

Geography PhD

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Learn more about the Doctor of Philosophy in Geography.

About the Program

The doctoral program in Geography focuses on geographic approaches to the study of urban and environmental processes and conditions in U.S. and international settings. Our emphasis is on the themes of geographic methods, globalization, social justice and sustainability. We train our students to conduct research that is theoretically informed and empirically grounded along the urban to rural continuum; understand interdisciplinary and integrative analyses of complex human-environmental processes; and specialize in techniques for urban and environmental analysis with an emphasis on GIS, spatial statistics and qualitative methods.

Time Limit for Degree Completion: 7 years

Campus Location: Main

Full-Time/Part-Time Status: Students complete the degree program through classes offered after 4:30 p.m. The degree program can be completed on a full- or part-time basis.

Interdisciplinary Study: Faculty members in the Department of Geography and Urban Studies hold doctoral degrees in environmental science, geography, urban and regional planning, and other social sciences. Even beyond the interdisciplinary expertise of the departmental faculty, the program draws on the expertise of Graduate Faculty conducting research and teaching courses in related departments across the university.

Affiliation(s): The program is affiliated with the Association of American Geographers and the Urban Affairs Association.

Areas of Specialization: Graduate faculty expertise is at the intersection of geographic methods, globalization, social justice and sustainability, including Black and feminist geographies, community-based research, energy geography, geographic information science, geospatial data science, health geography, political ecology, sustainability science, urban analytics, urban and economic geography, and urban studies and public policy. Faculty have regional expertise in North America, Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, and Africa. Faculty networks with academic institutions, community organizations, nongovernmental organizations and public agencies, as well as social movements in Philadelphia and beyond, provide opportunities to actively engage in research.

Job Prospects: Graduates are often employed in academic settings as teaching-research scholars in geography and in interdisciplinary fields such as environmental studies, international studies and urban studies. They also serve research-oriented organizations such as non-governmental organizations, policy institutes and think tanks as applied researchers and administrators.

Non-Matriculated Student Policy: Non-matriculated students may take up to 9 credits prior to matriculation. If accepted into the program, these credits may be applied toward the degree.

Funding Opportunities: Financial support is available to graduate students through a variety of university and departmental teaching and research assistantships, fellowships, and awards. Most assistantships and fellowships carry a stipend plus a tuition waiver. Assistantships typically require 20 hours of work per week devoted to assisting faculty with either teaching or research. Teaching Assistants grade papers, lead discussion sections, and occasionally lecture in large undergraduate classes. Advanced graduate students are sometimes assigned their own undergraduate class to teach.

In recent years, a number of graduate students have been supported by externally funded faculty research projects. Positions on funded research projects may include full or partial tuition coverage in addition to the stipend for up to 20 hours of work per week. The timing and availability of such opportunities depend on the status of faculty research projects and external grants.

Admission Requirements and Deadlines

Application Deadline:

Fall: January 15

Applications may be evaluated before the deadline, if submitted early, and after the deadline at the discretion of the Graduate Chair.

APPLY ONLINE to this graduate program.

Letters of Reference:

Number Required: 3

From Whom: Letters of recommendation should be obtained from college/university faculty members familiar with the applicant's academic competence. The recommendations may be submitted on the "Reference Report for Graduate Study" or as a traditional letter of recommendation. Letters must be signed and uploaded as a PDF on official letterhead.

Coursework Required for Admission Consideration: No specific coursework is required as applicants are drawn from a variety of disciplines.

Master's Degree in Discipline/Related Discipline: A master's degree is not required but is highly recommended.

Bachelor's Degree in Discipline/Related Discipline: A baccalaureate degree is required. It should have been earned in Geography, Urban Studies, Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Economics, Political Science, Psychology or Sociology, among other disciplines.

Statement of Goals: In approximately 500 to 1,000 words, share why you are interested in Temple's Geography program, your research and academic goals, future career goals, academic and research achievements, and any other information that you believe will be helpful in evaluating your application. The Graduate Admissions Committee is particularly interested in students' interests and goals and whether they fit with the interests of specific faculty as well as general program offerings.

Standardized Test Scores:

GRE: Optional. Scores may be submitted if available.

Applicants who earned their baccalaureate degree from an institution where the language of instruction was other than English, with the exception of those who subsequently earned a master's degree at a U.S. institution, must report scores for a standardized test of English that meet these minimums:

- TOEFL iBT: 88
- IELTS Academic: 6.5
- PTE Academic: 60

Resume: Current resume required.

Writing Sample: At its discretion, the Graduate Admissions Committee may request a writing sample. The writing sample is not required.

Advanced Standing: Graduate coursework taken at an accredited institution as part of a master's degree program prior to matriculation at Temple may be accepted for Advanced Standing Credit. Applicants must supply an official transcript from their prior graduate institution to the Graduate Chair. The Graduate Admissions Committee reviews the request. Only grades of "B" or better can be accepted. If the request is granted, the student receives advanced standing and is awarded a maximum of 24 credits. Normally, these credits should have been earned no more than five years prior to the student's matriculation at Temple.

Program Requirements

General Program Requirements:

Number of Credits Required to Earn the Degree: 57

Required Courses:

Code	Title	Credit Hours
Core Courses		
GUS 5159	Geographic Inquiry	3
GUS 8097	Research Design	3
Methodology Courses ¹		6
Electives ²		39
Research Courses ³		6
GUS 9994	Doctoral Qualifying Examination	
GUS 9998	Dissertation Proposal	
GUS 9999	Dissertation Research	
Total Credit Hours		57

1

Students select two courses from a departmental list of approved methodology courses.

2

Any GUS course at the 5000 level or higher may be taken as an elective. With approval from their advisor and the graduate chair, students may take graduate-level courses outside the department.

3

Of the 6 required research credits, a minimum of 2 credits of GUS 9999 must be taken. The other 4 credits may be taken in any combination of GUS 9994, GUS 9998, and GUS 9999.

Culminating Events:

Qualifying Examination:

The qualifying exam is taken after all coursework is completed. The exam has written and oral components. Students develop the parameters of the exam with their committee, which approves reading lists prepared by the student before the exam. All parts of the written exam must be passed before the student proceeds to the oral exam. The oral exam, based on the written portion, assesses the candidate's readiness to commence dissertation research.

In conjunction with their Graduate Advisor, each student identifies at least two other faculty members for the exam committee. At least two committee members must be GUS faculty, while the third may be from outside the Department. The Graduate Advisor/Chair and all but one of the remaining members of the examination committee must approve in order for the student to pass.

Students are expected to demonstrate breadth of knowledge and intellectual sophistication across the field of Geography. Students should be able to employ various theoretical approaches to investigate geographic and urban patterns and processes and to use data to illuminate concepts. When student pass the exam (1 credit), they achieve candidacy. If the student fails the exam, they are given the opportunity to retake the exam, usually within one term. If the student fails the second time, they are recommended for academic dismissal.

Ordinarily, the exam should be administered no later than six months after coursework is completed. Several different written formats are possible, at the discretion of the committee, including a single extended paper, individual papers prepared for separate examiners, and closed or open book exams administered within a time limit. The oral portion of the exam may expand on the questions asked on the written exam. It may include additional but related questions.

Proposal:

The proposal defines the research problem, scholarly significance, pertinent literature and methodology. It should contain an outline of the projected document and timeline for completing various tasks involved in the dissertation. Within one term after finishing the qualifying exam, a candidate is expected to submit a 5 to 6 page preliminary dissertation proposal to the Doctoral Advisory Committee. Within one year of passing the qualifying exam, a candidate is expected to submit a more substantial proposal to the committee members. When the proposal is ready, the committee chair schedules a meeting of the committee. The student gives an oral presentation of the proposal, and the committee members ask questions and give suggestions. The committee must approve the proposal and give specific instructions on how the student can improve it. After the meeting, the committee chair sends a letter to the Department's Graduate Director indicating whether it has been accepted (1 credit) or rejected, summarizing comments from the overall committee. At that time, the student is scheduled to present their proposal at a departmental colloquium.

Dissertation:

The PhD dissertation should make an original contribution to the field of Geography. The dissertation must demonstrate formulation, design and independent execution of a significant research project. The student must complete a minimum of 4 credits of dissertation research. While no ceiling on the number of dissertation credits exists, students should note that seven years from matriculation is the time limit for completion of the degree.

When the student and the committee chair judge the dissertation complete and ready to be defended, the committee chair schedules the defense. The Coordinator arranges the time, date and room, and forwards to the student the appropriate forms. With approval of the committee chair, the Coordinator sends a completed "Announcement of Dissertation Defense" form, found in TUportal under the Tools tab within "University Forms," to the Graduate School at least 10 working days before the defense. The Coordinator notifies all members of the Dissertation Examining Committee and all faculty members and graduate students in the Department. Changes in the membership of a committee must be approved by the Department's Graduate Director. If approved, the Graduate School must be notified.

The entire Dissertation Examining Committee must attend the defense to evaluate the student's dissertation and oral defense. This committee is comprised of the Doctoral Advisory Committee and at least one additional Graduate Faculty member from outside the Department of Geography and Urban Studies. Affiliated faculty may serve as external members of the Dissertation Examining Committee. The student presents a formal lecture at the defense. The oral defense should demonstrate that the student's work satisfies the standards for original research in Geography; that the candidate has mastered the appropriate methodology or methodologies; and that the candidate has an understanding of the relationship of the dissertation to the broader field. Following the public lecture and discussion, the Dissertation Examining Committee convenes in a closed session with the candidate for the defense. Directly after this session, the committee votes whether to accept or reject a completed dissertation.

Contacts

Program Web Address:

<https://www.temple.edu/academics/degree-programs/geography-and-urban-studies-phd-la-gus-phd>

Department Information:

Dept. of Geography and Urban Studies
308 Gladfelter Hall

1115 W. Polett Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6089
guses@temple.edu
215-204-7692

Submission Address for Application Materials:

<https://apply.temple.edu/CLA/>

Department Contacts:

Senior Manager, Administration:

Jessica Brennan
jessica.brennan@temple.edu
215-204-7577

Graduate Chairperson:

Kimberley Thomas, PhD
kimthomas@temple.edu
215-204-7692

Chairperson:

Kevin Henry, PhD
khenry1@temple.edu
215-204-7692