paper for each faculty member listed and come prepared to discuss briefly the overall contribution of this paper to the faculty members field and to Geography overall. Given the large diversity of faculty in UF Geography, many papers will be well outside of your areas of expertise and knowledge and may be a challenge to read. By the end of the semester though, to say you have read at least one key paper from every faculty member in our program will be a significant achievement and useful to you during your career here at UF. You will receive either a "Satisfactory" or an "Unsatisfactory" for each week for completion of this task.

**Seventh**, based on the focus areas we will dedicate 2 weeks to a specific assignment where all students will review ALL focus area materials and will then complete one of the assignment options. This activity will be In lieu of class as Dr. Southworth Is attending the Global Land Systems Symposium In Oaxaca Mexico. During these dates there will be no class meeting, although you can use this time to meet Informally If helpful to your selected Focus Area Activity.

### **Grading**

Based on final points total:

93-100% = A

90-92.9% = A-

87-89.9% = B+

83-86.9% = B

80-82.9% = B-

77-79.9% = C+

73- 76.9% = C

70-72.9% = C-

67-69.9% = D+

63-66.9% =D

60-62.9% = D-

Less than 60 = E (Fail)

## **FALL 2024 COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Fridays 9:35am-12:35pm, TUR3018**

Each week, I assign a set of readings which will be posted under the relevant module # indicated in Canvas - see below for which modules are covered each week and note some weeks have more than one module. These readings will be: (1) related to the history and concepts in geography or the theories, philosophies and methodologies of geographic thought; (2) be readings selected by each faculty member in response to the following request from me: "If you had to list 2 papers (by you, as solo, lead or coauthor) that you feel best represent you and your research what would these be"; and (3) represent selected readings from the UF Geography faculty on the different focus areas represented in our program. Topics to be covered are briefly given below – full detail, citations and links to papers for each topic are provided in canvas.

<b>Class #: Date</b>	<b>Module # in Canvas &amp; Geographic Thought Topic(s) [1]</b>	<b>UF Geography Faculty or UF Geog Focus Area [2, 3]</b>
Class 1: Aug 23rd	<b>Topic: Welcome to UF Geography, Intro to class</b>	
Class 2: August 30th	<b>MODULE 1</b> What is Geography?	Dr. Kevin Ash Dr. Jason Blackburn
Class 3: Sept 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULES 2 &amp; 3</b> The roots of Geography and its development into a discipline, and The Regional Tradition	Dr. Brian Child Dr. Johanna Engström
Class 4: Sept 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULES 4 &amp; 5</b> The Growth of Spatial Science, and Paradigms & Revolutions	Dr. Tim Fik Dr. Yujie Hu
Class 5: Sept 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULE 6</b> Positivism	Dr. Gaby Hamerlinck Dr. David Keellings Dr. Liang Mao
Class 6: Sept 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULE 7</b> Alternatives to Spatial Science	Dr. Corene Matyas Dr. Joann Mossa Mr. Stephen Mullens
Class 7: Oct 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULE 8</b> Post-structuralism and Beyond [class ends early - EAB meeting]	Dr. Esther Mullens Dr. Sadie Ryan Dr. Katy Serafin
Class 8: Oct 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULE 9</b> Complexity Theory	Dr. Cynthia Simmons Dr. Anwar Sounny-Slitine Dr. Jane Southworth
Class 9: Oct 18 <sup>th</sup>	HOMECOMING - UF HOLIDAY - NO CLASS	
Class 10: Oct 25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULE 10</b> Moral Philosophy & Ethics	Dr. Bob Walker Dr. Olivier Walther Dr. Berry Wen
Class 11: Nov 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>No Class Meeting - Jane at GLP</b> Do all Focus Area Readings and pick assignment/activity to complete and submit	FA #1: Geospatial Analysis & Techniques FA #2: Medical Geography in Global Health FA #3: Earth System Science FA #4: Geopolitics and the Global Economy
Class 12: Nov 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No Class Meeting - Jane at GLP</b> Do all Focus Area Readings and pick assignment/activity to complete and submit	FA #5: Places, Networks & Flows FA #6: Catastrophes, Conservation and Conflict FA #7: Sustainability & the Global Environment
Class 13: Nov 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MODULES 11 &amp; 14</b> Thinking, Doing, Constructing Geography The Future of Geography	Dr. Alan Wiig Dr. Jamaal Wright Dr. Di Yang
Class 14: Nov 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Putting the UF back into CGT & looking at our future - YOU!	Pick 2 papers written by fellow graduate students in our program to discuss – because you all <b>ARE</b> the future of Geography 😊

Canvas: We will use the “modules” feature on Canvas to organize readings, discussion boards, and places to upload assignments. You can see how this works by visiting the Canvas page at <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/420554>

Office Hours: I am usually in my office but week to week have a highly variable schedule, so I am available by drop in or by appointment.

### **Attendance Policy, Class Expectations, and Make-Up Policy**

- Attendance is required - you are responsible for the announcements made in class.
- Class Rules: Cell Phones MUST be turned off or placed on a silent mode. Texting during class time is not permitted nor condoned. It is expected that students will avoid surfing the internet, using phone apps, and checking e-mail during class to prevent distracting others.
- Please turn all work in on-time. Contact me immediately if any problems arise or you know something will be late. If you fail to complete the assignment by the assigned day and do not have a valid excuse, there will be no make-up and you will be given a zero (0) on the assignment.

### **Students Requiring Accommodations**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

### **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

### **Commitment to a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment**

The Department of Geography and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences values broad diversity within our community and is committed to individual and group empowerment, inclusion, and the elimination of discrimination. It is expected that every person in this class will treat one another with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. If you feel like your performance in class is being impacted by discrimination or harassment of any kind, please contact your instructor or any of the following: your academic advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator, the Department Chair or your Graduate Student Representatives.

### **Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

## Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <https://registrar.ufl.edu/ferpa.html>

## Campus Resources:

### Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc> , and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, Assault, or Violence: If you or a friend has been subjected to sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or violence contact the Office of Title IX Compliance, located at Yon Hall Room 427, 1908 Stadium Road, (352) 273-1094, [title-ix@ufl.edu](mailto:title-ix@ufl.edu)
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)
- Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu) . <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> . Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> .
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> .
- Student Complaints Campus: [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf) .
- On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process> .

## **The following are the Focus Areas of UF Geography to be discussed in this course.**

(1) Geospatial Analysis & Techniques; (2) Medical Geography in Global Health (MGGH); (3) Earth System Science; (4) Geopolitics and the Global Economy; (5) Places, Networks & Flows; (6) Catastrophes, Conservation and Conflict; and (7) Sustainability & the Global Environment.

### **FOCUS AREA #1: Geospatial Analysis & Techniques**

Modeling, Measurement, Visualization and Computation: techniques for the collection, analysis, interpretation and display of geospatial data, using tools such as GIS, Remote Sensing, GPS, and Spatial Statistics.

### **FOCUS AREA #2: Medical Geography in Global Health (MGGH)**

Medical geography, an important area of health research, applies concepts, methods, and techniques from geography to investigate health-related topics across the world, focusing on spatial aspects of human and animal (livestock and wildlife) disease and health intervention.



### **FOCUS AREA #3: Earth System Science**

This is the science of the atmosphere, land, biota, and water from a geospatial perspective. By combining contemporary issues such as climate change, environmental extremes, and hazards, this focus area emphasizes the integrative nature of physical and environmental geography. Earth systems scientists use biophysical understanding to identify and solve problems for management and policy.

### **FOCUS AREA #4: Geopolitics and the Global Economy**

The turbulence of the current times has dramatically transformed the world's economic and political geographies. The scale and scope of such changes require urgent attention. Important topics in this arena relate to: globalization and its impact on peoples and places; economic inequalities across geographic scales and borders; terrorism and power; the development of the knowledge-based economy; and the relationship between economy and environment. Now, more than ever, the changing fortunes of peoples and places demands our attention.

### **FOCUS AREA #5: Places, Networks & Flows**

Geographers conceive of networks and flows between places as a foundational spatial concept. Geographic information systems (GIS) are the main analytical tools employed in determining relations between individuals, settlements, modes of transport, and infrastructures like power grids, and communication networks. The concepts can also be applied to disease contagion, healthcare service delivery, crime activities, river networks and atmospheric teleconnections.

### **FOCUS AREA #6: Catastrophes, Conservation and Conflict**

Disastrous natural hazards, both fast and slow, and violent conflicts affect many people worldwide, often impacting already fragile environments and conservation areas. These crises have significant political, economic, and social implications that can reverse development gains, further entrench poverty and inequality, thereby increasing the risk for future crises.

### **FOCUS AREA #7: Sustainability & the Global Environment**

Major contemporary issues in global environmental change and sustainability have increasing relevance for environmental management and development practice in both the developed and developing worlds. Global socio-ecological problems call for interdisciplinary solutions that transcend the usual boundaries of science and decision-making.