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# Geography & Urban Studies



Center for STRATEGIC ADVISING  
& CAREER COUNSELING

# Career Options for Geography & the Environment and Urban Studies Majors

This booklet contains specific information about majoring in geography or urban studies at The University of Texas at Austin, as well as career opportunities related to these majors. The careers listed typically require a bachelor's degree, and special certification or training requirements are noted. Please use this booklet as an idea generator, rather than as a comprehensive list of all career options for geography and urban studies majors. The career descriptions were obtained from the Center for Strategic Advising & Career Counseling (CSA&CC) library resources and career websites (see listing of sources on last page).

The first section, "Direct Career Opportunities," includes careers that use the analytical and research skills acquired by geography and urban studies majors. The second section, "More Career Opportunities," lists careers that are potentially available to all liberal arts majors who have related experience or coursework.

For geography and urban studies majors, there are many career options that require a master's or doctoral degree but do not require any particular undergraduate degree. Examples of these include law, international affairs, museum administration, library and information studies, hospital administration, and many more. For careers requiring graduate education, please visit our library or speak to a career counselor.

The CSA&CC offers many other services and resources to help you with your career planning. These include:

- Career Counseling
- Career Assessment
- Career Information Library
- Internship Information
- Graduate School Planning Assistance

Visit our website at [utexas.edu/ugs/csacc](http://utexas.edu/ugs/csacc) or call (512) 232-8400 for more information.

# **MAJORING IN GEOGRAPHY & THE ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

Departmental Website: [www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/geography](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/geography)

Campus Location: GRG 334

Phone Number: 471-5116

## **DESCRIPTION OF MAJORS**

Geographers study the interactions between people and their natural and built environments. Geographical concerns range in scale from urban spaces and movement patterns to global environmental systems. By incorporating a strong comparative and international bent, geographers situate both teaching and research in an interregional and global context.

Urban and regional planners work to create a livable community that is fiscally, structurally, and environmentally sound. They shape the surroundings that are appropriate to the needs of urban, suburban, or rural residents while using their knowledge of transportation, economic development, housing, land-use regulations, infrastructure management, and preservation of open spaces.

## **AREAS OF STUDY**

Geography

Cultural Geography

Earth Science

Environmental Resource Management

Geographic Information Science

Landscape Ecology and Biogeography

Urban Geography

General Geography

\*There are no specific Areas of Study for Urban Studies

## **EXAMPLES OF COURSES**

### **GRG 305 This Human World: Intro to Geography**

Learn why things are where they are and the processes that underlie spatial patterns. These processes are fundamentally cultural: they involve a complex mix of folk culture, popular culture, communication, religion, demography, industry and urbanization.

### **URB 353 Texas, 1914 to the Present**

The course will survey change and continuity in the history of Texas within the context of U.S. history. Special attention will be given to politics and social relationships (class, race and gender relations) between 1900 and 1950. We will also examine themes such as socio-economic change, labor, transborder relations and electoral politics.

### **GRG 304E Environmental Science: A Changing World**

This course will survey the major global environmental concerns affecting the Earth and its residents from the perspectives of the environmental sciences. As such, it also provides an introduction to how scientists monitor, evaluate, and predict changes in ecosystems and ecosystem services, in the availability and sustainability of water and energy sources, in environmental contamination, and in the equity issues that divide and unite the planet.

### **GRG 356T Geographic Information Science and GPS**

Consider the interrelationships between GPS and GIS. GPS and GIS are used together for georegistration of remote sensing imagery, navigation, location-based services, land-surveying, precision agriculture, participatory mapping, attribute collection, and for surveys of people and places. Students will master the fundamentals of GPS technologies and the ways in which GPS is integrated with GIS in a variety of application areas. Designed for students with some background in GIS or computer-assisted cartography.

### **Skills gained by Geography and Urban Studies Majors**

Conducting research

Problem Solving

Thinking from a global perspective

Surveying and mapping  
Analyzing computer data  
Understanding spatial relations

## **DIRECT JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

This sampling includes careers that use the analytical and research skills typically acquired by geography and urban studies majors.

### **Area Specialist**

Study specific countries or areas of the world by collecting information from newspapers, radio, government documents, and aerial photos. Requires a good knowledge of language and culture of area's inhabitants. Information supplied is often used to help government set policies or take positions on key issues.

### **Cartographer**

Conduct geographical research. Compile, analyze, and interpret spatial data. Cross-validate information from surveying teams and satellite images. Create maps and overlay them with specialized industry information. Work for government agencies such as the National Imagery and Mapping Agency and U.S. Geological Survey and private companies in the real estate and telecommunications industries. Usually requires GIS experience.

### **Community Organizer**

Establish and organize community groups to solve social problems in the community. Assess strengths and weaknesses of existing resources and propose changes. Promote cooperation and coordination among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other community groups. Conduct research, prepare budgets, and assist in fundraising.

### **Environmental Planner**

Assist the public with environmental section of land development regulations and regulatory process. Prepare staff reports and review land use submittals and ensure compliance with the comprehensive plan.

## **Environmental Scientist**

Research and study sources of pollution that impact humans, animals, and the environment. Develop ways to improve air, water, and soil quality. Design and manage waste disposal systems, monitor and preserve water supplies, and assess compliance with government regulations. Often specialize in area such as ecology, conservation, environmental biology, or environmental chemistry. Usually requires concentration of coursework in sciences.

## **Forest and Conservation Technician**

Gather information on the condition of forest land tracts such as species and population of trees, insect damage, and potential fire hazards. Supervise and train forest workers in maintaining forests and their recreational facilities. Work for government agencies or large corporations in the lumber and paper industries. Some science coursework is helpful.

## **Forester**

Manage forest land for conservation, recreational, and economic purposes. Inventory timber and negotiate contracts for tree procurement and removal. Create strategies for conserving wildlife, soil, and water quality and monitor overall health of forest. Requires concentration of courses in biology in addition to a geography degree.

## **GIS Analyst**

Create graphical representations of land areas for analysis using GIS software/hardware. Analyze geographic information to assist in decision-making related to population distribution, traffic movement, land availability, real estate prices, environmental hazards, soil types, and flood zones. May develop software to produce complex maps and reports or detailed computer models of land. Work for geographers, planners, land developers, real estate agents, utility companies, and municipal officials.

## **GIS Manager**

Plan, implement, and manage the GIS unit of a company or organization, including goal-setting, training, budgeting, and implementing policies and procedures. Usually requires previous experience as a GIS analyst.

## **Health Services Planner**

Work closely with doctors and hospital administrators to perform a variety of tasks related to delivery of health services. Determine best location for new hospitals and clinics, decide which hospitals' vital services should be offered to make service as efficient as possible, or plan ideal garage sites for emergency medical service vehicles.

## **Land Surveyor**

Provide information used to create GIS databases by measuring distances, directions, and angles between points on, above, and below the earth's surface. May research legal records to resolve land boundary and ownership issues. May specialize in technology such as satellite observations, geophysical prospecting, and hydrographic surveying of bodies of water. Requires state licensure.

## **Location Expert**

Use knowledge of economic geography, demographics, and transportation to assess location needs and then advise businesses and industries on the most potentially successful locations for new ventures.

## **Outdoor Guide**

Lead groups on trips involving outdoor recreational activities such as fishing, hiking, nature photography, wildlife observation, or canoeing. Provide educational information about physical environment, wildlife, climate, and ecology. Work for tour companies, ranches, parks, or on a freelance basis.

## **Park Ranger**

Manage facilities and programs at federal, state, and local parks and historic sites. Typically work for a government parks department. Summer jobs are readily available to students interested in the field of historical parks management.

### **Real Estate Appraiser**

Prepare written description of land, buildings, and natural resources, and make estimate of their value. Appraisals are made when property is bought, sold, taxed, insured, condemned, or mortgaged. May provide expert testimony in court or act as consultants. Work for real estate firms, financial institutions, government agencies, or on a freelance basis.

### **Real Estate Development Researcher**

Explore the real estate needs of communities, gather information about available parcels of land, and research market feasibility of proposed projects. Work for real estate developers.

### **Remote Sensing Analyst**

Measure and analyze aerial photographs and satellite images that are used to make maps of land that is inaccessible or hard to survey by other methods. Work for government agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey or private companies. May also work for government agencies such as the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency to interpret images from other countries related to national defense. Some states require licensure as a professional land surveyor.

### **Rural Planning Coordinator**

Deliver direct planning service to constituents, facilitate communication among organizations involved in planning efforts, perform technical planning work, and ensure compliance with applicable policies and procedures.

### **Transportation Planner**

Address traffic issues in urban areas by balancing use of private vehicles with use of public transportation. Develop multimodal systems that utilize cars, buses, commuter trains, subways, streetcars, and even helicopters.

### **Urban and Community Planner**

Work to make cities attractive places to live and work, taking into account zoning, traffic, building density, recreation, waste materials, and water. Work closely with builders to ensure cities develop within limits of master plan.

### **Urban Planning Research Assistant**

Conduct research (under supervision of city or regional planner) into the economic, environmental, and social consequences of development to support strategies for appropriate growth and renovation of rural, suburban, or urban areas. Work for government agencies or consulting or architectural firms.

## **MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

This section lists other opportunities that may be available to all liberal arts majors. Entry into these careers usually requires internship or volunteer experience or relevant coursework in addition to a geography degree. This is a sampling of job opportunities; for more options and ideas, please visit the CSA&CC career information library.

### **ADVERTISING/MARKETING/SALES**

#### **Advertising and Promotions Manager**

Plan and direct advertising policies and programs or produce collateral materials, such as posters, contests, coupons, or give-aways, to create extra interest in the purchase of a product or service for a department, an entire organization, or on an account basis.

#### **Buyer**

Purchase merchandise directly from manufacturers and resell it to retailers (wholesale buyer) or purchase goods from wholesalers for resale (retail buyer). Become expert in particular kind of merchandise (such as clothing or electronics), stay informed about new trends, analyze customers' buying preferences, and decide what merchandise employer will sell.

#### **Customer Service Representative**

Interact with customers to provide information in response to inquiries about products and services and to handle and resolve complaints.

### **Real Estate Agent**

Operate real estate office, or work for commercial real estate firm, overseeing real estate transactions. Other duties usually include selling real estate or renting properties and arranging loans. Requires a state license.

### **Sales/Service Manager**

Direct the actual distribution or movement of a product or service to the customer. Coordinate sales distribution by establishing sales territories, quotas, and goals and establish training programs for sales representatives. Analyze sales statistics gathered by staff to determine sales potential and inventory requirements and monitor the preferences of customers.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Internal/Financial Auditor**

Examine and analyze accounting records to determine financial status of establishment and prepare financial reports concerning operating procedures.

### **Insurance Agent**

Assist companies and individuals in selecting the most appropriate insurance policies. Consult with clients, write reports, maintain records, and help process insurance claims. A professional license is required, and business courses can be helpful.

### **Loan Officer**

Provide guidance and information for prospective loan applicants. Analyze and verify clients' creditworthiness. May negotiate repayment plans with delinquent borrowers. Work for commercial banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions.

### **Management Consultant Analyst**

Analyze business problems by collecting information from both internal and external sources, developing possible solutions, and then making recommendations to management team. Usually work for consulting firms, who hire recent college graduates for 2-3 year analyst positions.

## **Retail Manager**

Oversee profitable operation of retail stores, including hiring and supervising employees, managing inventory, and managing the budget. May be responsible for merchandise promotions and advertising.

## **CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Corporate Recruiter**

Maintain contacts in the community and travel, often to college campuses, to seek qualified job applicants. Screen and interview applicants and makes job offers. Stay up-to-date on organizational hiring policies, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action guidelines. Work for companies, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

### **Human Resources Specialist**

Create and carry out human resource programs and policies including staffing, compensation, benefits, immigration, employee relations, training and health and safety programs. Assess employees for promotion.

### **Meeting & Convention Planner**

Coordinate all aspects of group meetings and conventions, including speakers, location, audio-visual equipment, and publicity. Work for nonprofit organizations, professional associations, hotels, corporations, and government agencies.

### **Public Relations Specialist**

Write articles for internal publications, write press releases, assemble press kits, arrange speaking engagements, assist in fundraising activities. Work in a variety of settings: business, government, non-profit, and education.

### **Technical Writer**

Write technical materials, such as equipment manuals, appendices, or operating and maintenance instructions. May assist in layout work.

## **EDUCATION**

### **College Admissions Officer**

Evaluate freshman and transfer applicants; counsel and advise the general public including, but not limited to, prospective applicants, parents, faculty, and administration on admission-related issues; and participate in various recruitment and yield activities.

### **Corporate Trainer**

Develop and conduct individual, group, and classroom training for employees on a wide variety of subjects. Develop training manuals, handouts, procedures, and supplemental training materials. Other duties involve test creation and administration for the advancement of employees.

### **Disability Services Coordinator**

Serve as an advocate for students with disabilities. Work with faculty to understand and provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Promote disability awareness on college campuses.

### **Elementary School Teacher**

Teach pupils in public or private schools at the elementary level basic academic, social, and other formative skills. Public schools require teacher certification, but private schools do not.

### **Residence Life Coordinator**

Supervise undergraduate and/or graduate staff, develop residence hall community, respond to student concerns, manage administration and facilities, and participate in department initiatives and campus life.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND OUTDOOR**

### **Environmental Education Specialist**

Plan, develop, and conduct programs to inform public of historical, natural, and scientific features of national, state, or local parks.

### **Environmental Science and Protection Technician**

Perform laboratory and field tests to monitor the environment and investigate sources of pollution, including those that affect health. May collect samples of gases, soil, water, and other materials for testing and take corrective actions as assigned.

### **Green Marketing Analyst**

Create innovative ways to introduce environmentally conscious products into the marketplace. Analyze sales data and consumer spending habits and consult with other marketing team members and graphic designers.

### **Recycling Coordinator**

Design and implement curbside and drop-off recycling and hazardous waste programs through city governments or private firms. Conduct public outreach campaigns to educate people about the advantages of recycling. May ensure compliance with ordinances or apply for grants.

### **Tour Guide**

Escort individuals or groups on sightseeing tours or through places of interest, such as national parks, industrial establishments, public buildings, and art galleries.

## **GOVERNMENT**

### **Legal Assistant**

Assist lawyers by researching legal precedent, investigating facts, or preparing legal documents. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding, to formulate a defense, or to initiate legal action.

### **Legislative Analyst**

Perform quantitative and qualitative analysis of information needed by legislators and other government officials. Evaluate policy issues and options, write reports, conduct briefing meetings, and respond to inquiries.

### **Legislative Assistant**

Meet with lobbyists, arrange committee and subcommittee hearings, assist in developing legislation and amendments. Respond to requests for information, prepare memos and reports based on completed research for legislators.

### **Lobbying Organizer**

Distribute information about a particular issue or organization, recruit volunteers, solicit funds, and organize such efforts as rallies, letter-writing campaigns, and voter registrations drives. Work for special and public interest groups as well as professional lobbyists.

### **Political Party Staffer**

Work to advance a political party's agenda by recruiting and training candidates, preparing for conventions, planning fundraisers and publicity events, and supporting elected officials. Internship experience is especially helpful.

## **HUMAN SERVICES**

### **Americorps Volunteer**

Serve full-time for a year in organizations and agencies throughout the country, work to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, increase housing opportunities, or bridge the digital divide. Benefits include an Education Award or an end-of-service stipend.

### **Community Organizer**

Establish and organize community groups to solve social problems in the community. Assess strengths and weaknesses of existing resources and propose changes. Promote cooperation and coordination among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other community groups. Conduct research, prepare budgets, and assist in fundraising.

### **Social Service Caseworker**

Help families and individuals secure assistance from social service agencies. Interview clients to understand degree and nature of problems and refer to appropriate community resources. May determine eligibility for financial assistance and/or advocate on clients' behalf to government or nonprofit agencies.

### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Recruit, train, schedule and provide supervision to volunteers at non-profit organizations. Arrange for on-the-job and other required training, supervision and evaluation of volunteers. Serve as liaison between administration, staff, and volunteers.

### **Youth Organizer**

Manage and administer youth and community projects and resources; conduct needs assessment and plan and deliver relevant programs of personal and social education via discussions, arts-based activities, community/environmental projects, residential activities, and outdoor/sports activities.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **ESL/ESOL Teacher**

Provide rigorous and appropriate instruction to international students that supports the acceleration of English and appropriate academic content. Serve as a liaison between the student, his/her family and the school, by providing cross-cultural information to all parties that foster positive relationships.

### **Foreign Service Officer**

Analyze and report on political and economic developments, including agricultural trends, humanitarian and social conditions. Identify export markets, negotiate international agreements, and interpret US policies and interests for foreign governments, opinion leaders and publics. Issue visas to foreign nationals, provide development assistance, and arrange cultural exchanges.

### **Intelligence Officer**

A member of the armed forces, police officer or civilian intelligence agency who specializes in the gathering, fusion and analysis of information and intelligence in order to provide advice to their government or another organization.

### **Interpreter/Translator**

Enable the cross-cultural communication necessary in today's society by converting one language into another. Must remain sensitive to the cultures associated with their languages of expertise.

### **Peace Corps Volunteer**

Peace Corps Volunteers work internationally in the following areas: education, youth outreach, and community development; health and HIV/AIDS; agriculture and environment; business development; and information technology. Within these areas, the specific duties and responsibilities of each Volunteer can vary widely.

## **MEDIA/PUBLISHING**

### **Copy Editor**

Act as liaison between author, editor, and proofreader. Review manuscripts for grammar and style usage. May develop in-house style guide, supervise freelance staff, and handle author queries.

### **Copywriter**

Write articles, bulletins, sales letters, speeches, and other related informative, marketing and promotional material for use by publication or broadcast media to promote sale of goods and services.

### **Grant Writer**

Write and develop grant proposals, which includes conducting needs assessments and matching product needs with available funding. Work for government or non-profit agencies.

### **Staff Writer**

Research and write articles for magazine. May write article promos, short features, author bios, or photo captions. May work on freelance basis or for one particular magazine.

### **Travel Writer**

Write features with detailed, accurate, timely and up-to-date information regarding destinations, hotels, restaurants, tours, activities, etc, using a variety of sources of information. Involves thorough research and travel.

## **RESEARCH**

### **Information Broker**

Perform research for clients in business, healthcare, government, law, and science. Uses Internet, database, and library resources to find specific information. May also analyze information, write reports, and train clients in information retrieval. Often work for consulting firms or on freelance basis.

### **Institutional Researcher**

Write institutional and policy histories; research and report on current issues, long-range trends; edit records; manage archives. Work for government agencies, private corporations, public archives and libraries.

### **Market Research Analyst**

Research market conditions in local, regional, or national areas to determine potential sales of a product or service. May gather information on competitors, prices, sales, and methods of marketing and distribution. May use survey results to create a marketing campaign based on regional preferences and buying habits.

### **Publications Researcher**

Research story and script ideas; maintain research files on topics and people; verify stories for accuracy. Work for newspaper, magazine, or book publishers.

## **Social Science Research Assistant**

Assist social scientists in laboratory, survey, and other social research. May perform publication activities, laboratory analysis, quality control, or data management.

## **SOURCES**

College Board Book of Majors by CollegeBoard. College Board Publications, 2004.

American Planning Association: *www.planning.org*

Association of American Geographers: *www.aag.org*

SUNY Plattsburgh: *www.plattsburgh.edu/academics/geography/careers*

Federal Government Jobs: *www.usajobs.gov*

World Wide Learn: *www.worldwidelearn.com/online-education-guide*

Occupational Outlook Handbook: *www.bls.gov/oco*