

GPHY 400 – Geography Undergraduate Capstone

Department of Geography ~ University of Montana
Fall 2021

Instructor:

Sarah J. Halvorson and UM Geography Faculty Advisors

Office: Stone Hall 211

Office Hours: W 3:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointment (in-person on campus or remote)

Email: sarah.halvorson@umontana.edu

Course Meetings:

Wednesdays 4:00-5:20 p.m., plus FCFC fall seminars on “*Ethics, Justice, and Diversity in Conservation and the Environmental Sciences*”

Course Description:

The Geography Capstone is required of all Geography majors at the University of Montana. In a broad sense the Capstone is a forum for engaging in scholarship and practice pertaining to issues of geographic dimensions. It serves different, but related, purposes for students and faculty.

For students, the Capstone has four primary objectives. First, it provides a context for sharing information of importance to undergraduate seniors (e.g., research opportunities, courses, scholarships, etc.) and for providing guidance and mentorship on post-graduate professional and academic career development. Second, the capstone experience includes exposure to current research and scholarly initiatives by geographers, scientists, and practitioners in allied disciplines and fields. The guest lecture component sets out to span a broad range of topics related to DEI (i.e., diversity, equity and inclusion) in the conservation, geographical and environmental sciences. Third, the Capstone is an opportunity to simultaneously focus and synthesize what you have learned as you reflect on your entire program of study. And finally, the Capstone provides the opportunity to become more articulate about your major and what it has meant for you. This last objective is of particular value as you pursue professional opportunities or pursue graduate school.

For faculty, the Capstone creates a structure and process to assess student learning from the major as a whole, rather than on a course-by-course and individual student basis. As a common, shared experience for students and faculty, the Capstone is also a means for building a community of scholars within and beyond our program.

Learning Goals:

Upon completion of this course, you will:

1. Gain an appreciation of the broad range of topics with geographic dimensions, from the natural and social sciences to the humanities and arts, and from

- theoretical to methodological to ethics in professional practice.
2. Receive guidance toward professional development, including the development of a professional resume, curriculum vitae, and portfolio.
 3. Develop skills in professional writing, including a statement of interest for a professional position or in support of an application to a graduate program of study.
 4. Create a portfolio that serves as a summation of elements drawn from your whole program of study. Compiling a portfolio allows you to reflect on your post-graduate aspirations (e.g., in the letter of interest), academic preparation (e.g., in the resume/CV), and knowledge and skills gained in your undergraduate career (e.g., in course papers and projects). You will be asked to make connections between different courses and requirements, while demonstrating a higher level of proficiency in your chosen sub-fields and/or areas of concentration.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will recognize and explore core concepts of the discipline of geography.
- Students will articulate their substantive interests within the geographical sciences, giving attention to theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects.
- Students will engage in various forms of professional and science communication to support their own academic trajectories and professional development.
- Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate the following levels of understanding corresponding to the course materials and content (i.e., Learning Goals and Course Requirements):
 1. Strong understanding: very well-conceptualized, organized, composed, and completely error-free (i.e., spelling, grammatical, punctuation): a) resume, b) curriculum vitae, c) letter, d) preamble, and e) portfolio.
 2. Good understanding: well-conceptualized, organized, composed, and generally error-free: a) resume, b) CV, c) letter, d) preamble, and e) portfolio.
 3. Weak understanding: poorly conceptualized, organized, composed, and contains significant errors: a) resume, b) CV, c) letter, d) preamble, and e) portfolio.

Course Requirements:

Resume & Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Letter of Interest

Portfolio Preamble - Draft and Final

DEI Seminar Participation & Response Essay

Weekly Attendance

Presentation of Portfolio

Completed Portfolio (due before graduation!)

Resume (5%)

A well-designed and compiled resume will include: contact information, academic and professional credentials/preparation, relevant work and/or volunteer experience, and references. It may include a statement of interest/desired position. It should not include your hobbies and avocational interests and pursuits! Resumes are generally best tailored to the specific position that you are applying to if there is sufficient experience to merit this.

Curriculum Vitae (CV) (5%)

A well designed and compiled CV will include much of the same information that you will have compiled into a resume, but with some modifications in structure and more expansive sections on academic achievements, service accomplishments, and scholarly and professional activities. It should be complete and well-organized with appropriate headings, be consistent in how information is presented (i.e., dates, ordering, formatting), free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, and should be structured in such a way that it presents information in order of its importance and relevance (i.e., for an academic post, including graduate school admission: degrees and other credentials, awards, research publications and activities, grants and contracts, relevant work experience, etc.).

Professional Writing: Letter of Interest and Portfolio Preamble (20%)

As important as a resume or CV is in conveying your qualifications for a professional position or for entry into a graduate program, a strong letter of interest (or cover letter) better conveys your interest and fit for such. Probably the first item that a potential employer or graduate admissions committee reads, a letter of interest offers you a chance to personalize your qualifications. It includes relevant information not suitable for inclusion in a resume or CV and demonstrates your written communication skills. The Preamble of your portfolio is also an important personal statement describing your academic interests, how you see your place in the discipline of geography, what you would like to be doing professionally and personally, and what you aspire to contribute to the world.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Seminar Participation & Response Essay (20%)

Our Capstone has the opportunity to participate in the FCFC fall seminars on the broad theme of “*ethics, justice, and diversity in the conservation and environmental sciences*” that is coordinated by Dr. Elizabeth Dodson in the Department of Forest Management. We will be attending four presentations that are scheduled to coincide with the FCFC Graduate Seminar on Tuesday afternoons. These scheduled lectures very well might conflict with your own work and class schedules. However, all of the lectures will be recorded (via Zoom) and made available to you.

Attendance (20%)

In addition to helping you to prepare for your post-graduate life, this capstone

course will provide you with exposure to the current research, projects, and programs of geographers, scientists, and practitioners in allied disciplines and fields. The presentations will provide faculty and students with the opportunity to see how basic geographic thinking, skills, techniques, and approaches are playing a role in solving real world problems. You must attend the set of lecture presentations.

Completed Portfolio and Portfolio Gallery Participation (30%)

It is useful for college seniors to compile and present to potential employers and others a portfolio of written and technical work and projects completed in satisfaction of course requirements and in relation to internship and service learning projects. Portfolios also assist the Department of Geography in assessing what students know and can do in the context of discipline specific learning outcomes (the review of these aid the department in identifying areas in which curricular and/or pedagogical improvements might be needed).

Two of our Capstone meetings will be devoted to a Portfolio Gallery in which you will have an opportunity to share and get feedback on your draft portfolio with others in our Capstone community. This semester students are strongly encouraged to consider building a web-based (virtual) portfolio using Word Press (<https://wordpress.com/>) or Square Space (<https://www.squarespace.com/>).

The Capstone will very likely require that you continue to work on your portfolio throughout the final semester of your senior year. As such, if you are planning to graduate following Spring Semester, you will be given a grade of N (i.e., "work in progress") for Fall Semester. You will receive a grade for the course after your portfolio has been formally submitted to the department for archiving.

Required Texts:

Readings will include: (1) Alexander B. Murphy's *Geography: Why It Matters* (available on loan from UM Geography Faculty) and (2) various Capstone resources on Moodle, including seminar lecture readings to complement this component of the Capstone.

Policies:

Participation: Attendance is expected and will be recorded. Please be mindful of the fact that you are a major contributor to our Geography community and your input and involvement is the key to the success of this Capstone.

Respect, Inclusiveness and Diversity: We believe and act upon the premise that all students are entitled to and deserve respect, courtesy, and tolerance, regardless of their race, background, religious affiliation, gender, disability or any other perceived difference. Likewise, faculty, staff, and students deserve the same treatment from other students. Therefore, our intention is to make every effort possible to promote and create a safe space for diverse thoughts, ideas, and

people.

Academic Honesty: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://staging.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/>. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated.

Equal Access: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and the Office of Disability Equity. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with ODE, please contact this office in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. We will work with you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification.

Basic Needs: Any student who faces challenges securing their food and housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Success for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This communication will enable me to explore any additional resources that might be available.

Mask requirement:

As per UM policy, we are all required to wear masks while in the classroom. I know this is not ideal and we all hoped things would return to normal for Fall but we are still dealing with lots of cases of Covid in Missoula and masks are the best way to stay safe. Please note that refusing to wear a mask in class is a violation of the UM Student Conduct Code. To summarize:

1. We cannot begin until everyone is properly masked (over mouth and nose)
2. If there is anyone who does not comply then the student will be reported to our Dean (this is what UM Faculty have been instructed to do)
3. Class will be cancelled for the day as refusal to wear a mask compromises the safety of everyone else in the class (this is also what UM Faculty have been instructed to do).

