

## Geography Capstone

Geography Program – W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation  
University of Montana

**GPHY 400 – Fall 2022**  
**Wednesdays 4:00-5:20 p.m.**  
**Stone Hall 217**

### ***Land Acknowledgement:***

*The University of Montana resides on the aboriginal territories of many Indigenous peoples including the Selis (Salish), Ksanka (Kootenai), and Qlispe (Kalispel). Many other Indigenous peoples including the Amskapi Pikuni (Blackfeet), Nimiipuu (Nez Perce), Shoshone, Bannock, and Schitsu'umsh (Coeur D'Alene) also relied upon their traditional knowledge and relationships with this land and this space for survival in the past and today. We bring respect for these diverse Indigenous peoples' sacred connections to their homelands, along with their continued historical, political, and sovereign rights. We honor the path they have always shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.*

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### **Instructor:**

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W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation  
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### **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. Geography graduates engage in a rich array of career trajectories. This course begins to scan the spectrum of career opportunities and the tools and information to support successful professional development.

Second, the capstone experience includes exposure to current scholarly and applied initiatives by geographers, scientists, and practitioners in allied disciplines and fields.

Speakers, such as alumni of the Geography Program at UM, will share insights into their professional work and the requisite skills for various career paths. The guest lecture component also sets out to explore 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 students have learned as they reflect on their entire program of study while at UM. And finally, the Capstone provides the opportunity to become more articulate about one's major and what it has meant in terms of knowledge, skills, professional development, and scholarship. This last objective is of particular value as students 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, students 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 one's whole program of study. Compiling a portfolio allows students to reflect on their post-graduate aspirations (e.g., in the letter of interest), academic preparation (e.g., in the resume/CV), and knowledge and skills gained in their undergraduate careers. The portfolio engages students in making connections between different courses and requirements, while demonstrating a higher level of proficiency in their selected sub-fields and/or areas of concentration.

### **Expected 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):
  - 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.
  - Good understanding: well-conceptualized, organized, composed, and generally error-free: a) resume, b) CV, c) letter, d) preamble, and e) portfolio.
  - Weak understanding: poorly conceptualized, organized, composed, and contains significant errors: a) resume, b) CV, c) letter, d) preamble, and e) portfolio.

### **Required Texts:**

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

### **Summary of Course Requirements:**

Weekly Participation and Attendance  
 Resume and Curriculum Vitae (CV)  
 Professional Writing: Letter of Interest and Portfolio Preamble  
 DEI Seminar Lectures and Response Essay  
 Career Readiness Activity with ElevateU  
 Portfolio Gallery Presentation  
 Completed Portfolio (due before your graduation!)

#### **Weekly Participation and Attendance (20%)**

In addition to helping you to prepare for your post-graduate life, this Capstone 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 the opportunity to see how basic geographic thinking, skills, techniques, and approaches are playing a role in solving real world problems. Please plan to attend all class meetings.

#### **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 to which you are applying.

#### 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 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 experience. 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 your community and to the world.

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

Our Capstone offers the opportunity to view the FCFC fall seminars on the broad theme of “*ethics, justice, and diversity in the conservation and environmental sciences*” that were coordinated by faculty over the past few years. We will be viewing four presentations that were recorded and made available on YouTube. Please see this link for recordings and resources: <https://www.umt.edu/environment/dei/>

#### Career Readiness Activity (5%):

The Geography Program is committed to the career success of our students and encourages you to participate in ElevateU – UM’s signature career readiness program – to ensure that you graduate career-ready, with the education, skills, and tools needed to launch, carry-on, and pivot your post-graduation career. Please see:

<https://www.umt.edu/experiential-learning-career-success/elevate-u/>

Participation in ElevateU is free and can be started at any time, no matter where you are in your academic or career journey. Here are suggested ways to get started with ElevateU:

- Create a profile on UM’s Handshake platform to search for jobs and internships.
- Schedule an appointment with an Experiential Learning and Career Success (ELCS)

career coach or advisor or with a career professional in your college.

- Take the Strong Interest Inventory to explore career and/or major options aligned with your interests.
- Participate in a live group coaching session with industry experts or complete any of 22 career learning journeys within ElevateU Online.
- Attend a career fair or event this semester through ELCS and/or your college's career office. Register for the following ELCS fall events in Handshake ([umt.joinhandshake.com](http://umt.joinhandshake.com)):
  - Prepare for the Fair Workshop, Tues. 9/6
  - Student Employment & Experiential Learning Career Fair, Thurs. 9/8
  - Explore Your Career and Major Interests, 9/13, 10/19, 10/26
  - Start Smart Salary Negotiation Workshop, Thurs. 10/13

### Completed Portfolio (20%) and Portfolio Gallery Participation (5%)

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 will be 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.

### **Grading Scale**

This course is graded on the traditional A – F letter grade scale only, it is not offered under the credit/no credit option. Upon completion of the course, your points earned on assignments will be expressed as a percentage of total points possible in the course and translated into a letter grade as follows:

A 93-100%; A- 90-92%;  
B+ 88-89%; B 83-87%; B- 80-82%;  
C+ 78-79%; C 73-77%; C- 70-72%;  
D+ 68-69%; D 63-67%; D- 60-62%; F 59% and below

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## 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.

The UM “Class Attendance/Absence Policy” can be found in the [UM Catalog \(2015-2016\) Academic Policies and Procedures](http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academics/academic-policy-procedure2.php) (<http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academics/academic-policy-procedure2.php>).

### 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.