

# Geography 399: The Professional Geographer

**Instructor:** Dr Leslie McLees

**Instructor email:** lmclees@uoregon.edu

**Course Website:** canvas.uoregon.edu

## Course Description

In a job economy where the current generation of graduates is expected to change jobs every three to four years it is important to be able to understand how to critically reflect on what a person has, what they want, and how to get there. This requires critical reflection of those interests and skills, and their potential application in different professional settings.

This course is designed to provide geography students with resources and opportunities to critically reflect on their individual career development pathways and to describe their accomplishments, interests, values and personal characteristics in professional situations. The course will emphasize the importance of skills students have gained in geography classes and how they can translate those skills in professional situations. We will focus on asking spatial questions (*the why of where*) and applying concepts that geographers use, such as scale, place, globalization, and human-environment interactions, in professional environments in way that reflect the critical thinking gained from geography and a liberal arts education. This will allow students to reflect and articulate the benefits of a geographical approach in different professional settings.

To provide students with the tools to present themselves, their strengths, and the value of a geography degree, students will prepare resumes and cover letters in response to specific job ads they are interested in. They will also conduct practice interviews with professionals with non-geography backgrounds and informational interviews with people in the field they hope to enter. All of these activities will build upon each other, requiring continual self-reflection by the students as they learn more about their chosen field and how their skills, values, and interests articulate with different potential career pathways.

Throughout this course, we will also reflect on the value of geography, both in the workplace and beyond, and focus not just on geography as a major and a job, but how it helps make us well-rounded citizens. We will do this reading a text and engaging in in-class discussions about how geography provides us with unique tools to understand the complexity of events both in our neighborhoods where we live and work, and around the world.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and critically reflect on the skills, values and interests that students have gained through their life and academic experiences;
- Articulate the skills and values that they have, and how those translate into career options;

- Understand how a geographical approach and education enhances their potential career pathways and their ability to engage in the world as a global citizen;
- Connect skills to long-term personal and professional goals and develop a pathway of steps necessary to reach those goals;
- Understand how to see themselves outside the structure of college requirements, beginning to independently make decisions about career pathways;
- Identify and prioritize what is important in their personal and professional goals so that when life circumstances change, they are better able to adapt.
- Create an online portfolio that moves students beyond courses and articulates them as a geographer

### Estimated Student Workload

Students will be expected to spend a significant amount of time outside the classroom engaged in work for the course. There are reading assignments throughout the term, as well as several assignments dedicated to walking students through the process of reflecting on geography as it is applied in potential careers, and in understanding world events more broadly.

The first few weeks, focus will be on critical reflections about individual skills and experiences within the context of Geography, and specifically on what geographers bring to professional situations. This will include readings, discussions, and class exercises on gauging how they internalize a spatial perspective. Beginning in week 4, we will transition to a focus on utilizing a spatial perspective to interpreting some world events and trends. We will rely on the book *Why Geography Matters: And Why You Should Care*, by Dr Harm de Blij. We will also examine some current events as a way to ground these discussions.

Other assignments include; searching for job ads, creating a resume and cover letter, conducting an informational interview, creating an online portfolio, etc. These will build upon each other throughout the term to create a completed job application.

### How grades will be determined

Assessment type	% grade	Description
Attendance & participation	30%	Coming to class and engaging in discussion
Geographical trends	15%	Data analysis of trends in geography-related careers
Online portfolio	15%	Online resource for employers and students
Career path map	10%	Students will build this over the course of the term
Final job application	10%	Inclusive of draft and final resume, cover letter, etc.
Informational interview write-up	10%	Reflection on Informational Interview
Current events thru Geography	10%	Four write-ups about analyzing current events through the lens of geography
TOTAL	100%	

### A note on assignments:

This course is about professional development. Like any class, make sure you follow the guidelines and hand in professional quality material. As such;

- Marginal work will earn a marginal grade;
- Any assignment that is late will receive 10% off for each day it is late;

- There is no opportunity for extra credit in this class.

### **Academic Integrity Code**

All students are expected to complete assignments in a manner consistent with academic integrity. Students must produce their own work and properly acknowledge and document all sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases). Students can find more complete information about the University of Oregon's Policy on Academic Dishonesty in the University of Oregon Student Handbook. Find links on the Blackboard to clarify what is meant by plagiarism and to find proper ways of using sources.

***If you are found to have plagiarized (copied) off a classmate or from other materials for a test or an assignment of any sort, your first warning will be a zero on the assignment. Your second incident will result in an F in the course.***

### **Disability Statement**

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me at the beginning of the term if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

### **Attendance Policy**

Class attendance is an important part of a student's educational experience. Students are expected to attend every meeting of their classes and are responsible for class attendance. Regardless of what reasons there may be for absence, students are accountable for all academic activities, and I reserve the right to require special work or tests to make up for the missed class or classes.

### **Etiquette**

This course requires a significant amount of in-class participation, discussion and reflection. All students are expected to be engaged and share experiences. Please address each other respectfully and keep any unnecessary electronics stowed unless we are using them for class purposes.

### **Reading list**

Harm de Blij. 2012. *Why Geography Matters: And Why You Should Care*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.

Michael Solem, Kenneth Foote, and Janice Monk. 2013. *Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment*. Pearson.

Katherine Brooks. 2009. *You majored in what? Mapping your oath from Chaos to Career*. Plume.

Blair Badcock. 2007. "Using geography in public policy: The case of housing." *New Zealand Geographer*. 63: 1-4.

Pauline Kneale. 2002. "Careers for Geography Graduates." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 26(3): 405-412.

Michael Solem, Iven Cheung and M. Beth Schlemper. 2008. "Skills in professional geography: An assessment of workforce needs and expectations." *The Professional Geographer*. 60(3): 256-373.