

Study Abroad for Geography Majors

Geography is the "spatial" science - concerned with place, space, and pattern - and changes in pattern over time. At the same time, geographers study processes of change at different scales from global to local. First-hand geographical learning through experiences in diverse parts of the world is a valuable ingredient in the formation of an educated person in our globalizing world. Whether your area of emphasis is on culture, environment, GIS, planning or some combination, studying abroad can enrich your educational experiences.

Many study abroad programs are open to you. Imagine learning geography of Africa at Cape Coast University in Ghana, studying regional planning in Brazil or collecting field data for your GIS project in Thailand. Study abroad will help you understand the discipline of geography more thoroughly; because like many other disciplines, it originated outside of the United States and is continually influenced by ideas and methodologies from all over the world. These experiences and more are available to you through the many study abroad programs offered through the Padnos International Center and Geography and Planning Department.

Study abroad can help you...

- Understand the field of geography as an inherently international discipline
- Expand your cross-cultural communication and problem-solving skills
- Prepare you to work in an increasingly diverse and international workplace
- Improve your language skills
- Broaden your academic horizons
- Globalize your world view through direct contact with other cultures
- Build confidence in yourself personally and professionally.

For students interested in development problems, global interaction, or regional geography, study abroad is becoming a necessary component in establishing your credibility in the job market. For those planning on graduate school, it will help you focus your studies and plan your career path more effectively.

Learning abroad makes anyone a better geographer. It nurtures enthusiasm, perseverance, and insight for tackling all that life offers.

Can I afford to study abroad?

YES! Early planning for study abroad helps you make cost-effective program decisions, and it also helps you prepare your finances through savings, scholarships, and financial aid. Financial aid applies to study abroad and, in some cases, your loan eligibility will increase to cover additional expenses. Grand Valley State University's Padnos International Center offers grants and scholarships to qualified study abroad participants. Visit the Padnos International Center to research all your options (<http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad>).

Do I need to speak a foreign language?

NO! Most study abroad programs offer instruction in English, even in non-English speaking countries.

Will I take longer to graduate?

NO! With good advance planning, you can take courses that satisfy requirements in your geography major or the general education program. Study abroad doesn't have to delay completing your degree, but it will enrich your experience.

What are my next steps?

Set goals and plan for results

Geography students can study abroad at any time during their four years. The process of selecting a study abroad program is similar to selecting your major or minor.

- Begin at least six months in advance of your study abroad. It is never too early to start planning.
- Set some goals. There is not one program best suited for Geography students. There are many good study abroad programs, and the best one for you depends on **what you want**.
- Prioritize your goals. Consider your long-term academic and professional goals, as well as your on-campus degree requirements.
- Consider long-term programs.
- Prepare academically. You may need to take language or other prerequisite courses for your chosen program.
- Give yourself time to research and talk to advisers and students who have studied abroad.

With proper planning study abroad can help you prepare for your professional life in today's global context.

Attend an Information Session

Learn about study abroad resources and advising by attending an Information Meeting at the Padnos International Center. See www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad or call 616.331.3898 for the latest schedule

Investigate Programs

Use the Study Abroad catalog, resource center, website, and advisers to find a program that fits your goals and area of concentration.

Once you have selected a program

When you decide on the program that will work best for you, you should begin an online study abroad application available at www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad. Be sure to pay close attention to application deadlines. Keep in mind, students are also able to fulfill General Education requirements abroad, including a custom theme. Students that wish to complete a custom theme abroad should contact the Padnos International Center directly for information on the appropriate process

Talk to your adviser

Use a credit transfer form to get approval from your academic adviser for major-specific courses. Be sure to meet with your adviser at least **three months prior to departing** for your program. Your adviser must approve any Geography courses or major elective courses you wish to take to ensure that they will be counted toward your degree requirements. Bring the course descriptions of the courses you would like to take abroad to this meeting along with the credit transfer form provided by the Padnos International Center.

Academic Suggestions for Geography Students

Review the following suggestions from the Department of Geography before beginning your research.

Seek cultural immersion

Look for programs that offer significant cultural integration. Deep involvement in the host culture leads to personal growth and instills the cross-cultural skills that are so important to success in the workplace and community.

The department is especially partial to programs that get you into regular classes at a host university and programs where you can be out of the classroom and into the community. On the other hand, courses that are essentially guided tours may not be recommended in the major.

Be realistic; not all students are ready for the same amount of cultural immersion. If you are shy or anxious in unfamiliar situations, you may want to take select a program providing courses in English before attempting to take courses in universities abroad. You may also wish to take language courses abroad to improve your skills before trying to follow lectures in another language.

Conduct fieldwork for your senior project

Study abroad can provide an opportunity for you to pursue unique fieldwork experiences. With the consultation of your capstone project adviser and/or Department Chair, you can use this research as the basis for your senior project.

You may be able to pursue independent research, research through an internship or volunteer opportunity, or research through your study program that could be used for your senior project.

Look for a program that provides insights into another society or physical environment

- Seek to study in a culture that contrasts with your own. Encountering a very different culture will provide new insights into your own culture. The department encourages students to consider study in countries outside of Western Europe.
- Learn about other traditions and perspectives in geography. See how geographers in another country view their discipline; choose a program where your professors are from the host country.
- Look for opportunities to study how the geography of an area has affected its culture, environment, economy, and politics. Can you apply what you have learned in class here to understanding your new environment?

Develop or improve second language skills

- If you are at the beginning or intermediate level, consider a program where you can study a language and be surrounded by it.
- If you already have reasonably advanced language skills, consider a program taught in the language. In general, you will need to have good language skills to study geography abroad.
- Plan your language study carefully, so that you do not find yourself out of sequence on your return to GVSU.

In the following pages you will find some options that can fit well for a Geography Major. They are meant to be **examples only**; do not confine your search to this list. Instruction is in English unless otherwise indicated.

Africa & Middle East

Ghana

The **University of Cape Coast** is one of our partner universities. It was established in 1962 primarily to serve as a leader in teacher education. The university is located just west of Cape Coast, on a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Two of the most historical sites in Ghana, Elmina Castle, and Cape Coast Castle, are located just a short distance from the university.

GVSU Course

GPY 100 Physical Geography

GPY 220 Cultural Geography

GPY 200 Computer Cartography

GPY 307 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems

GPY 309 Introduction to City and Regional Planning

GPY 407 Advanced GIS*

UCC Course

GEO 101 Elements of Physical Geography

GEO 102 Elements of Human Geography

GEO 312 Cartography

GEO 203 Elements of Geographic Information System (GIS)

GEO 308 Regional Analysis and Development Planning

GEO 416 Geographic Information System (GIS)

To view additional course options, visit: www.ucc.edu.gh

South Africa

At the **University of Cape Town** you will meet students from many countries and also take advantage of reverse academic calendar of the Southern hemisphere (the school year starts in February). The Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town offers several undergraduate courses that can count for GVSU credit. Below are some examples:

GVSU Course

GPY 100 Physical Geography

GPY 220 Cultural Geography

GPY 412 Global Environment Change

UCC Course

EGS20012S Physical Environmental Process

EGS1002S Human Geography

EGS3014S Environmental Change

To view additional course options, visit: <http://www.egs.uct.ac.za/>

*GIS and remote sensing courses at Cape Coast might be less computer-intensive than GVSU. Please discuss with your advisor if these choices are appropriate for your track.

Asia & Oceania

Japan

International Christian University in Tokyo is a partner of GVSU. Although ICU does not have a Geography department, a variety of geography courses are offered by Division of Social Science. Instruction is in English or Japanese. Please, check the language of instruction directly with IUC for the courses of your choice. ICU also offers an intensive 6-week program in Japanese language in summer.

GVSU Course

GPY 235 World Regional Geography

Contact your advisor to see how this course can be taken for GPY credit

Contact your advisor to see how this course can be taken for GPY credit

ICU Course

SSEC 292 J CHL SHL Regional Geography

SSEC 104 J Outline of Economic Geography

SSEC 290-391 J Economic Geography Of Japan I-II

To view additional course options, visit: www.icu.ac.jp/liberalarts_e/index.html

Australia

University of the Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing universities in Australia and is located just one-hour away from Queensland's capital of Brisbane. USC Study Abroad program for international students is available in all years in short-term, one semester or one-year formats.

GVSU Course

GPY 307 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

GPY 220 Cultural Geography

GPY 309 Introduction to City and Regional Planning

GPY 310 Land-Use Planning

USC Course

ENS 253 Introduction to Geographical Information Systems

ENP 245 Cultural Geography and Demography

ENP 255 Urbanism and Urban Design

ENP 270 Regional Infrastructure Planning

To view additional course options, visit : www.usc.edu.au/Students/International/Programscourses/Studyabroad/

Asia & Oceania continued...

Australia

Macquarie University in Sydney is ranked in the world's top 100 universities. The University has two Geography Departments: Physical Geography and Human Geography. Both offer excellent course selections.

GVSU Course

GPY 100 Physical Geography

GPY 307 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

GPY 335 Geographic Patterns of Global Development

GPY 354 Geography of Asia

GPY Advanced GIS

MU Course

GEOS 112 The Planet Earth

GEOS 264 Geographic Information Systems

GEOS 215 Geographies of Development

GEOS 311 Asia-Pacific Development

GEOS 426 Geographic Information Systems: Applications

To view additional course options, visit: www.mq.edu.au/

Europe

United Kingdom

Kingston University is a large public university within a short trip from London. The School of Earth Science and Geography at Kingston offers a well developed graduate and undergraduate programs in geography, state-of-the art GIS facilities, and a great selection of undergraduate courses that would qualify for GVSU credit.

GVSU Course

GPY 100 Physical Geography

GPY 220 Cultural Geography

GPY 307 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

NRM 350 Remote Sensing

GPY 309 Introduction to City and Regional Planning

GPY 412 Global Environmental Change

KU Course

Earth Environments– Level 13

Geographies of People, Place and Culture– Level 1

Geographical Information Systems– Level 2

Remote Sensing and Image Processing– Level 2

Planning and the Environment– Level 2

Managing Environmental Change– Level 3

To view additional course options, visit: <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/geography/courses/gis.htm>

Independent (non-GVSU) Programs

In addition to the above listed programs, Geography students may look for additional programs appropriate for the geography major/minor by visiting the following website:
www.goabroad.com