

GEOGRAPHY, PH.D.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and reason scientifically about geographical concepts.
- Students will produce significant contributions to geographical scholarship through research, publication, and dissemination activities.
- Students will be prepared for careers in the field.
- Students will develop competence as instructors.

Degree Requirements (33 Post-Masters Hours)

The doctoral degree requires a minimum of 33 post-master’s degree credit hours comprising a minimum of 21 credit hours of coursework plus a minimum of 12 credit hours of dissertation preparation (GEOG 899). Doctoral students must file a completed D-POS within the first 24 months of full-time enrollment. The specific course requirements include:

1. GEOG 801 (3 credit hours).
2. A techniques or methods course at the 700-level or above that is appropriate to the student’s specialization and selected with advisor approval (3 credit hours). Courses taken at the Master’s level cannot be applied toward this requirement.
3. A graduate-level statistics course (3 credit hours). If an equivalent course was taken at the master’s level, this requirement will be waived, but the credit hours will not count toward the doctoral degree.
4. Twelve (12) credit hours of Dissertation Preparation (GEOG 899). Students cannot enroll in GEOG 899 until they have an approved dissertation proposal.

Coursework

Course	Title	Credits
GEOG 801	Historical and Contemporary Geographic Thought	3
	Select an advanced techniques or methods course, taken at the 700-level or above, appropriate to the student’s specialization and dissertation topic and selected with advisor approval	3
	Select a graduate-level statistics course (3 credit hours). If an equivalent course was taken at the master’s level, this requirement will be waived, but the credit hours will not count toward the doctoral degree.	3
	Select additional courses including at least one course outside of Geography	12
Total Credit Hours		21

The following stipulations apply to doctoral coursework:

1. Half the coursework (not including GEOG 899) listed on the D-POS must be at the 700- or 800-level.
2. No more than 3 credit hours of independent study (e.g., GEOG 705, 706, 805) with any designator may be included on the D-POS.
3. A maximum of 6 credit hours with non-GEOG designators (or 9 credit hours if students take techniques/methods or graduate-level statistics outside of Geography) may appear on the D-POS.

4. During preparation of the dissertation, any student who wishes to use University facilities or to confer with faculty must be enrolled in at least one credit hour of GEOG 899

Admission to Candidacy

Doctoral students must complete the following to be admitted into candidacy:

1. Full admission into the doctoral program;
2. Approval of D-POS; and
3. The successful completion of the following course requirements (see above) with a grade of B or better: GEOG 801; the techniques or methods course at the 700-level or above; and the graduate-level statistics course (3 credit hours).

Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination consists of the dissertation proposal, the oral defense of the

proposal, and a written exam. The proposal defense and the written exam must take place within one regular semester (or the equivalent) of each other. The comprehensive examination may not be given fewer than 60 days before the student receives the degree. Certification of the comprehensive examination for doctoral students remains valid for five years, after which it must be revalidated. Revalidation is not guaranteed.

The comprehensive examination committee must include no fewer than four members and must include one (but no more than one) member from outside USC Geography. Regular and research faculty who have been appointed to associate membership to the USC Graduate Faculty may also serve on or chair a doctoral committee. Faculty members with term appointments may serve on, but may not chair, doctoral committees.

Dissertation Proposal and Oral Defense

The dissertation proposal must be of a quality commensurate with proposal submitted to a nationally-recognized funding source. Committee members must be given a minimum of two weeks to review the proposal. The oral defense of the proposal, which is open to the public, should be announced at least one week in advance. A copy of the proposal should be placed in the departmental office at this time. The student will have up to one month after the oral proposal defense to complete remediation. Students have only one opportunity to complete the remediation.

Written Exam

The written exam occurs after coursework is completed or during the final semester of coursework; it can occur before or after the oral proposal defense. Students and individual committee members should agree on concepts and/or reading lists no fewer than 90 days prior to the start of the exam. Each committee member is responsible for evaluating written exam responses corresponding with his/her area of expertise within two weeks of the student’s completion of the written exam. Each committee member will assign a grade of Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail. A Conditional Pass or Fail indicates that a student must undertake remedial work on the exam response. The committee may allow a maximum of one month for the student to complete any remediation. Committee members will have a maximum of two weeks to evaluate the remediated work as Pass or Fail. Students have one opportunity to complete remedial work and must pass every section of the written comprehensive exam in order to pass the exam as a whole.

Dissertation

Committee

The dissertation committee must include no fewer than four members and must include one (but no more than one) member from outside USC Geography. Regular and research faculty who have been appointed to associate membership of the USC Graduate Faculty may also serve on or chair a doctoral committee. Faculty members with term appointments may serve on, but may not chair, doctoral committees. The dissertation committee may or may not have the same members as the comprehensive examination committee.

Format

Dissertations may be traditional or manuscript style. Manuscript style dissertations must consist at least three manuscripts prepared for, but not necessarily accepted for, publication. The student must be senior author on all three manuscripts. All dissertations must follow the formatting guidelines defined by the Graduate School.

Defense

The student will submit a complete draft of the dissertation to the committee at least two weeks prior to the defense. The dissertation must be placed in the department office at least one week prior to the defense. The defense will be open to the public and typically involves a short (~30 minute) public talk with questions and answers, followed by a closed session with the dissertation committee. The dissertation defense should be no fewer than 30 days before graduation date. The committee may allow one month for a student to complete any required remediation. Students have only one opportunity to complete the remediation.

Teaching Experience

All students must have at least one semester's worth of experience as an instructor of record or as a laboratory instructor.

Full-Length Research Presentation

All students shall present a 35-45 minute public research presentation. This is a separate requirement (and presentation topic) from the dissertation defense.

Academic Progress

Probation

Students must demonstrate satisfactory academic progress at the end of each semester. Students who receive a grade lower than a "B" in a graduate course or who do not demonstrate satisfactory academic progress will be placed on academic probation for one academic semester. Students on probation may lose their funding.

Termination

Causes for termination may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Failure to complete all requirements from the previous degree by the end of the first semester.
2. Failure to have an academic advisor at all times.
3. Receiving two grades lower than a "B" in graduate courses.
4. Academic dishonesty.
5. Failure of the written comprehensive exam.
6. Failure to have an approved dissertation proposal by the end of the fifth regular semester for full-time students.
7. Failure to produce a defensible dissertation.