Message from the Chair

Geography and Community Outreach

Our Geography faculty, students, and staff have been busy, reaching out to various local, regional, and international communities. With the help of all members of the department and with special help from our staff members Karin Waller and Nick Miller, this year’s fall enrollment is more than 10% higher than the previous year’s enrollment. Most of our 300 level courses are either full or nearly full. To accommodate students in the waitlist, we either increased the cap or added a new section for several of our courses.

This seems to indicate that our courses will serve the increasing need of general education for non-majors as well as offering the critical pedagogical need of our majors. We recently updated a geography career board to show where our alumni work under what job title. Prospective students can take a look at the board (also see page 2 of this newsletter) to identify possible career paths in geography.

Teresa Bulman, director of the Center for Geographic Education in Oregon, took K-12 teachers to Russia (see page 6) this past summer for them to have real-world experiences so that the teachers disseminate living knowledge to our Oregon students. As part of the Study Abroad program, Barbara Brower led seven students to France to learn the geography of food in local places. Additionally, her urban coyote research has drawn academic and community interest around the Portland metropolitan area.

Geoffrey Duh was busy during the summer spending time at the National Climate and Water Center to complete the development of GIS-based streamflow forecast models. The project has been expanded to include a web-based GIS component for decision support. Martin Lafrenz’s two recent projects directly involve in community partnership. With colleagues in Environmental Sciences and Management and Metro, he mapped biodiversity corridors in the Portland metro area. His another project, with K-12 teacher and Murdock fellow, Angelica Huston, examined how salt marsh vegetation shifts after dike removal as an analog of climate change.

Andres Holz’s fire ecology research in Patagonia has drawn attention of regional forest managers to mitigate potential fire risk. Hunter Shobe’s newly redesigned world population and food supply class asks students to reach our community food supply chains. Such a place- and student-based learning will enrich students’ experiential knowledge. Our new assistant professor Brit Crow-Miller’s research in China’s water transfer project has been quoted in the Economist. Our new assistant professor Martin Swobodzinski has been busy in making connections to local GIS industries to better attract possible collaborative opportunities with the PSU community.

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David Banis, Associate Director of Center for Spatial Analysis and Research, has been working with US Forest Service on a cultural value mapping project with Rebecca McLain, an affiliated faculty member of the department. Tim Palmer, another affiliated member of the department, is well-known for his life-long work on communicating nature with photographic images.

Working with Portland Parks and Recreation Urban Forestry, Jeff Ramsey, MS candidate, wrote an article about Portland Canopy Study in the Urban Forest Report. Our emeritus Professor Joe Poraczyk is still active in Urban Forest Commission work. Another graduate student, Stephen Przybylinski, has been closely working with local community to understand the dynamics of urban homeless people and local policy.

This diverse set of activities through research and education illustrates our strong commitment to community outreach. While it may take time to establish reliable relationships with many community partners, once established, our geography community will be better served and will be more resilient in the future. Geography is a discipline of networking people and nature.

Interview with our new Assistant
Professor Britt Crow-Miller

How did you get into your field?

I had the chance to spend a few months traveling across China when I was still in high school, exploring the cities in the Eastern and Central regions (which were really beginning to boom at that time) and spending time embedded in a remote rural community on the Sichuan-Tibetan Plateau. There were so many fascinating contradictions between, for example, rural and urban, rich and poor, modern and traditional. At the same time, the social and environmental impacts of development were evident at every turn and clearly very complicated. I came home with a strong desire to understand what was going on there and how China had gotten to that point. When I left for college the following year it was with the plan of studying Chinese language and history. I started out focused on socio-spatial issues in late Imperial and early 20th century China, but for my Masters and ultimately my PhD I decided to move into a more explicit focus on environment and development in the post-reform era. (continued next page)
What is your current area of research?

My research is focused on the question of how power and politics shape the social and environmental impacts of resource management schemes and development pathways, both in China and beyond. I am motivated by a desire to understand and lay bare the underlying political-economic agendas that drive particular courses of resource management in the development process, as well as the unintended social and environmental consequences this process so often produces. Another common theme in my research has to do with the role Chinese development plays beyond its own borders in terms of shaping environments and resource access, and constraining how social and political actors in places like Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa are able to negotiate their positions in relation to China’s development project. With these themes at the core of my research, I have been able to engage in a broad range of interesting and important projects, from the politics of urban water provision in North China to the unintended consequences of a World Wildlife Fund development project with female oyster harvesters in West Africa.

What attracted you to Portland?

Anyone who has spent time in Portland knows that it is a fantastic place to live. Like any city, it has its share of challenges, but on the whole the quality of life it offers is higher than anywhere else I’ve lived before. It sometimes feels like I’m living in a Portlandia episode, but being able to ride bikes with my family to a non-profit brew pub with a children’s folk guitarist playing for a pack of toddlers in the back is, while admittedly pretty absurd, a wonderful option to have. And of course Portland offers great access to the outdoors (even a slew of nearby hiking options where the canopy is so thick it keeps you dry in the rain!). The natural beauty of the area is really special.

What courses will you teach?

This fall I will be teaching Environment and Society (GEOG 230). It’s a new course for me and I think it is an especially exciting one because it’s an opportunity to capture the interest of students as they are beginning their undergraduate experience and hopefully inspire them to consider focusing on geography and social-environmental issues. In the winter I will be teaching Cultural and Political Ecology (GEOG 348) and Geography of the Pacific Rim (GEOG 355), which is one of my favorite courses so far. I teach it with a strong focus on environment and development in East Asia and I’ve had several students uncover passions in many of the subtopics we deal with, including issues with water and air quality and sophisticated self-governance systems in slum communities in East Asian megacities. In the spring I will teach 230 again and introduce a new course on modern China, which will focus on various cultural, political, economic, and environmental dimensions of China’s transformation into a global power. At some point I’ll also likely be teaching Geography of World Affairs (GEOG 350), in which I focus on global affairs through the lens of environmental politics.

What can students expect in the classroom?

I am lucky enough to teach courses that genuinely excite me, so I am able to bring a lot of energy to the classroom. I like to create a classroom environment where students feel respected and comfortable sharing their views and engaging in critical discussion with each other. I try not to just lecture at my students, so I often play with the format of the class by dividing into small discussion groups, engaging in targeted writing exercises and, when possible, getting out into the community to understand how issues related to the environment, politics, and development are present in our own lives here in Portland. If there is a way for me to steer a class toward the specific interests of the students in a given quarter, I like to do that too. My goal is to get students thinking about things they may have never considered before and to get them excited.

What are your future research plans?

I have a couple of projects on my agenda for this year. First, I plan to continue my work on the politics of water governance and urbanization in North China, related specifically to the South-North Water Transfer Project. I’m hoping to add a comparative dimension to this project by investigating large interbasin water transfer projects in North America. Also in this vein, I am currently working with a colleague in Urban Studies and Planning to examine the “technopolitics” of Chinese water infrastructure. One project I am particularly excited about getting off the ground is related to the idea of “glocal development” in rural China. I will explore possibilities for and political barriers to bringing economic growth beyond China’s urban areas through new models of global production and consumption. This is a new subject for me, but it draws upon many of my interests and past experience working on issues related to inequality, urbanization, and the politics of development. Finally, I plan to begin background research for a longer-term project related to China’s role in development in Africa. I will look particularly at questions related to the export of a new and distinctly Chinese development model and the implications of Chinese water stress for African countries in which the Chinese government is buying and leasing land for food exports.
Since the GIS Grad Certificate Program’s inception in 2004, 306 students have earned the certificate.

For more information regarding the GIS program at PSU, visit the following link:
http://www.pdx.edu/geography/GIS

Or scan the QR code below with

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Dr. Martin Swobodzinski has also joined our faculty this year. Watch for his interview in the next newsletter!

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External Grants

David Banis and the Center for Spatial Analysis and Research (CSAR) has initiated a partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to provide geospatial support for the Pacific Region National Wildlife Refuge System. The initial award is $10,000.

Teresa Bulman, Director of Education Programs for the Center for Geography Education in Oregon (C-GEO, housed in the PSU Department of Geography) has received a grant of $200,000 from the Gray Family Foundation for K-12 geographic literacy programs.

Teresa Bulman, C-GEO has also received a grant for $10,250 for "GIS in K-12 Geography" from the Gray Family Foundation.

Geoffrey Duh and the Geography Center for Spatial Analysis and Research (CSAR) received a $205K funding from USDA-NRCS through the Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) agreement for the 2014 - 2016 academic years. The project, NWCC Spatial Services - Watershed Analysis Internet GIS, is to develop a cloud-computing GIS to support the water forecasting tasks performed at USDA-NRCS National Water and Climate Center (NWCC). The internet GIS will complement the Basin Analysis GIS (BAGIS) Geoffrey developed for NWCC and provide a more streamlined data and online GIS apps sharing environment among NWCC forecasters and the general public.

Faculty & Student Presentations

Britt Crow-Miller, was quoted in the following Reuters article, "Quenching Beijing’s Thirst May Stunt Regional Growth" and in The Economist, "A Canal Too Far: The World’s Biggest Water-Diversion Project Will Do Little to Alleviate Water Scarcity.”


The following papers were presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG) held September 24-27 2014, Tucson, AZ:

Dirk Kinsey - Emerging Gang Geographies of Multnomah County

Stephen Przybylinski - Not In Portland’s Back Yard: The Production of a Self-Organized Homeless Space

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Emeritus Faculty News

Martha Works, retired in Spring 2014 and has been enjoying her new adventures.

Thomas Poulson, passed away on June 20th, 2014 at age 83. He was a faculty member of the department from 1963 to 1996. As a popular professor, he led student groups abroad and sponsored the immigration of several talented foreign scholars to the United States. Read his obituary here.
Nan Devlin (B.S., M.T.A., 1986) just accepted a job as the Tourism Director of Tillamook County. She earned her geography degree, mentioned in the Tillamook Herald article here [http://www.tillamookheadlightherald.com/news/article_c8ff62a0-450e-11e4-87b4-270e6a638449.html](http://www.tillamookheadlightherald.com/news/article_c8ff62a0-450e-11e4-87b4-270e6a638449.html).

Lesley Bross (GIS Certificate, 2010) will be assisting the Dynamic Ecosystems and Landscapes Lab during the 2014-2015 academic year on a grant from the United States Forest Service. Lesley will be working with Dr. Robert Scheller to improve functionality of the Harvest Extensions to the LANDIS-II forest landscape simulation model (www.landis-ii.org).

Ron Goodwin (BS ’64/MST ’69) “My wife Katie (BS ’64/MST ’70) and I have been able to use our geography experience as volunteers with the Friends of Multnomah Falls for 25 years in the Multnomah Falls Visitor Center where we meet people from all over the world. We have had visitors from Timbuktu, Chad and about any country as they visit the number one natural attraction in Oregon.

Attached is our 50th Anniversary Cake which has PSU’s logo on it as that is where we met in geography classes. We have travelled to many countries so the globe is at the top of the cake along with the logo for the Pacific Crest Trail on which I am a section/crew leader for maintaining the section from Timberline Lodge to Barlow Pass.”

Brian McLeer (GIS Certificate, 2013) “I recently changed jobs. I was a GIS Technician for the City of Clovis, NM, and am now the GIS/CAD Technician for the City of Woodburn, Oregon. Also, I received a Special Achievement in GIS (SAG) Award from ESRI in July of this past summer while still working for the City of Clovis, NM.” [http://events.esri.com/conference/saglist/?fa=Detail&SID=1800](http://events.esri.com/conference/saglist/?fa=Detail&SID=1800).

Lindsay Spell (M.S., 2014) "I am thrilled to be working at Oregon State University as a Special Projects Coordinator on the Rural Communities Explorer team! The RCE includes an online database and mapping tool that helps Oregonians find and understand over 200 different social, economic, environmental and health indicators. Right now I am working on a project that is building a site to present and explain data relating to the Governor’s 10 Year Plan for the state. This work is very similar to my thesis research and I am so excited to be able to combine my GIS and human geography skills in ways that are helping citizens and decision makers throughout the state better understand their communities. I can honestly say that I would not have this job if not for my work for David Banis and CSAR on DEQ’s Oregon Incident Response Information System project. Through that work I met the director for the Oregon Explorer, who then told me about RCE and now here I am! We are always looking to continue spreading the word about the RCE, so please go to the site and explore! (www.oregonexplorer.info/rural)”.

Lindsay Spell, M.S. Special Projects Coordinator on the Rural Communities Explorer team (RCE). The RCE includes an online database and mapping tool that helps Oregonians find and understand over 200 different social, economic, environmental and health indicators (see right).
Center for Geography Education in Oregon

C-GEO had an active summer:

We held several Atlas Workshops throughout the state. These workshops teach teachers the fundamentals of map reading and introduce them to the Student Atlas of Oregon. To request a free workshop for your school, or to access the free online atlas go to:  http://www.pdx.edu/geography-education/instructional-materials-0

We held two summer institutes for K-12 teachers. One explored the geography of the Civil War and traversed battlefields of the mid-Atlantic. The second explored the Tuscany region of Italy and compared the sustainability practices of the hill towns with Oregon’s urban and rural sustainability practices.

We hosted a workshop led by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources staff, the purpose of which was to design a workshop specifically geared to teaching geography using primary sources. The workshop we designed will become the standard for the Library of Congress programs throughout the US.

Finally, we did a lot of research on GIS and other technology programs designed for use in K-12 classrooms. That searchable data base will be posted on the C-GEO website in the near future.

Faculty & Student Publications


C-GEO
Contact: geogall@pdx.edu
503-725-5864
www.pdx.edu/geography-education/

Director of Geography Education Programs C-GEO:
Dr. Teresa Bulman

A note on giving:
The CLAS Dean’s office is currently running their Fall campaign for the Dean’s Excellence Fund.

If you would rather make a donation directly to Geography (including the Thomas Harvey Memorial Scholarship to support student research in cultural landscape studies), please click here

Thanks, as always, for your support!