

GEOGRAPHY 4101

Undergraduate Research and Professionalization Seminar

AU 2025 / #17673 / 3 credits

Instructor: Dr. Kendra McSweeney
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Office hours: Office hours: Tuesdays 3 - 5 pm or by appointment
Class: T Th 12:45-2:05, Derby Hall 1116

Disability Services (with accommodations for illness)

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health and medical conditions, whether chronic or temporary), please let me know immediately so that I can privately discuss options. You do not need to disclose specific information about a disability to me. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may ask you to register with Student Life Disability Services, if you have not already done so.

If you become ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of viral infection or fever, please let me know via email as soon as possible. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Overview

This course has three complementary foci:

- 1) to encourage you to reflect on your undergraduate and professional experience to date, particularly in terms of content learned and hard/soft skills developed. In this respect, the course should be equally useful to all geography majors and minors, regardless of your 'track';
- 2) to guide your assessment of what additional skills or competencies you might still develop, and your evaluation of your professional goals and priorities;
- 3) to assist you in building a professional plan for shaping the next steps in your professional life, in whatever field you chose.

In all three respects, the course demands introspection: you will be asked to systematically think through your learning and skill development to date, articulate professional aspirations and the path required to achieve them. This applies to all students, whatever your plans are after graduation. In our classroom meetings, the focus will be on reviewing and understanding the required readings, preparing for and presenting your assignments, engaging with each other and with guests, and grappling with career-related concerns such as salary negotiation and ethical issues. Outside the classroom, the course asks you to explore the career resources in and around Ohio State, build your networks, and meet with people working in sectors you're interested in. Built into the course throughout are multiple moments to think about research, communication, spatial thinking, and other skills that will benefit you no matter what you plan for your future.

Course Format

This seminar meets twice a week for a total of 3 hours. Success in the course relies on coming to class and engaging in class discussion, with the required readings done, and keeping up with the assignments.

Course-specific Policies

Instructor availability

I have set aside Tuesdays 3-5 pm for meetings with students (aka 'office hours'). If you plan to stop by, please give me a heads-up in class or via email so I can know when to expect you. Get used to coming and talking with me. Consider this an exercise in networking—I can best help you with your professional journey if I get to talk with you a bit outside the classroom. If you cannot make the Tuesday time slot, we can arrange another time.

Teaching is only one of my job duties. My time is also spent on research and administrative activities. I can usually respond to your emails within 24 hours, and longer on weekends.

Due dates

Due dates for assigned work are noted in this syllabus. Any outstanding assignments must be submitted to the instructor via email by midnight on Dec. 15, 2025, to be considered for partial credit.

Code of conduct

In this seminar-style format, I will be encouraging discussion rather than lecture. We will be talking about themes related to your background, education, and aspirations. Because of this, we must take special care to conduct ourselves in class with care and attention. For example:

1. Polite interjection is welcome. If there's something you don't understand, or want to push back on, please feel free to jump in.
2. Debate is welcome; we all bring different perspectives. But we must debate respectfully. We can all develop our skills at negotiating different ideas, seeing multiple sides of an argument, and holding different ideas in productive tension.
3. If you are comfortable talking and contributing on-the-spot, be sure to leave time and space to those who may take longer to articulate their thoughts or may be less quick to speak out.
4. Active listening is expected. Phones/devices should be silent so you can be maximally present. Consider taking notes by hand rather than on a laptop.
5. Academic integrity is upheld in all course activities. I will be clear when I am unsure of something, and I expect you to do the same. The idea is to create an environment where we can all learn from each other and acknowledge and appreciate others' contributions to our learning.

Readings

There is no textbook. All required readings and other materials will be provided by the instructor, either in hard copy, via email, or on Carmen as necessary.

Evaluation

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS/100	DUE DATE
• Attendance/participation in class	25	Ongoing
• Meeting with instructor	5	To be scheduled
• Resume (due in class)	5	Sept 16
• LinkedIn profile	5	Sept 30
• "Three Alumni"	5	Oct 9
• Informational Interview	20	Due Nov 4
• Workplace visit/job shadow	20	To be scheduled
• Presentation: Your professional plan	15	Due in class Dec 2, Dec 4, or Dec 9

- **If this is a required class for you, you must get at least a C- in order to graduate.**
- **Grading Scale:** Calculate your grade according to OSU's Standard Grade Scheme:
 - 93 - 100 (A); 90 - 92.9 (A-); 87 - 89.9 (B+); 83 - 86.9 (B); 80 - 82.9 (B-); 77 - 79.9 (C+); 73 - 76.9 (C); 70 - 72.9 (C-); 67 - 69.9 (D+); 60 - 66.9 (D); Below 60 (E).

A brief description of each assignment follows. Further details will be provided in class.

1. Attendance/Participation / 25 points

This is a seminar: participation in class discussions is required during our 23 in-class meetings. If you are unable to attend a class in person for any reason, please email me prior to class. Doctor's notes and/or details of your other appointments are required.

Meaningful participation means being present, actively listening to others, not being distracted by a screen, and regularly participating in discussion. If for any reason you do not expect to be able to participate fully in class discussion even when you are present, please let me know and I'd be happy to find ways to accommodate you.

To give you a sense of how I turn your attendance / participation into a grade, see this rubric:

Unsatisfactory (0-15)	Below expectations (16-19)	Meets Expectations (20-22)	Impressive (>22)
Multiple unexcused absences (>5). Rarely speaks or only speaks when called on	Some unexcused absences (3-5). Does not volunteer much. Rarely speaks or only speaks when called on.	Attends class consistently, volunteers regularly, contributes meaningfully.	Attends class frequently, volunteers frequently and meaningfully. Contributes new, interesting ideas/questions to move discussion forward.
Not attentive. Not prepared.	Not always attentive. Sometimes not well prepared.	Attentive, engaged, prepared.	Attentive, engaged, prepared. Facilitates others' learning.

Frequently distracted by screen.	Uses screens for non-class purposes.	Does not use screens for non-class purposes.	Does not use screens for non-class purposes.
Not always on task or engaged in group/pair work	Not always on task; not always engaged during group/pair work.	On-task and engaged during pair/group work.	On-task, engaged, and supportive of others during pair/group work.

2. Meeting with Instructor / 5 points

Early in the semester we will schedule one-on-one meetings with each other so I can get to know you better and to discuss options for your informational interview and workplace visit/job shadow. Expect a one-hour meeting. All meetings should be scheduled before September 25.

3. Resume (or CV) / 5 points, due in class 9/16

It's always a good time to polish your resume (one page), which you will do following OSU-Career Center best practices. If you would like to do a curriculum vitae (CV; multiple pages) instead, please do.

4. LinkedIn Profile / 5 points, due 9/30

Networking is essential no matter what your post-graduate plans are. LinkedIn is a good platform for some types of networking and for being alert to career opportunities. Prepare a LinkedIn profile with substantive information about yourself, your skills, and your interests. Be sure to upload your resume to the profile, and if appropriate, examples of projects you've done. Link to other students in the class and ask them to endorse you for specific skills. 'Link' to my account by 30 Sept.

5. "Three Alumni" / 5 points, due 10/9

Using LinkedIn, please identify three OSU alumni. One should currently be working in the private sector, one in the public sector, and one in a non-profit. All should be working in an area of potential interest to you. Using a standard template that will be provided, summarize key aspects of their professional trajectory in a PPT slide sent to the instructor by 10/9. Be prepared to talk about the individuals in class on 10/14 and/or 10/21.

6. Informational Interview / 15 points, due 11/04

As a group, we will practice 'interviewing' various guests. Through your networks, LinkedIn, and in discussion with me, please identify and contact a person who is working in a field in which you are interested. Be persistent. Meet with them in person to conduct and record an informational interview to learn more about them, their career trajectory, and the demands of their job. Write up your experience of the conversation in a 5-page (12 point font, double-spaced) report, including a transcription of a 20-minute portion of the interview (2-3 pages, single-spaced)

7. Workplace Visit / Job Shadow / 20 points (date flexible)

You will schedule a visit to a workplace in Central Ohio and talk with employees/get a tour/shadow an employee. Please take photos to illustrate your visit. Expect to share your insights with the class in your final presentation. Work with the instructor to determine a workplace that is most closely related to your career interests. The instructor will help you set up the visit and ensure any accommodations you may need.

8. Professionalization Plan Presentation / 15 points, due in class 12/2, 12/4, or 12/9

Using a template that will be provided, draw on the materials you've read or produced during this course to lay out a professionalization plan to guide you over the next 1-5 years. Peer grading will be used according to a rubric developed by the class.

9. "Extra Credit" / 5 points

OSU is a big place. There are all kinds of Career Fairs, Grad School Fairs, talks and other events going on that may be helpful to you in preparing for life beyond college. Extra credit is available to students who actively pursue on- (and sometimes off-) campus opportunities for career exploration during AU25. You must describe your experience to the class to get credit for it. Alert me at the beginning of class so I can set time aside. (One option is for you to make an appointment with a Career Coach in the Arts & Sciences Career Center. If interested, book your meeting ASAP, as their staff get busier as the semester progresses.)

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Activities/Assignments / Guests
Course Introduction			
1	Tues 8/26	Intro to course and each other	Scavenger hunt
	Thurs 8/28	Orientation to class and course <i>Reading: Syllabus</i>	Department tour @ 1:30
Taking Stock			
2	Tues 9/2	What is Geography Again? 1 <i>Readings: GAO Report; 'Geography at Harvard'</i>	Book appointments with prof
	Thurs 9/4	What is Geography Again? 2 <i>Readings: NRC Report; Dutta & McSweeney</i>	Paths into geography
3	Tues 9/9	What have I learned in College? 1 <i>Readings: Deresiewicz/Wildavsky/Mintz</i>	
	Thurs 9/11	What have I learned in College? 2 <i>Reading: Solem et al.</i>	Your skills and competencies
Building your portfolio			
4	Tues 9/16	Working your networks	Due: Resume, in-class <i>9/17: OSU Career and Internship Fair</i>
	Thurs 9/18	Informational Interviewing <i>Reading: TBD</i>	How to navigate LinkedIn
5	Tues 9/23	Internships <i>Reading: NACE Guide</i>	Crowd-source and apply for one
	Thurs 9/25	[Instructor absent] Building LinkedIn competency	
6	Tues 9/30	Talking Money <i>Reading: TBD</i>	Due: LinkedIn profile
	Thurs 10/2	AI in the Workplace <i>Reading: 'AI in the Workplace'</i>	
7	Tues 10/7	[Instructor absent] <i>Reading: Harvey, 'Professional Ethics'</i>	
	Thurs 10/9	The Ethical Geographer	Due: 'Three Alumni'
8	Tues 10/14	Graduate School: What, Why <i>Reading: 'International Student' report</i>	<i>Guest: Alex Dyer</i>
	Thurs 10/16	AUTUMN BREAK	
Your professional options (readings TBD)			
9	Tues 10/21	Careers in State and Local Government	<i>Guest: Michelle Hooper</i>

	Thurs 10/23	Careers in Federal Government	
10	Tues 10/28	Careers in Private Sector/Self-Employment	<i>Guest: Alexander Nesterov</i>
	Thurs 10/30	Careers in Non-Profits	
11	Tues 11/04	Alternative routes	Due: Informational Interview
	Thurs 11/06	Going Global: Careers Overseas	<i>Guest: Madelyn MacMurray</i>
12	Tues 11/11	VETERANS DAY	
	Thurs 11/13	Instructor absent	Workplace visits/job shadowing
13	Tues 11/18	Instructor absent	
	Thurs 11/20	Communicating Geography: Teaching, Journalism, Science Writing	Establish grading rubric for presentations
14	Tues 11/25	Workplace visits and job shadowing	
	Thurs 11/27	THANKSGIVING	
Formalizing a plan			
15	Tues 12/02	Professionalization plan: presentations	
	Thurs 12/04	Professionalization plan: presentations	
16	Tues 12/09	Professionalization plan: presentations	
Partial credit for OUTSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS is possible if TURNED IN BY DEC 15, 2025 @ midnight			

Potential Guests (Alumni) (confirmations and visit dates TBD)

- Alexander Nesterov '20, Retail Real Estate GIS Business Analyst, JP Morgan Chase
- Madelyn MacMurray, '24, Researcher, Stimson Center, Washington DC
- Rachel Beery '18, Consultant, Deloitte (DC); formerly Senior Field Deployment Specialist, FEMA
- Fatima Dahir '21, Legal Assistant, CAIR Legal Defense Fund
- Ian Dunn '10, Manager & Geospatial Analyst at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Alex Dyer '22, Master's Student, Virginia Tech (formerly GIS Intern, Nat'l Park Service, Bar Harbor, ME)
- Andrew Gerberry '12, GIS Manager, DelCo Water
- Chris Gordon '07, Business Lawyer, Brickler & Eckler LLP
- Chloe Huggins '23, Guide, Lasting Adventures, CO (formerly GIS Intern, Nat'l Park Service, Aztec, NM)
- Mia Murray '20, PhD Candidate, UC-Boulder
- Yared Oresso '20, Associate Geospatial Analyst, Royce Geo (Washington, DC)
- Zach Paganini '15, Post-doctoral Fellow, NOAA EPP/ CESSRST-II (NYC)
- Amelia Quinn '23, Project Manager, Epic Electronic Health Records (Verona, WI)
- Sara Santiago '12, Assistant Director, The Forest School, Yale School of the Environment

Examples of Potential Workplace Visits/Shadow sites

- Nationwide (downtown)
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
- Franklin County Engineers
- Columbus Council on World Affairs
- Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS)
- ENGIE-Axiom (on campus)
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)

Other Policies

Mental Health, Counseling and Consultation Services

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the [Committee on Academic Misconduct](#) (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so please review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If an instructor suspects that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, the instructor is obligated by University Rules to report those suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that a student violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in the course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If students have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, they should contact the instructor.

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship, or on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

Religious Accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#).

Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#)

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

Grievances and Solving Problems

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

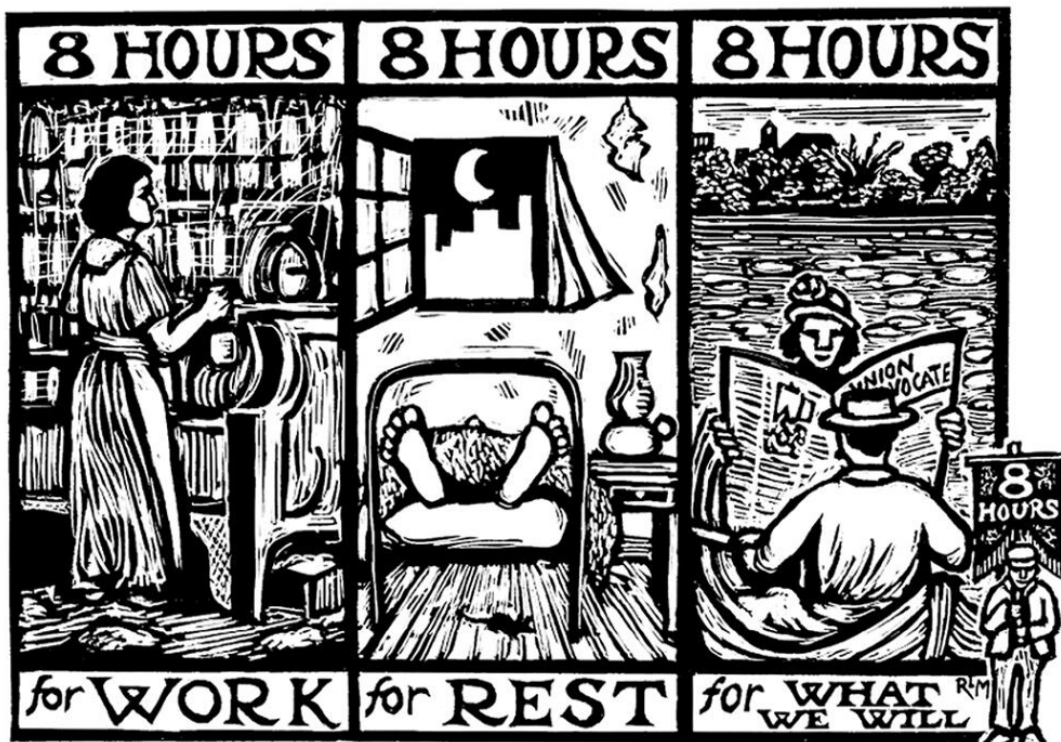
The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a welcoming community. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office (CRCO):

Online reporting form: <http://civilrights.osu.edu/> . Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605.
civilrights@osu.edu

Military-Connected Students

The [Military and Veterans Services](#) (MVS) Office offers a wide range of resources for military-connected students. Whether using educational benefits or not, all military-connected students are encouraged to learn more about how the university supports military-connected students (i.e., information about tutoring, transition services, access to the veteran's lounge, etc.). For service members, should you receive military orders during the semester or know of classes that will be missed due to service commitments, please speak with your instructor as soon as possible on possible accommodations. MVS contact information: milvets@osu.edu; 614-247-VETS; veterans.osu.edu/; 185 Student Academic Services Building, 281 W. Lane Avenue.



Early 20th Century slogan of labor movement; poster created 1997; <https://www.rlmartstudio.com/product/eight-hours-2/>