

Undergraduate Program for Distinction in Geography

Description and rationale for Distinction in Geography:

To accompany the Renée Crown University Honors Program, the Geography Department offers the **Distinction in Geography** to its undergraduate majors. Through this program, majors have the opportunity to complete original geographic research in an area of their choosing and work closely with a geography faculty member on a research project. The Program for Distinction in Geography gives undergraduates the chance to work independently on their own research projects and to study a topic of their choosing in an in-depth manner.

Distinction in Geography culminates in the completion of a senior thesis, supervised by a geography faculty and assessed by a second reader. It recognizes geography majors who demonstrate exceptional achievement in some aspect of the field. Students can earn departmental distinction in addition to university honors, but the achievement of university honors need not automatically confer departmental distinction. If students use the same thesis project both to earn Distinction in Geography and to fulfill the thesis requirement of university honors, the thesis must meet the requirements for both projects.

All students receiving Distinction in Geography must have a minimum GPA in geography courses of 3.7 and a cumulative GPA of 3.4, by the end of their senior year. Students not meeting these requirements can be formally sponsored by a regular geography faculty member, in a letter written to the Department Chair and Undergraduate Director. The expectations for graduating with distinction in geography exceed the expectations for a capstone experience in general.

To graduate with Distinction in Geography, undergraduates must meet the following requirements:

1. **Be a geography major** in good standing with Syracuse University.
2. Have a **minimum departmental GPA of 3.7**, unless formally sponsored by a regular geography faculty member.
3. Have a **minimum cumulative GPA of 3.4** by the end of their senior year, unless formally sponsored by a regular geography faculty member.
4. **Enroll in GEO 492** or, if also completing an Honors thesis, GEO 499 in their senior year.
5. **Successfully complete a thesis** approved by a committee composed of a thesis supervisor and a second reader.

Structure for the Program for Distinction in Geography:

To graduate with distinction, students must take at least three thesis credits (*GEO 492/499*) during their senior year. Thesis work is done in conjunction with a faculty member in the Department of Geography and operates as an independent study. The senior thesis must be completed and approved by the supervising faculty member and second reader prior to graduation. The specific format of the relationship between the thesis supervisor and the student must be worked out in advance of the student's enrolling in GEO 492 for thesis credit.

Senior theses in geography can take a number of forms but must include the following elements:

1. **Original research carried out by the student.** Thesis research can include, but are not limited to, fieldwork in a given research site, analysis and interpretation of pre-existing data and maps, archival research, interviews and oral histories, a detailed literature review in a subdiscipline of geography, and so on. Some component of the thesis must present original ideas and arguments or original research.
2. **A second reader for the thesis.** Students, in conjunction with their supervisors, must select a second reader from the faculty in the Geography Department or other related disciplines. In addition to responsibilities agreed upon by the student and supervisor, the second reader must read and approve the final draft of the thesis.
3. **A thesis read and approved by both the thesis supervisor and the second reader.** The thesis project can take the form of an extended written project or a series of maps created by students. Whatever form is used, however, there must be a written component of some sort.
4. **Compliance with writing and format guidelines set by the supervisor and student.** Most theses average 60 pages, but there is no designated page length. Students writing theses longer than 100 pages are encouraged to condense their writing. Students are encouraged to review approved undergraduate theses in James Library for examples.

Timeline for Program of Distinction in Geography:

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| Fall semester, junior year: | Students also completing an Honors thesis begin work on their senior thesis in geography. Deadlines for the Honors Program begin in November. |
| End of spring semester, junior year: | Students interested in graduating with Distinction in Geography identify a topic of study, a research question/project, and a geography faculty member to supervise the project. |
| Summer between junior & senior year: | Students begin and/or complete any necessary fieldwork for their senior theses. |
| Fall semester, senior year: | Students continue work on thesis projects. |
| October 15th, senior year: | Second reader is selected. Students continue to work with their supervisors on drafts of their theses. |
| Spring semester, senior year: | Students register for GEO 492 or, if also completing an Honors Thesis, GEO 499. |
| February 1st, senior year: | Students submit a first draft of their theses to their supervisors. Supervisors return draft with written comments within three weeks of submission. The second reader may or may not read the first draft. |

- March 15th, senior year:** Students submit draft of theses to their second readers, if required. Second readers return theses with comments within three weeks of submission.
- April 15th, senior year:** Students submit final draft of theses to supervisors and second readers.
- April 28th, senior year:** Supervisor and second reader approve final versions of the theses, which will be submitted to the Geography Department and bound.
- May 1st, senior year:** All paperwork for thesis is completed, and the Geography Office is officially contacted by supervisors to confirm completion of all requirements to graduate with Distinction in Geography.

Required formatting for Senior Theses for Distinction in Geography:

Senior theses must meet the following format elements:

1. Theses must be printed on standard quality 8 1/2" X 11" paper.
2. If bound, theses must have 2" left-hand margins and 1" right-hand margins. If unbound, theses must have 1" margins on all side.
3. Theses must be double spaced and must use 12-point font. The abstract and bibliographies should be single spaced. Footnotes and endnotes must be in 10-point font and single spaced.
4. A consistent citation style must be used throughout the thesis and approved by the supervisor.
5. All pages, except the abstract and title page, must be numbered. Pages before the Project Body should be numbered in small Roman numerals. Pages in the Project Body and beyond must be numbered in Arabic numerals.

The following components must be included in the thesis:

1. **Title page.** All information on the title page must fit on one page.
2. **One-page thesis abstract** that describes the research project, questions, methods, findings, and significance. Please note that students also completing an Honors Thesis must ensure that their Senior theses in Geography meet the requirements for Honors Theses as well.
3. **Table of contents** listing the page numbers of all sections of the thesis.
4. **Acknowledgments (optional).**
5. **Project body**, including all thesis chapters and sections.
6. **Bibliography** including all works and evidence cited in the thesis.
7. **Appendices (optional).**