

UNT Geography

Ideal Timeline for Graduate Student Progress

For Students Working with Dr. Murray Rice

Welcome to UNT Geography, and to grad studies with me as your major professor. Past experience indicates the following is a helpful guide for schedule planning. Every student is different, and individual preferences and unexpected circumstances may cause deviations from the below. However, I've found this overall plan works well as a starting point for successful degree completion and career launching. The following assumes a fall MS program start.

Summer before Admission

Please consult with me about possible thesis research directions, reading lists, and overall program and major professor expectations. We'll work together to begin setting up a draft degree plan and expectations for the first semester. This discussion is the start of an every-semester expectation-setting and evaluation discussion that will continue between us throughout your program at UNT Geography.

Semester 1: Fall of Your First Year in the Program

Courses to Complete This Semester

- GEOG 5160: Foundations of Geographic Thought (3 semester credit hours)
- GEOG 5220: Applied Retail Geography (3 semester credit hours)
- GEOG 5800: Research Design and Geographic Applications (3 semester credit hours)

Other Tasks to Complete

- Complete your degree plan by the end of this semester (including selection of all coursework and designation of the two professors who will serve on your thesis evaluation committee in addition to me).
- Plan (if possible) to attend the annual *Applied Geography Conference* ("AGC"). The AGC is the premiere national conference that connects business geography practitioners, students, and faculty. In fall 2017, AGC is holding (and I am attending) a special one-day *Business Geography Symposium* at Kent State University, in Kent, Ohio (near Cleveland).
- As a second option, plan (if possible) to attend the *Southwest Division of the AAG* annual conference ("SWAAG", our regional geography meeting), held somewhere in the TX/LA/AR/OK/NM region every fall.

Note 1: GEOG 5800 is a course that focuses on preparing you to write your thesis proposal. Advanced students (who enter UNT Geography with highly developed thesis ideas) may be ready to write and actually defend their thesis proposal by the end of this fall semester. Other students may need more time, and should consider defending their thesis proposal in spring semester.

Note 2: The SWAAG conference includes an annual student paper and poster competition. Please consider entering this competition if you have undergraduate research of a high quality. However, even if you don't present a paper, this is a worthwhile (and fun) conference to go to. In recent years, UNT has had great grad student participation at SWAAG, making it a really good opportunity to get to know your fellow students and other people from our SWAAG region.

Note 3: I try to meet every week with each of my graduate students, even if only for a few minutes. Please arrange a regular weekly meeting time with me at the beginning of the semester.

Semester 2: Spring of Your First Year in the Program

Courses to Complete This Semester

- GEOG 5185: Statistical Research Methods in Geography (3 semester credit hours)
- GEOG 5230: Location Intelligence – Business GIS Concepts & Applications (3 semester credit hours)
- One more 3 semester credit hour course from your degree plan.

Other Tasks to Complete

- Consult with me about possible summer internships, summer research, and possible *Applied Geography Conference* participation for the coming fall (need to discuss this now because of late spring AGC registration deadlines).
- Defend your thesis proposal (if at all possible, and it almost certainly will be; we will talk about this as part of your program schedule).
- Possibly attend and present at the annual meetings of the AAG (consult with me early in fall if interested). The *Business Geography Specialty Group* of the AAG runs a student paper competition most years; I will have more information if this is a possibility.

Note: GEOG 5185 and GEOG 5230 provide an opportunity to try out some preliminary ideas for a component of your thesis work. Successful completion of this work provides the opportunity to submit an abstract and paper for presentation at the fall AGC.

Middle Summer of Program

May to Early June: assuming a positive consultation with me about your GEOG 5190 and GEOG 5230 projects, submit an abstract (very good idea) for presentation consideration by the AGC.

- *Abstract:* one paragraph paper summary submitted by AGC deadline in June. Submission provides the opportunity to present a paper at the AGC.

June and July: a good opportunity to take on an internship with a regional or national company, or another organization. Internships provide practical experience and contacts that will definitely prove useful when you're planning your next move after graduation from here. If you don't do an internship, you might consider taking a summer course (possibly from your minor).

August: this is a great opportunity to get your thoughts and plans together for your thesis. You should have well-developed ideas about the dataset(s) you need, the analytical methods you will use, and the research literature your thesis topic exists within.

Anytime in the May to August Period: possibly defend your thesis proposal (if not already done, and it should have been). Scheduling is subject to my availability and the availability of your other professors. If your thesis has not been defended by this point, you are behind schedule. I may keep working with you if there are unavoidable reasons to account for your delay, but under normal circumstances a delay this substantial should never happen. Please keep in close touch with me if you suspect you might be falling behind.

Semester 3: Fall of Your Second (and Final) Year in the Program

Courses to Complete This Semester

- Three 3 semester credit hour courses from your degree plan.

Other Tasks to Complete

- Make significant progress on your thesis (research and writing).
- Possibly present at the AGC (if abstract submitted earlier in the summer) and register for AAG.

Semester 4: Spring of Your Second (and Final) Year in the Program

Courses to Complete This Semester

- All remaining courses from your degree plan (if possible, and it likely is).

Other Tasks to Complete

- Complete your thesis, and schedule a thesis defense date (see me for applicable deadlines and waiting periods between thesis submission and defense).
- Possibly attend and present at the annual meetings of the AAG (need to register the preceding fall, however). The *Business Geography Specialty Group* of the AAG runs a student paper competition most years; I would be happy to share more information if this is a possibility.

Final Summer of Program (and Fall Semester, if Needed)

If you still need this time, complete and defend your thesis in this period. Scheduling of the thesis defense is subject to my availability and the availability of your other professors. *You should not count on extending your program this far.*

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| <p>I hope the above is helpful. Please remember, the scheduling outlined above represents good ideas that have proven to work well with past students. However, they are only guidelines. Please consult with me for advice tailored to your personal situation and interests.</p> |
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