



TEACHING GEOGRAPHY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Geography Teaching Career?

Teaching Geography in schools is a long established and recognized career field. It is important, exciting, and challenging to engage in the teaching/learning experience in innovative and resourceful ways. To play a meaningful role in engendering modern geography among the citizens of Michigan (or elsewhere in the United States) is well worthwhile. You should prepare yourself by examining your interests and aptitudes relative to the curricular needs in schools. You will want to be able to teach not only geography, but also other subjects (since many schools need subject matter versatility in



Nicole Blodgett, a 2001 Teaching of Geography graduate, is now pursuing a Geography Master's degree.

their teachers. Whether you can also teach Earth Science, Mathematics, or the Social Sciences is a matter of personal preference (matched to market demand).

So you will want to create your own "package" of skills and knowledge that

make you into an attractive and competitive Geography Education professional. The package is based on the Geography Teaching (Secondary) Major, a related minor, and cognate courses to start you in your career.

After you have entered your career, you will gain more comprehensive knowledge and more polished skills. A Geography Teaching Major is the starting point.

This Major is made up of a core of required courses, and choice of elective courses. (See next page.)

Your energy, imagination, and drive will define the direction and distance you go. Good Luck!

Career Opportunities

- Geography Teacher
- Media Specialist
- GIS Educator/Trainer
- A Teacher of Teachers
- Community Colleges
- School Administrator
- Principal
- Community Educator
- College Professor
- Textbook Publishing
- Textbook Marketing
- Electronic Media Development

Starting in Community College?

If you begin at a community college, make sure that you get basic skills you will be able to use in teaching. This includes office and computer competence in word processing, spreadsheets, Powerpoint, etc. Take the basic general

education courses needed for graduation. Do not avoid courses that focus on the United States and the physical and social sciences. You will need this background later. A public speaking course is important. Education is very

people-oriented, and good communication skills (speaking, talking, writing) will be useful. Don't avoid basic math and critical thinking courses including statistics. And you might want to learn CPR and first aid skills as well.

University Degree Requirements

Western Michigan University requires all students to have completed 122 semester credit hours to receive a bachelor's degree. This includes any credit hours that have been officially recognized from other colleges or community colleges.

The specific requirements for graduation that will govern you are found in the Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog. Since the University changes over time, the version of the

Catalog that governs you is the one that was current when you entered the University.

Your total credit hours will include those of your Geography Teaching Major, your

related minor, education and general education courses, and electives. Please select these in consultation with an adviser or mentor, so that you can make them work for you effectively.

The Geography Teaching Major allows you to arrange a professional internship, to have an international study abroad experience, and/or to do an independent study project under the guidance of a Geography faculty member. You need to plan your program to take advantage of these options.



Dr. Lisa DeChano, Teaching of Geography Adviser and core faculty member.

If Your Teaching Career is 'Plan A', What is 'Plan B'?

We want your teaching career to be successful and satisfying. However, let's be realistic. Surveys show about one in three who begin teaching careers decide to change careers within four years. (In this age of budget constraints, teaching jobs may be harder to find, too.) Teaching can

be stressful if your ideals don't square with the reality of co-workers, community, students, or parents.

What to do? Don't abandon hope. Go for a teaching career anyway—but have 'Plan B' in place. For instance, maybe you'd like to be a GIS educator instead, so

you could still use your urge to teach. Learn skills now that you can switch to later if you should need or want to. Your interest in Geography suggests 'Plan B' lies here. That's what a college degree is all about. It assists you to become a resourceful, adaptable person who can accommodate change.

Student Teaching, Study Abroad, or Research Options

A student teaching internship is required. Students gain a good idea about teaching as a career by going into a school and teaching under the supervision of a master teacher.

We also recommend that Geography Teaching students consider an optional study abroad experience. This is a good way to learn about the world beyond the U.S., and it can give personal knowledge

about how geography is taught elsewhere.

We also recommend students consider doing an inde-

pendent research activity under the supervision of a faculty member. Carrying through an independent research project is an important demonstration to employers that students can work self-reliantly to answer important questions. The new state of Michigan certification exams lay greater emphasis on these skills and knowledge than prior to 2003. So all these experiences can add value to your degree.



Dr. Joseph Stoltman—Geography Teaching core faculty member.

Check It Out:

- www.aag.org/careers

Teaching Geography in Secondary Education

Your complete program of study at Western Michigan University, or at other colleges from which you are transferring credit, constitutes the entire Secondary Education Teaching of Geography curriculum. This Curriculum can be supplemented by knowledge and skills from other places also. The more accomplished you are, the more likely you will have a satisfying career.

General Education, Liberal Education, & College of Education Curricular Requirements. To complete a college degree at Western Michigan University, each student fulfills “General Education” goals. Each student gains understanding of the natural and social sciences; knowledge of the United States and some international issues/regions; computer, mathematics, and critical reasoning proficiencies, etc. Please see the General Education section of the Undergraduate Catalog for a full description. In addition, students in the College of Arts & Sciences take additional classes as listed in the Liberal Education Curriculum in the Undergraduate Catalog. These give students a frame of reference on the world that works for them after graduation. (Believe it or not, students who have studied a foreign language frequently report they have been able to use it effectively in their career; for teachers, Spanish might be a good language.) Finally, to become a certified teacher, students need to complete College of Education requirements also. (Please see an adviser in the College of Education.)

Geography Major—Secondary Education Teaching of Geography. Effective teaching of modern geography in schools is currently attracting significant attention by curriculum planners. Modern geography knowledge and skills are badly needed in society. This major of 32 credit hours is designed to develop a teacher corps more skilled in contemporary geography, consistent with Michigan teacher certification standards and national geography education objectives. The major has two parts—a required core of 20 hours, and either a physical science or social science component (your choice) with a variety of courses from which you choose a selection totaling 12 hours. The core is defined by what all teachers should know.

- *The Core Courses:*

Geography 1050 Physical Geography	4 cr. hrs.
Geography 2050 Human Geography	3 cr. hrs
Geography 2650 Map, Chart & Air Photo Reading	3 cr. hrs.
Geography 3030 Geographic Inquiry*	4 cr. hrs.
Geography 3800 United States & Canada	3 cr. hrs.
Geography 4600 Geography/Social Studies Teaching in Middle & High School	3 cr. hrs.

*Prerequisite: a course in statistics (STAT 1600, 2160, 2600, 3660 or equivalent)

- *Physical Science or Social Science Emphasis.* Students should select either the 12 hour physical science or social science emphasis sequence below.

- *Physical Science Emphasis.* Geog 2250 Introduction to Meteorology & Climatology and choice of Geog 1000 World Ecological Problems, Geog 3500 Conservation of Resources, Geog 5010 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems, Geog 5530 Water Resources, Geog 5550 Contemporary Issues in Resource Management, Geog 5570 Environmental Impact Assessment, Geog 5690 Intermediate Geographic Information Systems, or Geog 5820 Remote Sensing of the Environment.
- *Social Science Emphasis.* Choice of Geog 1020 World Geography, Geog 2440 Economic Geography, Geog 3110 Michigan, Geog 3610 Population Geography, Geog 5010 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems, Geog 3810 South America, Geog 3820 Mexico & the Caribbean, Geog 3860 West & South Europe, Geog 3890 Monsoon Asia, Geog 3900 China, Korea & Japan, Geog 5690 Intermediate Geographic Information Systems, Geog 5700 Cities & Urban Systems, or Geog 5820 Remote Sensing of the Environment.

Related Minor. Geography Teaching majors select a minor. Minors are shown on the previous page, and are an important complement to the major. Properly selected, the major and the minor strengthen a student for subsequent careers. However, it is not necessary to select a minor that you think will “pay off” later—particularly if you have no personal interest in it. It is often better to select a minor that you have some “passion” for because that keeps your motivation strong. Students who maintain their enthusiasm may find good uses for their minors.



Department of Geography faculty possess worldwide experience in Geography and Tourism. From left, back row: Kevin Weakley, Jordan Yin, Rolland Fraser, Lisa DeChano, Gregory Veeck., Middle Row: James Biles, David Lemberg, Margaret Pearce, Jay Emerson. Front Row: Deborah Che, David Dickason (Chair), Elen Cutrim, Joseph Stoltman. Not Pictured: Eldor Quandt, Chansheng He, Jeroen Wagendorp.



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**GEOGRAPHY—
MAKING A
DIFFERENCE**

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Western Michigan University & Geography Teaching

Founded in 1903, Western Michigan University has had a strong Geography program from the start. In fact, it was opened originally with the express purpose of teacher training in all fields. Today the University has nearly 30,000 students with a comprehensive variety of academic programs. Usually about 2,000 of our students come from outside the United States, representing more than 100 countries. Western is one of the U.S.'s 40 largest universities by total student size, and

by international student population.

The Geography Teaching Program has many alumni, and we look to maintain ours as a solid Geography Teaching program. In the most recent multi-year summary, more than 80% of our students passed the state of Michigan Geography Certification exams. (And a higher percentage have passed the exams among students who adhere to our curriculum.)

The University is located in the City of Kalamazoo, in southern Michigan about half way between Chicago and Detroit. Kalamazoo is

a safe, small metropolitan area. You can get to Kalamazoo by air, rail and highway—US-131 and I-94.

The University offers comprehensive cultural and athletic programs. The City offers even more, so many opportunities exist to attend concerts, theaters and plays, and participate in recreational athletics.

Michigan lies in the heart of the Great Lakes Region, one of the wonders of the world. The Great Lakes possess one-fifth of the world's surface fresh water. This is an excellent place for continuing education after graduation.



The main campus of Western Michigan University. The Geography Teaching Program is located in Wood Hall to the right of this photo.