

Welcome to the Department of Geography at UCLA! Geography is a uniquely “interdisciplinary discipline,” one that encompasses aspects of the earth sciences, social sciences, and humanities, with particular strength in the investigation of human-environment relations. “Physical geographers” study the spatial patterning, processes, and distribution of the Earth’s atmospheric, hydrological, geomorphological, and biological systems; “human geographers” study the ways that space, place, scale, territory, and other spatial phenomena shape our social, political, cultural, and economic lives, as well as, crucially, how all these intersect with the more-than-human environment.

This interdisciplinary approach makes geographers particularly well suited to addressing some of the most pressing issues facing society today, including: climate change, globalization, biodiversity, geopolitics, population and resources, wildfires, inequality, urbanization, environmental and climate justice, immigration, food, and agriculture. Geographers approach these issues from multiple perspectives and with a wide range of tools, from remote sensing and atmospheric modeling to ethnography, critical theory, and discourse analysis. We are especially skilled at thinking across scales, linking local issues and processes to transnational and global ones. We not only seek to understand the world, but to make it a better place for humans and the non-human world alike. If you are interested in understanding the multi-faceted nature of human/environment relations from many angles, Geography is the perfect degree for you.

Our Department was established as far back as 1911 and it consistently ranks among the top Geography departments in both the United States and the broader world. We offer undergraduate degrees (B.A.) in Geography and Environmental Studies, and graduate degrees (M.A., Ph.D.) in Geography. And, yes, geographers do make maps as well! In fact, we not only offer a minor in Geospatial Information Systems and Technologies (GIS&T), but also an online GIS certificate and a pioneering Master’s in GIS&T.

As an integrative discipline bridging the humanities, social sciences and earth sciences, and quantitative and qualitative methods, Geography majors are unusually well rounded – an incredible asset in today’s flexible and uncertain job market. As a graduate of our department, you will be prepared for a range of potential careers that allow you to make a difference in the world, whether in business, public policy, urban planning, non-governmental and community organizations, geospatial and mapping technologies, or academic research. At the same time, our program allows you to tailor your coursework to develop the combination of skills and expertise that best suits your capabilities and passions. Indeed, the education of a geographer involves the preparation of an informed citizen of the world.