Geographical and Sustainability Sciences

Chair
- David A. Bennett

Director, Undergraduate Studies
- Silvia Secchi

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- Heather A. Sander

Undergraduate majors: geography (B.A., B.S.); sustainability science (B.S.)
Undergraduate minors: geographic information science; geography
Undergraduate certificate: geographic information science
Graduate degrees: M.A. in geography; Ph.D. in geography
Faculty: https://clas.uiowa.edu/geography/people/faculty
Website: https://clas.uiowa.edu/geography/

The importance of geographical and sustainability sciences is rooted in the complexity of social and environmental problems. We live on a dynamic planet, one that is constantly changing in response to human and natural processes that are highly interconnected. Geographers study the interactions of people and their environment to better understand these intricately related processes. At the University of Iowa, the department teaches and conducts research on human and natural systems and how interactions between these systems shape the world we live in. Cutting edge technologies, such as geographic information systems (GIS), satellite imagery, and Global Positioning System (GPS), are used to help inform decision making at geographic scales and to analyze and visualize geographic processes.

The Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences offers undergraduate programs leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Undergraduate students with a major in geography select from three tracks: environmental studies, geographic information science (GIScience), and health geography. The mission of the graduate program is to empower graduates with the ability to conduct significant research. In addition to offering graduate degree programs, the department administers the geoinformatics subprogram of the graduate informatics certificate; see the Certificate in Informatics (Graduate College) in the Catalog.

**GE CLAS Core Courses**

The Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences offers a number of courses that students in other majors may use to satisfy requirements of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Undergraduate students who select these courses should consult their academic advisor to determine the best place to use them to satisfy requirements of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (GE CLAS Core). Look for courses with the prefix GEOG under “Natural Sciences,” “Social Sciences,” and “International and Global Issues” in the GE CLAS Core section of the Catalog. Nonmajors also may choose geographical and sustainability sciences courses as electives.

**Related Certificates**

**Social Science Analytics**

The Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences collaborates with the Departments of Political Science, Sociology and Criminology, and Statistics and Actuarial Science (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) to offer the undergraduate program in social science analytics. The Department of Political Science administers the certificate; see the Certificate in Social Science Analytics in the Catalog.

**Sustainability**

The Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences collaborates with the Departments of Biology, Earth and Environmental Science (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences), Civil and Environmental Engineering (College of Engineering), as well as the School of Planning and Public Affairs (Graduate College) and the Tippie College of Business to offer the undergraduate program in sustainability. The certificate is administered by University College; see the Certificate in Sustainability in the Catalog.
University Programs of Study

Majors
- Major in Geography (Bachelor of Arts)
- Major in Geography (Bachelor of Science)
- Major in Sustainability Science (Bachelor of Science)

Minors
- Minor in Geographic Information Science
- Minor in Geography

Certificate
- Certificate in Geographic Information Science

Graduate Programs of Study

Majors
- Master of Arts in Geography
- Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

Facilities

The department houses three geographic information computational laboratories. They support a variety of geographic information system (GIS) software packages, including the latest software from Esri ArcGIS and Erdas Imagine as well as a suite of other commercial and open-source software. All lab computers are regularly updated to ensure that they are capable of running the latest software at peak performance.

The Geographical Information Systems Instructional Lab (GISIL) is the department's center for GIS teaching as well as a place where students conduct geographic and GIS-related projects. It is equipped with 27 networked student workstations, instructional support technology (e.g., CRT projection), and a suite of peripherals, including a LiDAR 3D scanner, high-end global positioning system (GPS) units, and a large-format printer.

The environmental modeling and GIS research laboratories contain state-of-the-art machines (Windows and Linux platforms), geoprocessing and statistical software, and an array of software development tools. Projects requiring massive storage or high performance computing have access to additional resources managed by the University's Information Technology Services research support group. The University of Iowa is a charter member of Internet2, which provides access to additional resources managed by the University's massive storage or high performance computing have access to additional resources managed by the University's Information Technology Services research support group.

Global and Regional Environmental Research, the Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination, International Programs, the Institute for Rural and Environmental Health, the Iowa Quaternary Studies Group, and the Public Policy Center. Participation in multidisciplinary working groups also is available through interdisciplinary research grants with investigators from other University of Iowa academic units, for example, the College of Engineering, the Carver College of Medicine, and the College of Public Health.

Geographic researchers also have access to other University of Iowa resources, such as the University's Main Library, whose collections include more than 115,500 maps; 3,600 atlases and reference works; and around 100,000 aerial photographs, primarily of Iowa.

Courses

- Geography Courses (p. 2)
- Sustainability Science Courses (p. 7)

Geography Courses

GEOG:1000 First-Year Seminar
Small discussion class taught by a faculty member; topics chosen by instructor; may include outside activities (e.g., films, lectures, performances, readings, visits to research facilities). Requirements: first- or second-semester standing.

GEOG:1020 The Global Environment
Underlying processes driving human/environment interaction, including climate change, deforestation, and natural disasters; environmental challenges, including declining biological diversity; human response to more frequent severe climate events; production of a more sustainable future. GE: Sustainability. GE: Natural Sciences without Lab.

GEOG:1021 The Global Environment Lab
Laboratory application of concepts discussed in GEOG:1020; computer-based and traditional approaches to the investigation of earth's processes, including earthquakes, water and energy balances, climate and weather, and soil development. Corequisites: GEOG:1020, if not taken as a prerequisite. GE: Natural Sciences Lab only.

GEOG:1030 Our Digital Earth
New technologies that have revolutionized how people navigate in unfamiliar places, locate friends and colleagues, manage cities, and confront environmental problems during the past decade; fundamental concepts related to how geographic information is used to better understand and manage the world and our everyday lives.

GEOG:1046 Environmental Politics in India
How resources, commodities, people, and ideas cross borders; examination of globalization through issues of technology, social justice, environment; perspectives from anthropology, gender studies, geography, energy science, and development. GE: International and Global Issues. Same as ANTH:1046, GWSS:1046, SJUS:1046.

GEOG:1050 Foundations of GIS
Introduction to concepts and methods of geographical information systems (GIS) technology through hands-on lab activities and projects; cartography, spatial analysis, and GPS.

GEOG:1060 Geography of Asia: From Japan to Pakistan
Varied cultures and environments of Asia; different geographic regions and processes in Asian development. GE: International and Global Issues.
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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEOG:1070</td>
<td>Contemporary Environmental Issues</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
<td>EES:1050, ENVS:1080</td>
<td>Third- or fourth-year standing. Same as EES:3010, ENVS:3010.</td>
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<td>GEOG:2374</td>
<td>Biogeography</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:2410</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:2910</td>
<td>The Global Economy</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:2930</td>
<td>Water Resources</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:3001</td>
<td>Special Topics</td>
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<td>GEOG:3003</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Environmental Seminar</td>
<td>1 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:3010</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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<td>GEOG:3020</td>
<td>Earth Surface Processes</td>
<td>3 s.h.</td>
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GEOG:3050 Geospatial Programming 3 s.h.
Introduction to geospatial programming with Python; programming basics, data structures, and algorithms; spatial data models and structures; vector-based and raster-based geoprocessing; automating GIS tasks and models; spatial libraries (e.g., ArcPy, GeoPandas, GDAL, PySAL). Prerequisites: GEOG:1050. Same as GGI:3050.

GEOG:3070 Hungry Planet: Global Geographies of Food 3 s.h.
Societal and environmental implications of past, current, and future global food supply examined from a geographical perspective; focus on questions of who eats what, where, and why; transformative history of agriculture, modern agribusiness and alternative food supplies, geopolitical implications of food production, food scarcity and rising food costs, urban versus rural agriculture, the obesity epidemic versus malnutrition, and the future of food. Same as GHS:3070.

GEOG:3110 Geography of Health 3 s.h.
Provision of health care in selected countries, with particular reference to the Third World; focus on problems of geographical, economic, cultural accessibility to health services; disease ecology, prospective payment systems, privatization, medical pluralism. Same as GHS:3111.

GEOG:3210 Health, Work, and the Environment 3 s.h.
Survey of environmental and occupational health hazards and the associated health risks of exposure; how public health protects society from these hazards; how public health policy can be influenced by science. Same as CPH:3400.

GEOG:3300 Envisioning Future Worlds: Sustainable Development and Its Alternatives 3 s.h.
Sociocultural, geopolitical, and environmental implications of sustainable development and its alternatives investigated from a geographic perspective; geopolitical history of sustainable development; measures of sustainability in development; major critiques of sustainable development; alternative visions of development from different geographical contexts including ecofeminism, Buen Vivir, food sovereignty, degrowth, commoning, and the People's Health Movement. Same as GHS:3300.

GEOG:3310 Landscape Ecology 3 s.h.
Landscapes as complex systems that arise from interactions among physical environments and species, including humans; exploration of how these interactions shape landscape ecosystems and influence landscape change through lecture, computer and field labs, and research discussion; key topics include causes and consequences of landscape pattern, techniques used to quantify and model landscape pattern, the role of humans in determining landscape structure and function, and conservation and management of species and landscapes. Prerequisites: GEOG:2374 or BIOL:2673. Requirements: ecology course numbered 1000-4999.

GEOG:3315 Ecosystem Ecology 3 s.h.
Terrestrial ecosystems as integrators of biological, physical, and ecological processes; flows of energy, carbon, water, and nutrients within ecosystems; spatial and temporal patterns and processes of Earth's ecosystems; sustaining ecosystems in the face of global change. Prerequisites: GEOG:2374 or BIOL:2374 or BIOL:2673 or GEOG:1020 or EES:1080.

GEOG:3320 Wetlands: Function, Geography, and Management 3 s.h.
Hydrological, geomorphological, and ecological processes and their interaction in wetlands; geographic differences in wetlands based on climate and hydrology; wetlands, lakes, and rivers; role of wetlands in drainage basin hydrology and flooding; values and valuation of wetlands; wetland law and wetland delineation; wetlands and water resources. Prerequisites: GEOG:2310 or GEOG:2374. Same as EES:3260.

GEOG:3331 Human Dimensions of Climate 3 s.h.
How climate shapes human societies; focus on how climate and climate variability affects food production, water use, energy use, and human disease systems (e.g., influenza, malaria, air pollution, diarrheal disease); climate change impacts (e.g., sea level rise, droughts, wildfires, famine); societal impact, adaptation and vulnerability, mitigation strategies; policy.

GEOG:3340 Ecosystem Services 3 s.h.
Ecosystem services—valuable goods and services produced by ecosystems (e.g., flood control, food production, water purification)—from an interdisciplinary perspective centering on geographic techniques used to measure, map, and model ecosystem services; methods used to incorporate ecosystem services into decision and policy making; how human activities alter these services. Prerequisites: GEOG:1050 and (GEOG:2374 or GEOG:3310 or EES:1080 or BIOL:2673 or BIOI:1370 or GEOG:1070 or GEOG:1020).

GEOG:3350 Urban Ecology 3 s.h.
Urban ecology as an interdisciplinary field that investigates relationships between natural and the systems in urban environments; students explore urban ecosystems through lecture, discussion of current research, and field-based research projects; and identify how cities can become more sustainable systems. Prerequisites: BIOL:2673 or GEOG:2374. Requirements: GEOG:2374 or ENS:2673 or introductory course in ecology, and junior standing.

GEOG:3360 Soil Genesis and Geomorphology 3 s.h.
Introduction to soil genesis, soil geomorphology, and classification including the basics of soil profile description and soil-landscape, soil-vegetation, and soil-climate relationships; emphasis on study of soils as the interface between living and non-living Earth systems and the role of soils in sustaining ecosystems and human societies; short field excursions and a weekend field trip. Requirements: college earth science and chemistry. Same as EES:3360.

GEOG:3400 Iowa Environmental Policy in Practice 3 s.h.
How Iowa government addresses environmental policy development and implementation; policy process and current environmental issues; students attend meetings with Iowa State legislators and relevant agency personnel in Des Moines, Iowa, to observe how policies move into practice in agency offices. Prerequisites: GEOG:1070 or POLI:3111 or GEOG:3780. Requirements: junior or higher standing.

GEOG:3420 Sustainable and Green Building Concepts 3 s.h.
Green building and sustainable development trends and theories: water policy, ecosystem services, climate change, and public health; LEED certified building process and each of the associated credit categories (i.e., sustainable sites, energy and atmosphere, water efficiency); how knowledge of green building and sustainable development can help lessen the environmental impact of built environments, improve the bottom line, and better plan for great communities.
GEOG:3500 Introduction to Environmental Remote Sensing  3 s.h.
Basic concepts and principles of remote sensing; sources of data; georegistration; digital processing and classification of remotely sensed images for extraction of environmental information; linkage of remote sensing techniques with GIS analysis. Same as IGPI:3500.

GEOG:3520 GIS for Environmental Studies  3 s.h.
Students learn new, more advanced techniques for the representation and study of human and natural systems using geographic information systems (GIS); application of this new knowledge to environmental management and problem solving. Prerequisites: GEOG:1050. Same as IGPI:3520.

GEOG:3540 Geographic Visualization  3 s.h.
Concepts and techniques that underlie cartographic representation, interaction, and geovisualization; map symbolization and visual variables; spatiotemporal visualization, multivariate mapping, interactive cartography, animation, geovisual analytics, 3D visualization, virtual and augmented reality. Prerequisites: GEOG:1050. Same as IGPI:3540.

GEOG:3560 Spatial Analyses of Wind Energy  3 s.h.
Underlying processes, measurement methods, and spatial analyses related to wind energy; students explore techniques for data collection and analysis; GIS-based approaches to renewable energy siting.

GEOG:3570 Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR): Principles and Applications  3 s.h.
Basic principles and applications of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR); LiDAR as an essential technology for mapping and analyzing a vast range of topics, including hydrology flooding, transportation planning, and 3D modeling. Recommendations: GEOG:3500 or EES:3100.

GEOG:3610 Ethical Collection and Use of Geospatial Information  3 s.h.
Ethical issues that arise during the collection and use of digital geospatial information; particular emphasis on privacy as well as willful and unintentional introduction of different types of errors of omission (e.g., sampling related errors) and commission (e.g., inappropriate map projections); readings provide theoretical background and illustrative practical examples.

GEOG:3760 Hazards and Society  3 s.h.
Examination of the impact and societal responses to natural and technological hazards; using case studies from around the world, students explore relationships between extreme events, human behavior, disaster management, public policy, and technology to understand what makes people and places vulnerable to hazards. Same as GHS:3760.

GEOG:3780 U.S. Energy Policy in Global Context  3 s.h.
Historical and contemporary aspects of U.S. governmental planning and policy on a wide range of energy issues in global context. Same as GHS:3780, HIST:3240, POLI:3431.

GEOG:3800 Environmental Economics and Policy  3 s.h.
Reasons why markets fail in environmental realm (e.g., externalities, common pool resources, club goods, public goods); ecosystem services and techniques used for their valuation; revealed and stated preferences; cost-benefit analysis and role in policy-making process; tools to address environmental market failures, particularly command and control, taxes and subsidies, and mitigation markets; focus on air pollution, climate change, and water-related policies.

GEOG:3920 Planning Livable Cities  3 s.h.
Development of livable cities in the United States; economic, physical, environmental, and political forces that shape their growth; impact of planning, how it shapes the future of cities. Same as URP:3001.

GEOG:3940 Transportation Economics  3 s.h.
Overview of transportation markets—intercity, rural, urban; transportation modes—rail, highway, air, water, pipeline, transit; issues in finance, policy, planning, management, physical distribution, and environmental, economic, and safety regulation. Recommendations: ECON:1100 and ECON:1200. Same as ECON:3750, URP:3350.

GEOG:3992 Undergraduate Research  arr.
Opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in faculty-led research projects.

GEOG:4000 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Future  3 s.h.
Establishment of baseline competencies among students from diverse backgrounds; introduction to the United Nations sustainable development goals framework; foundational concepts for sustainable development (e.g., life-cycle analysis, systems thinking, data processing, visualization). Same as SDG:4000.

GEOG:4010 Field Methods in Physical Geography  3 s.h.
Introduction to basic approaches to research design and of sampling environmental variables commonly used in environmental sciences; basic methods of sampling and lab analyses of vegetation, land cover, soils, and more.

GEOG:4030 Senior Project Seminar  3 s.h.
Development of an independent research project, preparation of a research report, and presentation of the associated outcomes. Offered spring semesters.

GEOG:4150 Health and Environment: GIS Applications  3 s.h.
Introduction to how geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial statistics are used in the study of patterns of health and disease in space and time. Same as GHS:4150, IGPI:4150.

GEOG:4200 Sustainability as a System Science  3 s.h.
Investigation of social, environmental, and economic sustainability in systems across the planet with a focus on food, energy, and water nexus; geographical and temporal trade-offs, unintended consequences, impacts quantification, role of public and private sectors, conceptual modeling of key system drivers and their interactions, nested systems, and system relations. Same as SUST:4200.

GEOG:4310 Climate Change  3 s.h.
Physical science of climate change; impacts on human and natural systems; mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Prerequisites: GEOG:1020 or GEOG:2013 or EES:1080.

GEOG:4470 Ecological Climatology  3 s.h.
Introduction to global energy, water, and carbon cycles; biosphere-atmosphere interactions across scales ranging from leaf to globe. Prerequisites: GEOG:2310 or GEOG:2374.

GEOG:4500 Advanced Remote Sensing  4 s.h.
Theory and practice of remote sensing and digital image processing; practical applications to human-environment interactions. Requirements: GEOG:3500 or EES:3100 or CEE:3783. Same as IGPI:4500.
GEOG:4520 GIS for Environmental Studies: Applications 3 s.h. Project-driven course to advance student knowledge of geographic information systems (GIS); application of GIS to environmental change analysis, environmental assessment, hazard/risk analysis, and environmental decision making. Prerequisites: GEOG:3520. Same as IGPI:4520.

GEOG:4580 Introduction to Geographic Databases 3 s.h. Introduction to basic building blocks of spatial database design, spatial data models, structures, relationships, queries (SQL), indexing, and geoprocessing; design and construction of various types of spatial databases, including relational and big data approaches such as ArcGIS geodatabase, PostGIS/PostgreSQL, and MongoDB. Prerequisites: GEOG:1050. Same as IGPI:4581.

GEOG:4650 Simulation in Environmental Geography 3 s.h. Exploration of how computer simulations are used in environmental studies, with focus on landscape ecology; students learn the basics of performing simulations and the principles and applications of simulation through readings and labs. Requirements: advanced courses in environmental geography or environmental science and senior standing.

GEOG:4750 Environmental Impact Analysis 3 s.h. In-depth exposure to the history and evolution of the U.S. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process; discussion of major court cases; ecological, economic, and political aspects of current environmental controversies; exposure to real-world scenarios that are crucial to understanding the EIA process in action; field trips to six or seven environmental control facilities in Iowa City and neighboring areas. Prerequisites: GEOG:1070. Same as URP:4750.

GEOG:4770 Environmental Justice 3 s.h. Introduction to the field of environmental justice; understanding and addressing the processes that lead poor and marginalized communities to face a disproportionate degree of environmental risks and hazards. Same as AFAM:4770, GHS:4770.

GEOG:4990 Senior Thesis 3 s.h. Original research. Requirements: senior standing.


GEOG:5001 Readings arr. Supervised readings by graduate students in topics of their choice.

GEOG:5010 Fundamentals of Geography 3 s.h. Geography as an academic discipline; history, advances, epistemology, common themes.

GEOG:5050 Research and Writing in Geography 3 s.h. Identification of research areas; research questions and hypotheses; responsible conduct of research; methodological decisions; research proposal and paper writing.

GEOG:5055 Geospatial Programming 3 s.h. Introduction to geospatial programming with Python; programming basics, data structures, and algorithms; spatial data models and structures; vector- and raster-based geoprocessing; automating GIS tasks and models; spatial libraries (e.g., ArcPy, GeoPandas, GDAL, PySAL). Same as IGPI:5055.

GEOG:5070 Special Topics arr. Contemporary fields of inquiry, such as biophysical systems, GIS, locational analysis, water resources, economic geography, demographic analysis, environment, urbanization, transportation, and regional development.

GEOG:5300 Envisioning Future Worlds: Sustainable Development and Its Alternatives 3 s.h. Sociocultural, geopolitical, and environmental implications of sustainable development and its alternatives investigated from a geographic perspective; geopolitical history of sustainable development; measures of sustainability in development; major critiques of sustainable development; alternative visions of development from different geographical contexts including ecofeminism, Buen Vivir, food sovereignty, degrowth, commoning, and the People’s Health Movement. Same as GHS:5300.

GEOG:5315 Ecosystem Ecology 3 s.h. Terrestrial ecosystems as integrators of biological, physical, and ecological processes; flows of energy, carbon, water, and nutrients within ecosystems; spatial and temporal patterns and processes of Earth’s ecosystems; sustaining ecosystems in the face of global change.

GEOG:5540 Geographic Visualization 3 s.h. Concepts and techniques that underlie cartographic representation, interaction, and geovisualization; map symbolization and visual variables; user-centered design, map use and usability engineering; web mapping, spatiotemporal visualization, multivariate mapping, interactive cartography, animation, geovisual analytics, 3D visualization, virtual and augmented reality. Same as IGPI:5540.

GEOG:5800 Environmental Economics and Policy 3 s.h. Reasons why markets fail in environmental realm (e.g., externalities, common pool resources, club goods, public goods); ecosystem services and techniques used for their valuation; revealed and stated preferences; cost-benefit analysis and role in policy-making process; tools to address environmental market failures, particularly command and control, taxes and subsidies, and mitigation markets; focus on air pollution, climate change, and water-related policies. Same as PBAF:5800, URP:5800.

GEOG:6100 Seminar in Health and Environment 3 s.h. Research on health and environment.

GEOG:6264 Planning Sustainable Transportation 3 s.h. Theories and methods of exerting public control over passenger and freight transportation; social and environmental regulation; effects of changing finance, regulation, and pricing policies, including privatization, tolls, impact fees. Same as PBAF:6265, URP:6265.

GEOG:6300 Seminar in Environment, Conservation, and Land Use 1-3 s.h. Research on land use, water resources, conservation.

GEOG:6500 Seminar in Spatial Analysis and Modeling 1-3 s.h. Research themes in spatial analysis, GIScience, simulation, remote sensing. Same as IGPI:6501.


GEOG:7000 Geography Colloquium 1 s.h.

GEOG:7150 Research in Health and Environment 1-3 s.h. Directed research in health and environment.
GEOG:7350 Research in Environment, Conservation, and Land Use  
Directed research in land use, water resources, conservation.

GEOG:7550 Research in Spatial Analysis and Modeling  
Directed research in spatial analysis, GIScience, simulation.

GEOG:7750 Research in Environmental Policy  
Directed research in environmental justice and policy.

GEOG:7999 Thesis  
arr.

Sustainability Science Courses

SUST:2013 Introduction to Sustainability  
3 s.h.
Introduction to sustainability knowledge, skills, and habits as a means to shape one's vision of a sustainable citizen; emphasis on basic skills of literacy, applied math, and finding information; traditional sustainability knowledge areas related to society, economy, and environment; intersecting themes (e.g., informed consumerism, eco-economics, and livable environments). GE: Sustainability. GE: Social Sciences. Same as BUS:2013, GEOG:2013, URP:2013.

SUST:4200 Sustainability as a System Science  
3 s.h.
Investigation of social, environmental, and economic sustainability in systems across the planet with a focus on food, energy, and water nexus; geographical and temporal trade-offs, unintended consequences, impacts quantification, role of public and private sectors, conceptual modeling of key system drivers and their interactions, nested systems, and system relations. Same as GEOG:4200.