

Instructions for Honors in the Major: Geography and Cartography/GIS

Overview

The Department of Geography administers two majors: 1) Geography and 2) Cartography and Geographic Information Systems. The honors requirements for these majors are very similar and are hereafter referred to as 'Honors in Geography' unless otherwise noted.

Honors in Geography is reserved for students who demonstrate a level of scholarship and independent study that goes well beyond the standard coursework for the major. To receive Honors, students must complete a year-long independent research project, which culminates in a written thesis and public presentation. Honors students must also take additional advanced courses in the major and maintain a GPA of 3.3 or higher in Geography courses. Students interested in obtaining Honors in Geography should begin planning in their junior year, and conduct their independent study during their senior year.

Note that Honors in the Major (in this case, Geography or Cartography/GIS) is distinct from Honors in the Liberal Arts, which is awarded and administered by College of Letters and Science. Students receiving both Honors in the Major and Honors in the Liberal Arts are awarded a Comprehensive Honors degree upon graduation, the highest degree obtainable from the College of Letters and Science. See <http://www.honors.ls.wisc.edu/> for more information.

Requirements

To earn a B.A. or B.S. with Honors in the Geography Major, students must complete:

1. the breadth requirements for the major;
2. the skills requirements for the major plus Geog 766 (introduction to research methods) for 1 credit, preferably during the junior year;
3. a minimum of 21 credits at the intermediate and advanced levels;
4. two advanced courses in the area of concentration with at least one of these being a graduate seminar (Geog 766, 681, 682 may not be counted toward this requirement);
5. a Senior Honors Thesis (and the associated courses Geog 681-682) during the senior year;
6. a public presentation of their work.

To earn a B.A. or B.S. with Honors in Cartography and Geographic Information Systems Major, students must complete:

1. the breadth requirements for the major;
2. the core requirements for the major plus Geog 766 (introduction to research methods) for 1 credit, preferably during the junior year;
3. the electives requirement for the major, with the additional requirement that at least one of the electives must be a graduate seminar;
4. Senior Honors Thesis, Geog 681-82, during the senior year;
5. a public presentation of their work.

Students are urged to take geography courses for honors credits whenever offered, but there is no required number of honors credits. A cumulative GPA of 3.3 in the major is required. Honors candidates must plan their program in consultation with the department honors advisor, as well as find a faculty mentor for their thesis project. The honors advisor provides guidance at the early planning stages and helps ensure that all requirements are met. The faculty mentor advises the honors student while he/she carries out her thesis research and should be someone with expertise in the student's research topic. Students should check in with the department honors advisor at least once a year, and should meet with their mentor fairly frequently, although the exact frequency will be determined by agreement between the thesis student and mentor.

The honors thesis is typically 30-35 pages in length and represents an independent and original work of scholarship by the student. The thesis is a year-long project. See "Guidelines for Preparation of the Senior Honors Thesis" for more information about the thesis.

Standard Timetable

Junior Year, Fall

- Begin brainstorming and planning research projects.
- Talk to the honors advisor for Geography.
- Identify suitable faculty mentors for the honors project and begin contacting them.

Junior Year, Spring

- Take Geography 766. This graduate-level seminar focuses on giving students the tools to design their own independent research projects. Honors students generally use this course to develop and write a proposal for their senior honors thesis.

Senior Year, Fall

- Take Geography 681. This course provides the academic credit for the work conducted by the Honors student during the pursuit of their thesis. May be taken for 2 or 3 credits. The bulk of this semester is usually spent conducting the actual research, although it is usually a good idea to outline and begin writing the thesis.

Senior Year, Spring

- Take Geography 682. As Geography 681, for the spring semester. May be taken for 2 or 3 credits. This semester is usually spent finishing the research and analyses, writing the thesis, and developing and giving a public presentation.

Anytime

- Take the additional credits and seminars required for Honors in Geography (see Requirements, above).