

**HANDBOOK OF
GRADUATE STUDIES IN GEOGRAPHY AT
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
OBJECTIVES	1
EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH FACILITIES.....	1
PROGRAM.....	2
ASSISTANTSHIPS	3
SCHOLARSHIPS AND FIELD STUDIES AWARDS.....	4
ADVISOR.....	6
COURSE WORK AND THE PLAN OF STUDY	6
PROPOSAL DEFENSE (Thesis or APP Proposal Defense).....	8
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS	8
Written Comprehensive Examination.....	8
Final Oral Examination (Thesis or APP Defense).....	9
THESIS	9
ALTERNATE PLAN.....	10
INTERNSHIP	10
Guidelines	10
APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION.....	11
RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARDING OF DEGREE FORM.....	11
FACULTY	11
CONTACT INFORMATION.....	13
ABBREVIATED GUIDE TO OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS.....	13

BACKGROUND

Minnesota State University, Mankato promotes learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region, and the global community. Geography has been in the curriculum at Minnesota State University since its founding as a Normal School in 1867. The school developed into a Teacher's College, a State College, and then into a University. As such, Geography has been a persistent and productive part of this campus since its very beginnings. Given this legacy and tradition, we offer several graduate programs that serve to train future scholars and professionals to carry the banner of geographic thought and problem solving to better the world through developing Big Ideas and implementing them through Real World Thinking.

OBJECTIVES

The faculty in the Geography Department view our graduate students as prospective leaders, colleagues, and neighbors. We therefore strive to help you develop knowledge, a variety of skills, initiative, and the ability to take responsibility and become a leader in the community. You will be expected to take responsibility in developing and implementing your progress and success in the program. Familiarize yourself with the contents of the *Graduate Studies Bulletin* (<https://grad.mnsu.edu/>) under which you are working and *The Basic Stuff Student Handbook* (available at <https://www.mnsu.edu/students/basicstuff/>). In addition to reading this handbook and going through the previously linked materials, we also understand that the amount of information you are trying to absorb can be cumbersome and difficult to retain. Thus, we have also created a "Cheat Sheet" or *Abbreviated Guide To Our Graduate Program* that you can find on our department's website, in our department office (ask the administrative assistant), or at the end of this handbook. This abbreviated guide contains a basic checklist of requirements and FAQs that graduate students have as they progress through our program.

The purpose of this handbook is:

1. To provide information about departmental policies and procedures more specific than those of the Graduate College; and
2. To give some advice about departmental activities which affect you. In addition, you should become familiar with the other special departmental and university forms and brochures (such as those dealing with internships, comprehensive and oral exams, program of study, change of advisor, etc.). Do remember that the faculty or the department secretary will frequently be able to provide you with useful information.

EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH FACILITIES

Faculty expertise includes geomorphology and earth surface processes, earth system science, soil science and sustainability, surface water resources, geographic information systems, remote sensing, cartography, quantitative methods, a variety of field methods, natural resources and natural resource management, economic geography, historical geography, mountain geography, arid environment/desert geography, political geography, and urban geography; and earth and atmospheric sciences. Regional emphases include the southwestern USA, the high plains USA, the upper Midwest USA, the west coast of the

USA, Latin America, the Caribbean, Scandinavia/Iceland, central Europe, East Asia, India, China, Taiwan, and more. Several faculty in our department have external collaborations with researchers regionally, nationally, and internationally, that can serve as committee members in your work and enhance your learning, research, and growth as a scholar within the program. Collaborations exist between the University of Minnesota's (Earth and Environmental Sciences), Korea University (Geography), Durham University in the UK (Geography), University of Kansas (Geography), Utah State University (Geology), Michigan State University (Geography), Arizona State University (Geography), University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (Geography and Anthropology), Winona State (Geology), University of Minnesota-Duluth (Geology), and others. Please see the list of faculty and their expertise at the end of this document and discuss with them about potential committee members for your thesis research.

Field work, the usage of geospatial technology and software, and laboratory analysis are often an important part of the program. You are strongly encouraged to undertake research with a substantial field and/or laboratory component. Our geospatial/geographic information science laboratories offer state of the science facilities comparable to major research universities. Available software and technology in our computer laboratories include: ESRI GIS products, GRASS GIS, QGIS, IDRISI, SPSS, and S-plus statistical packages, EkkoPro for Ground Penetrating Radar, ERDAS Imagine, Trimble Pathfinder Office, AutoCAD, Adobe Creative Cloud Suite, Trimble global positioning/global navigation satellite systems, and more. Our new EARTH Systems Laboratory provides state of the science tools for archeology, geomorphology/surface process, physical geography, and earth science/geoscience focused research and training. These include: laser diffraction particle size analysis, dendrochronology, ground penetrating radar, sedimentological and soil core analysis, magnetic susceptibility, aerial drone remote sensing, geospatial data analysis, and global positioning systems/global navigation satellite systems data acquisition and analysis. Annual faculty excursions for teaching and research include the Southwestern United States (Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico), Black Hills of South Dakota, the Colorado Rockies, Lake Superior basin in Minnesota/Wisconsin, the upper Mississippi River basin (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois), Iceland, and the Andes Mountains in Argentina.

PROGRAM

In carrying out the program of activities leading to your graduate degree, it is your responsibility to know all requisite steps. You should be proactive about this and if you have questions, make sure to inquire with the College of Graduate Studies and the department. You can learn more about that here, but also use the *Abbreviated Guide to our Graduate Program* (ask Geography's administrative assistant or see at the end of this document). Indeed, you will find that there is more bureaucracy than you encountered as an undergraduate but that is simply part of the graduate experience. You will complete the following:

- Apply for Graduate Study which includes:
 - a personal statement of intent that discusses your intended direction of study and professional goals;

- three letters of recommendation;
- minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.3. If the GPA is lower, the application will still be considered. A GRE is not required. If the minimum requirements are not met, conditional admission may be granted with full admission after demonstration of competence and associated experience;
- File a Plan of Study before completion of 16 graduate credit hours;
- Select a Major Advisor and Examining Committee (discuss the latter with your advisor);
- Write and submit an Internship, Thesis, or Alternate Plan Paper (APP) Proposal which may include Institutional Review Board approval if human or animal subjects are involved;
- Your particular advisor may require a Proposal Defense. Discuss with them to verify.
- Take the Written Comprehensive Exam;
- Turn in the Application for Graduation form;
- Complete the Thesis, APP or Internship Report;
- Take the Final Oral Exam (Thesis/APP Defense);
- Be sure your committee signs the Recommendation for Awarding the Degree form.
- The same information online with links to required forms:
<https://grad.mnsu.edu/graduate-student-resources/graduate-forms/>.

You will find it useful to list these steps on paper (see the summary check lists at the end of this document), then rework them after discovering the prerequisite steps which some have. Carefully scrutinize the forms called for in each of these steps to make sure that you have not skipped something essential. Discussing each of the steps **in advance** with your advisor is suggested in order to avoid mistakes such that you complete the degree in a timely fashion.

ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Assistantships in Geography help defray your educational expenses, but their primary purpose is to help broaden your experience, develop more skills and complete your degree. Many of our students find assistantships outside of the department where duties are likely to be administrative. Assistantship duties in Geography most often involve helping a professor with research or with teaching the laboratory component of a course, but might involve other professional duties.

Departmental faculty assign graduate assistants to specific jobs at the start of each semester. If you have particular skills or knowledge you would like to employ on an assistantship, or would like to work for a particular professor, put your thoughts in writing in advance of the start of the term, and submit this to the departmental Graduate Coordinator.

If you are assigned to work for two professors, make sure you know who your primary supervisor is (this helps reduce scheduling conflicts). Occasionally an experienced graduate student has the opportunity to teach a general education class. When this happens, a faculty member is assigned to work with you in developing the class. Let the department know well in advance if you have some interest in teaching; it generally takes a semester's advance notice to work it into the schedule.

Note that the first scheduled work day, or "duty day", for graduate assistants is the same as the first duty day for faculty members each semester. This is usually about one week in advance of the first day of classes. Ask the Departmental Secretary which is the first duty day for the following term. It is advisable to contact your supervisor that day to get your assignment, or report to the departmental Graduate Coordinator if you haven't yet been assigned.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FIELD STUDIES AWARDS

There are a number of opportunities in the department to apply for a Scholarship or Field Studies Award. These are two distinctly different things. Scholarships are funds that help defray from the costs of education and living expenses. Field studies awards are funds that help you pay for your research (extra study at external facilities, lab analysis, sample processing, equipment, travel, conference presentations, etc.).

You can find information on these opportunities here:

<https://sbs.mnsu.edu/academics/geography/scholarships-and-financial-assistance/>

You can apply for these opportunities here:

<https://mnsu.academicworks.com/> or search MNSU's website for "Scholarship Finder"

Each year these awards are given to students who apply through the Scholarship Finder program on MNSU's website. **BEFORE** you apply for any of these, you need to discuss with your application or intent to apply with your advisor. They will need to be aware of what you intend to apply for and why. This is because they will be your advocate to support you in trying to get these awards. The faculty in the Department of Geography will convene in the spring semester to decide on who gets these awards based on the quality, need presented, and merit of each proposal/application. If you do not have a faculty member with knowledge of your application for these awards, someone who can advocate for you and your application, than you will likely not receive the award. Again, please discuss your application and intent with your advisor.

To apply for these awards, please do the following:

- 1) Be sure to be very, very clear in your application about whether you are applying for a Scholarship or a Field Studies Award.
- 2) If you are applying for a Scholarship, make sure you follow the guidelines and requirements asked for in each award. These will be visible in the Scholarship Finder page for these awards.
- 3) If you are applying of a Field Studies Award, make sure you follow the guidelines and requirements asked for in each award. These will be visible in the Scholarship Finder page for these awards.
 - a) In addition, **make sure you include a budget**. This should be in a table format

that lists the expenses you will have (things you need money for) in the first column, the costs for each of those things in the second column, and whether these costs are **DIRECT** or **DEPARTMENT SUPPORT** costs in the third column (details on these costs below).

- i. Your budget should clearly designate what costs you will personally pay for. Please label these as **DIRECT COSTS** in your budget. These **DIRECT COSTS** include personal vehicle mileage, per diem (i.e. daily meal expense per university established costs), and individual room/lodging/camping. Your budget should also clearly designate what costs the department will pay for to support you. Please label these as **DEPARTMENT SUPPORT COSTS**. All other costs likely qualify as these types of costs. Department support costs are paid for by the department and reimbursed from the foundation account that grants your award. In other words, you will not receive this money but the department will handle the budget and expense in order to make things simple for you. It also provides educational and tax free discounts in order to allow you to do more with your awarded funds for research!
- ii. You ***MUST*** work with your advisor to determine what is **DIRECT** and what is **DEPARTMENT SUPPORT** cost in your budget. This is required in order to receive a Field Studies Award.
- iii. This is the table we use to define what is potentially **DIRECT** and **DEPARTMENT SUPPORT** costs in your budget. Do not assume you have it figured out, though. PLEASE discuss your budget and review it with your advisor:

iv.

Expense	Financial Aid	Payment Process
Individual Mileage/Per Diem	Y	Student Account
Coordinated Travel/Mileage/University vehicle rental/Per Diem	N	FD1400 - Department
Individual Room/Board/Lodging/Camping	Y	Student Account
Coordinated Room/Board/Lodging/Camping	N	FD1400 - Department
Lab Analysis/Supplies/Fees	N	FD1400 - Department
Equipment/Instrumentation/Misc. research expenses	N	FD1400 - Department
Training sessions at peer-institutions and/or laboratories	N	FD1400 - Department

b) In addition, make sure you include a timeline for your work. This should include when you will conduct your work, when expenses will be incurred, and what outcomes you will have from it and when those outcomes will occur.

c) Every Field Studies Award application should be discussed with your advisor and the application should be examined by your advisor before you submit. Your advisor should work with you to make sure your budget, timeline, and written descriptions/narrative are of high quality and are clear in their intent. Failure to work with an advisor on this will result in you not receiving the award you applied for. **MAKE SURE YOU WORK WITH YOUR ADVISOR BEFORE YOU SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR FIELD STUDIES AWARDS!!!!**

Following evaluation of your application, you will be notified if you have received a Scholarship or Field Studies Award. Scholarships will be directly distributed to you, via the Financial Aid Office. Field Studies Awards will have DIRECT costs distributed to you via the Financial Aid Office. DEPARTMENT SUPPORT COSTS will remain in the foundation account and the Department of Geography can access those funds for you. You and your advisor should keep all receipts and maintain a budget to keep track of all expenses in Field Studies Awards. You will need to give all receipts for expenses to the administrative assistant in the Department of Geography.

ADVISOR

Before being accepted to one of the graduate programs in the Department of Geography, you should communicate with a potential advisor and make sure they are willing to serve as your advisor. Students who fail to do this may not be admitted to the program. It is crucial to have an advisor set in place so that you can begin working on your research and get advising once you begin your educational experience in our program. Contact him/her, again, once you are admitted, for useful orientation to the department, and especially for aid in choosing your classes. Also, discuss your potential research projects and who are potential members of your committee (must be two internal faculty, can have external scientists besides that).

It is possible to change Major Advisors, and Examining Committee members, by simply filling out requisite forms (available from the Graduate College web page, <https://grad.mnsu.edu/globalassets/college-of-graduate-studies-and-research/files/documents/forms/change-of-advisor.pdf>) if your research interests change. It is the advisor's professional duty to provide unadulterated critical feedback as well as being supportive. Your advisor will be your greatest critic and your greatest champion. This is why it is VERY important to have an advisor lined-up before you begin here. They need to be in your corner for day one or it could lengthen the time necessary to complete your degree to 3+ years.

COURSE WORK AND THE PLAN OF STUDY

Taking classes is only one part of your graduate experience and training. Developing research skills as well as analytical and improved writing and presentation skills are of

equal importance. In addition to the two required core courses, GEOG 678 – Research & Writing and GEOG 680 – Philosophy of Geography, select courses that will aid you in completing your Thesis/APP research. Most graduate courses will have a research paper or project.

A Plan of Study must be filed before the completion of 16 graduate semester credit hours at Minnesota State University. The *Plan of Study* is the document that identifies the permanent advisor and indicates your degree program(s), department(s), course numbers, course titles, total credit hours, and APP or Thesis option. The *Plan of Study* must be signed by the student, major advisor and two examining committee members. Check with Graduate College for the form (<https://grad.mnsu.edu/globalassets/college-of-graduate-studies-and-research/files/documents/forms/plan-of-study.pdf>).

One part of your program is the selection of courses. You will probably find it useful to list a semester-by-semester schedule of those courses you must, should, and want to take. In practice, professors retire, or take sabbatical leave, new courses appear, and old ones are dropped, or the frequency of offerings changes, so you need other information sources. The semester schedule is available about six weeks before the start of a new semester, and tells you which specific courses will be offered, as well as their time and location. For medium range planning, you can get the jump on the published schedule by checking with the department secretary several weeks earlier, when the department's forthcoming schedule has already been finalized. For even better long-range planning, ask the department administrative assistant for a copy of the department's one-year and occasionally two-year schedule to see what is most likely going to be offered. If you would like to see a particular course offered though it isn't on the schedule (or in the bulletin) or offered during a different semester/time than the schedule indicates, speak to the chairperson; with enough interest and appropriate lead time, such changes and offerings may be possible.

A few things to know about course work in your graduate degree program:

- Any deficiencies satisfied by taking undergraduate courses must be made up as early in your program as possible and cannot be included on your *Plan of Study* nor count toward graduation.
- At least half of your course work included on the *Plan of Study* must be graduate only classes, i.e., in courses numbered 600 – 699 (this is exclusive of Thesis and/or APP credits). Other courses may be taken in senior/graduate courses numbered 500 – 599. Courses numbered 499 or lower may not be included on the *Plan of Study*.
- In addition to the core courses, at least half of your elective semester credit hours of course work included on the *Plan of Study* must be taken in Geography. Please consult the Graduate Bulletin and your advisor in selecting appropriate electives. You are encouraged to take courses in allied disciplines to develop expertise in your chosen research specialty.
- In instances where it suits the student's research needs, fewer elective credit hours in Geography are allowed and more may be taken in other departments. Written permission of your advisor and Departmental Graduate Coordinator is required:

The student should prepare a letter explaining the circumstances and submit to the Departmental Graduate Coordinator who will consult with the major advisor. If approved, the Graduate Coordinator will notify you directly.

- You may include on the *Plan of Study* up to six semester credits of Individual Study. No more than four credits of GEOG 677 – Individual Study may be taken with any one instructor on one topic in one semester.
- All are subject to a *Tools of Research Requirement* where you must take a minimum of one research methods or statistics course if not already fulfilled as an undergraduate. Depending upon your Thesis/APP research topic, foreign language or GIS skills may qualify as *Research Tools*. GEOG 678 can satisfy this requirement. You must consult carefully with your advisor to determine what qualifies as appropriate *Research Tools* for your chosen specialization.
- Per University requirements, a maximum of 10 graduate semester hour credits may transferred from non-MinnState institutions and up to 16 may be transferred from other MinnState schools.

PROPOSAL DEFENSE (Thesis or APP Proposal Defense)

Some of the faculty in the department may require a Proposal Defense if they serve as your advisor. You should inquire with your advisor to see if they require this. They can also explain how this process works and the expectations. This, if required, will likely occur at the end of your first year in the program.

A *Thesis or APP Proposal Defense* should occur prior to data collection, but this may not always be feasible. The proposal must include a tentative title, problem statement, objective, procedures to be used, time table, and documentation and approval of any human or animal participation or subjects by the *Institutional Review Board*. It is hoped that the proposal developed in GEOG 678 – Research and Writing (or some near variant) will be used as the *Thesis or APP Proposal*. The optimum time to meet with your committee and have the proposal approved is toward the end of your second semester in the program when you are nearing completion of GEOG 678; the proposal may be approved no later than 15 weeks prior to graduation. In consultation with your advisor, enroll for three to six Thesis credit hours after the Proposal is approved. It normally takes our majors about a 2+ years to do a thesis, so plan accordingly.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Comprehensive examinations are designed to determine the student's broad understanding in the field of study, specific areas of interest and/or the nature and design of the research project. Every candidate for a graduate degree takes the written comprehensive examination and the oral comprehensive examination in the form of a Thesis or APP defense.

Written Comprehensive Examination

Written comprehensive examinations are administered by the department. **At least two weeks prior** to the anticipated written comprehensive examination date, the student must submit a written request (can be email) to their advisor. Their advisor should inform the Department's Graduate Coordinator and Administrative Assistant.

Policy regarding written comprehensive examinations:

- a. Examination will consist of 3-4 questions and is expected to involve about six hours of writing.
- b. Questions will be invited from all members of the student's committee and may be invited from any professor from whom the student has taken courses, but the latter is not common practice. The advisor will select the questions to be used in consultation with the committee.
- c. Normally, the examination will be taken under the supervision of the advisor (i.e., no take-home exams), committee member, and/or administrative assistant. Reference materials, such as statistical tables, may be permitted at the discretion of the advisor.

- d. A student may bring and use a computer, or if desired, a departmental computer may be used.
- e. Normally, a student will pass if two of three examining committee members agree on his or her passing. If the examination is not passed, it may be retaken once. The student will be dismissed from the program if the second attempt is not passed.
- f. A student will normally request the examination late in the third or early in his or her last term of residency, but may apply sooner if the situation warrants. A student planning to graduate during summer session should make sure in advance that her/his committee will be available. Appointment of a substitute committee must be approved in writing by the student and his or her advisor.

Final Oral Examination (aka Thesis or APP Oral Defense)

This examination is held after the Committee approves the draft of the Thesis or Alternate Plan Paper, at least one month prior to graduation. The student arranges the time and place after consulting with the Examining Committee.

Policies regarding oral comprehensive examinations:

- a. The student must petition to take the exam at least two weeks in advance of anticipated exam date, and a near-final form of the thesis/research paper(s) should be made available to the committee and placed on reserve in the Geography Department at the same time the student petitions to schedule the defense. Typographical and grammatical errors must be rectified before the polished version is submitted.
- b. The examination will focus on the student's research report (thesis or APP) and evaluation of the comprehension, quality of work, results, and theoretical or applied implications of the work.
- c. The candidate's advisor, as chairperson of the examining committee, will lead the examination and may invite questions from the audience at his/her discretion. The defense/examination is PUBLIC. Please be aware that anyone can attend. Substitute members of the committee must be approved by the advisor and the candidate.

THESIS

The master's thesis enables you to generate new knowledge by developing and demonstrating your skills in problem formulation, reviewing pertinent literature, collecting /analyzing/interpreting data, and presenting results. Your advisor and committee will play a large and essential role in helping you develop a research problem and carry it through to completion. In picking your advisor, therefore, it is important to have an idea of the general areas of research interest. Under the thesis plan, the student earns a minimum of 30 semester credits approved on the *Plan of Study*: typically, students take 24 credit hours of course work and six credit hours of Thesis.

At the latest, your defended, and revised if necessary, thesis is due to the Graduate College four weeks prior to graduation. The summer between your two academic years is

especially important for data collection and preliminary analyses. For a good idea of the scope and format of geography theses, look at some in the departmental collection, ask some of the professors to show you some they might have, and all are available in the university library.

Students should pick up and review the *Thesis Guidelines* handout available from the Graduate College web page before starting the thesis. In general, any style manual may be used but you must be consistent throughout. Be sure to follow the Graduate College Thesis Guidelines very carefully to avoid rejection based upon poor formatting or stylistic errors.

ALTERNATE PLAN

Under the alternate plan, the student earns a minimum of 34 semester credits in approved courses and one or two research papers or their equivalent as required by the Examining Committee. Typically, students take 32 credit hours of course work and 2 credit hours of Alternate Plan Paper (APP). In consultation with your Major Advisor and with approval from your Examining Committee, an internship report may be used as the APP. The APP includes a research requirement less extensive in nature than a Thesis. However, the research should be significantly greater in quality and quantity than the standard graduate term paper. Ordinarily, the Thesis is oriented toward original research and primary data sources with appropriate analyses, whereas the APP is oriented toward the usage of secondary research sources. The same standards of excellence as well as the same formatting and style guidelines for that of a Thesis apply to the APP.

INTERNSHIP

If you are interested in a career outside academia, you may find that your most suitable terminal activity is an internship. The objective of the internship program is to provide the student with practical experience in a relevant public agency or private business. Your first task is to find a faculty member with some relationship to the kind of internship you propose and ask them to serve as your internship advisor. You should make this contact two to three months in advance of your planned starting date. In consultation with your Major Advisor and with approval of your Examining Committee, the final internship report may be used as your APP.

Guidelines

1. Prepare a vita or resume that summarizes your academic work and relevant experience (include names of references and examples of papers or projects), and give it to the internship advisor during your discussion.
2. Either you or the advisor may establish the contact with the supervising agency. The normal duration will be six months (though a three-month summer or semester-long internship is sometimes possible).
3. A maximum of 10 semester credit hours of internship can be counted toward the degree. No more than six credit hour are allowed per semester. One semester credit hour is granted per forty-five hours of internship work. You will receive a grade of In-Progress until you have finished the entire internship.

4. At the end of the first month of your internship, submit a progress report to your advisor and/or internship supervisor, and do this every month thereafter. After two months on the job, arrange a meeting with the advisory committee to rough out requirements for the final report. To save time, you should examine copies of completed internship reports to get an idea of their contents and approach and start a rough draft of your own report as soon as possible.

APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

The Application for Graduation must be approved by the examining committee and the graduate coordinator and submitted to the College of Graduate Studies 10 weeks before graduation. If a summer graduation is planned, you must file during spring term

RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARDING OF DEGREE FORM

If the thesis defense is successful and the Examining Committee has approved and signed, the Geography Administrative Assistant will submit the Recommendation of Awarding for Degree Form to the Graduate College.

FACULTY

- Sudarshana Bordoloi, Ph.D., York, 2014, *Assistant Professor*--population, migration, public health, development, human geography
- Mark Bowen, Ph.D., Kansas, 2011, *Assistant Professor/EARTH Systems Laboratory Co-Director* -- soils geomorphology, soils sustainability, the Anthropocene, soils and agriculture, paleoenvironmental change, Great Plains USA
- Donald A. Friend, Ph.D., Arizona State, 1997, *Professor*—physical geography, mountain geography, environment, conservation, science communication
- Woo Jang, Ph.D., Georgia, 2012, *Associate Professor*--Geographic Information Science, global positioning systems, global navigation satellite systems, locational analysis, quantitative methods, transportation geography
- Phillip Larson, Ph.D., Arizona State, 2013, *Associate Professor/EARTH Systems Laboratory Co-Director* -- earth surface processes and geomorphology, arid environments, fluvial and aeolian geomorphology, landscape evolution, paleoenvironmental change
- Jose Javier Lopez, Ph.D., Indiana State, 1998, *Professor*--economic and social geography, Latin America, quantitative methods
- Cynthia A. Miller, Ph.D., Syracuse, 1991, *Associate Professor* -- historical geography, cultural geography, geography of North America, environmental hazards
- Martin D. Mitchell, Ph.D., Illinois, 1993, *Professor* – climatic environments, natural resources, environmental regulations, cartography, the American West
- Rama Mohapatra, Ph.D., Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012, *Associate Professor* -- Geographic Information Science, quantitative methods, socio-economic analysis
- Fei Yuan, Ph.D., Minnesota, 2004, *Professor* – Geographic Information Science, Remote Sensing, GIS in natural resources

CONTACT INFORMATION

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206 Morris Hall
Mankato, MN 56001
Phone: (507) 389-2617
Fax: (507) 389-2980
<http://sbs.mnsu.edu/geography/>

ABBREVIATED GUIDE TO OUR GRADUATE PROGRAM “The Cheat Sheet”

1) You must complete 30 credits for the Thesis Plan (TP), or 34 credits for the Alternative Plan Paper (APP).

- a. You are required to take Geog 678 (3cr) and Geog 680 (3cr)
- b. You need at least 24 (Thesis Plan) to 28 (Alternative Plan Paper) elective credits within 500/600 level curriculum.
- c. 50% or more of your courses must be at the 600 level and 15 credits must be taken within Geography’s curriculum.
- d. Make sure to take 3-6 credits of Geog 699 (Thesis) or 1-2 credits of Geog 694 (APP). These DO NOT COUNT towards your 600 level credit total, but are required. So, do not count them in the 15 600-level you need!
- e. Make sure to fill out a **PLAN OF STUDY** that shows the courses you have and are taking. Ask Geography’s administrative assistant for this form.
 - **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT:** Make sure to indicate 50% or more 600 level classes in your Plan of Study form and that it shows a total of at least 30 (TP) or 34 (APP) credits. Make sure to include Geog 678 and Geog 680! Make sure to include Geog 699 (TP) and Geog 694 (APP)! **DO NOT SHOW MORE 500 level than 600**, even if you have taken the courses – just leave some of the 500 level off the form (don’t worry, they will show up on your transcript). Finally, get signatures from your committee and the Graduate Program Director and turn the form in to Geography’s administrative assistant. **THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!**

2) Speak with your advisor/thesis committee chair. Some require a “Proposal Defense” early on in your graduate education. **MAKE SURE YOU SPEAK WITH THEM ABOUT THIS.**

- a. A proposal defense is an oral presentation in front of your proposed committee that defends your rationale for conducting your research and outlines a plan/approach to complete your work.

3) You are required to complete a Comprehensive Exam before you graduate. Speak with your advisor/committee chair regarding this. They will explain how it works.

- a. A comprehensive exam is a written examination that can be taken over a one day or multi-day period. Most choose the one day period.
- b. There is associated paperwork that must be filled out. Please contact Geography's administrative assistant regarding filling out this paperwork.

4) You must apply to graduate! Make sure to fill out the Application for Graduation for the term you intend to graduate. If you cannot find this, speak to Geography's administrative assistant.

- a. Before filling out your Application for Graduation, please discuss your timeline with your advisor/committee chair.
- b. Be cognizant of the deadlines! Check the university's website to make sure you know when the Application for Graduation must be in!
- c. Make sure that you are enrolled in **AT LEAST ONE CREDIT** the term you intend to graduate.

5) You must DEFEND YOUR THESIS before you graduate. This is called the Thesis Defense or Oral Examination. You will give an oral defense (a presentation) of your work and your findings in front of your committee. They will evaluate your work and determine whether you pass, need revisions/improvements, or fail.

- a. This is a **PUBLIC EVENT**. Members of the public can attend this defense and ask questions.
- b. A completed first draft of your thesis **MUST BE AVAILABLE** at least two weeks, but preferably a month, before your Defense date. Failure to do this will result in rescheduling your Defense and potentially delay your graduation.
- c. If revisions are needed (based on your committee's evaluation during your defense), please complete those and review with your committee before you submit your thesis!

6) Make sure to check the Thesis and APP submission deadlines!

- a. Four copies of your thesis are due to the Graduate College by certain date if you wish to have printed copies made. You can choose to submit online for free, if you do not want printed copies. Failure to get your thesis/APP in on time will result in a delay of your graduation.
- b. Make sure to research the options of hard copy vs. electronic. Make sure to follow the appropriate guidelines for this.
- c. Make sure that you have included a signature page in the front page of your Thesis. If you wish to have a hard copy printed, this signature page must be on watermarked paper and must have signatures from all committee members! Ask the Department's administrative assistant for this paper if you do not have any. And, make sure you have formatted it correctly before you submit. See the following website for details: <https://grad.mnsu.edu/capstone/guidelines.html>

7) Make sure that your advisor/chair and committee have filled out a *Recommendation for Awarding the Degree* form.

- a. You will not be able to graduate without this. This must also be turned in to the Graduate College before graduation. Please check the deadlines. Please ask Geography's administrative assistant for this form and help with submitting it.