

# Department of GEOGRAPHY & GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN | COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

FALL 2016

## Professor Mei-Po Kwan Awarded 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship



**Professor Mei-Po Kwan has been named a fellow by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.**

She was one of 178 scholars, artists, and scientists chosen from about 3,000 highly accomplished applicants to receive a 2016 Guggenheim fellowship “on the basis of prior achievement and exceptional promise.”

Since its establishment in 1925, the Guggenheim Foundation has granted more than \$334 million in fellowships to over 18,000 individuals, many of whom have also received Nobel prizes, Pulitzer prizes, Fields medals, and other internationally recognized honors.

Kwan’s selection reflects her groundbreaking contributions

to the discipline of geography in fields spanning environmental health, sustainable cities, human mobility, socio-economic issues in cities, and GIScience. As noted in a recent award citation: “One of the defining characteristics of her research is that it transcends and eschews boundaries” both within geography and beyond.

Professor Kwan plans to use the Guggenheim fellowship to deepen our understanding of the uncertain geographic context problem (UGCoP), and to conceive possible methods for mitigating the problem in social science and health research. “When we try to explain a person’s behavior using data from an area that may not correspond to the area that has actually exerted the environmental influences on the behavior, our results may be unreliable,” said Kwan. ✨

## Natural History Building Renovation Update

As of this printing, we are just a few months away from moving into the Natural History Building. Faculty and staff have been on several tours, and we are seeing great progress. Our department’s spaces will include faculty offices, graduate student office spaces, research laboratories, GIS classrooms, and a beautiful new Russell Seminar room. NHB will also include shared spaces for student and faculty interaction, most notably the SESE Commons area, with its historic vaulted ceiling. ✨



Architect’s rendering of the SESE Commons



GGIS faculty take a tour of NHB. From left: Sara McLafferty, Mei-Po Kwan, Bruce Rhoads, Julie Cidell, Jonathan Greenberg, Brian Jefferson



Summer 2016—SESE Commons

## FALL 2016

Department of Geography and  
Geographic Information Science  
School of Earth, Society and Environment  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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College of  
**Liberal  
Arts &  
Sciences**

AT ILLINOIS

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



Dear Friends—

Greetings from the prairies of central Illinois! After the excitement of our Ph.D. program's #1 ranking, this has been a challenging year.

Nevertheless, our department continues to innovate and excel. The number of Geography & GIScience majors is highest in recent decades, and student interest continues to grow. Our new Professional Science Master's program in GIScience is off to a great start, with 10 new students enrolled this fall semester. We will move into the newly-renovated Natural History Building in Spring 2017, joining our fellow departments in the School of Earth, Society, and Environment. We remain ranked among the top Ph.D.-granting programs in the U.S., and faculty and students continue to conduct cutting-edge research on issues of pressing societal importance: water, climate change, risk and vulnerability, crime and policing, transportation, poverty, and health. We also lead innovation in geographic technologies (and the analysis of data acquired from these technologies), transforming business and governmental operations and people's everyday lives. A great example of our engagement with societal issues and GIS is the online atlas created by graduate student Melissa Heil that maps the impacts of Illinois' ongoing state budget stalemate. Check it out at: [www.illinois austerityatlas.com](http://www.illinois austerityatlas.com), and read about Melissa's work in this issue. Another excellent example is Shaowen Wang's CyberGIS Center's collaborative research that generates high-resolution flood prediction maps for the entire U.S.: [http://cybergis.illinois.edu/research/project/high\\_resolution\\_hydrogeologic\\_predictions](http://cybergis.illinois.edu/research/project/high_resolution_hydrogeologic_predictions)

We have continued this great work despite the state budget stalemate that left the University of Illinois with almost none of its regular state budget allocation for FY 2016, and only partial "stopgap" funding through this November for FY 2017. Loss of state funding has led to significant budget cuts that have been passed down in part to departments. For our department, the budget stalemate has meant cuts to everything from graduate student support, to course offerings, to computing equipment and supplies. Determining how and where to cut has not been a fun part of my job. Yet, the excellence and collegiality of our faculty, students, and staff have helped to maintain a robust and positive focus on our core educational and research missions.

I strongly believe that when facing adversity, the best defense is a good offense. So, in the coming year we will continue to develop new initiatives that not only strengthen our core programs, but lead us in new directions. Engagement with our many alumni is crucial in these efforts. Your successes, innovations, and accomplishments reveal the real value of higher education—a huge multiplier effect that ripples across Illinois and beyond, far exceeding the state's annual monetary contribution. We are incredibly grateful for your strong support and your many contributions to our programs. As always, feel free to contact me if you have comments, input, or ideas, and please visit the department if you are in Champaign-Urbana! ✨

**Sara McLafferty**  
smclaff@illinois.edu

# Designing a New Map for the Eastern Illinois Foodbank

The Eastern Illinois Foodbank (EIF) has been distributing food to those in need for over 30 years, a mission that requires great organization, many devoted volunteers, and an excellent sense of Illinois geography.

In July 2015, the Foodbank expanded its service area to include DeWitt, Livingston, and McLean counties, representing an increase of about 6,000 square miles, in which almost 30,000 food insecure families and individuals live. Kristen Costello, EIF's Development Relations Manager, approached our department for help creating a map of the expanded service area.

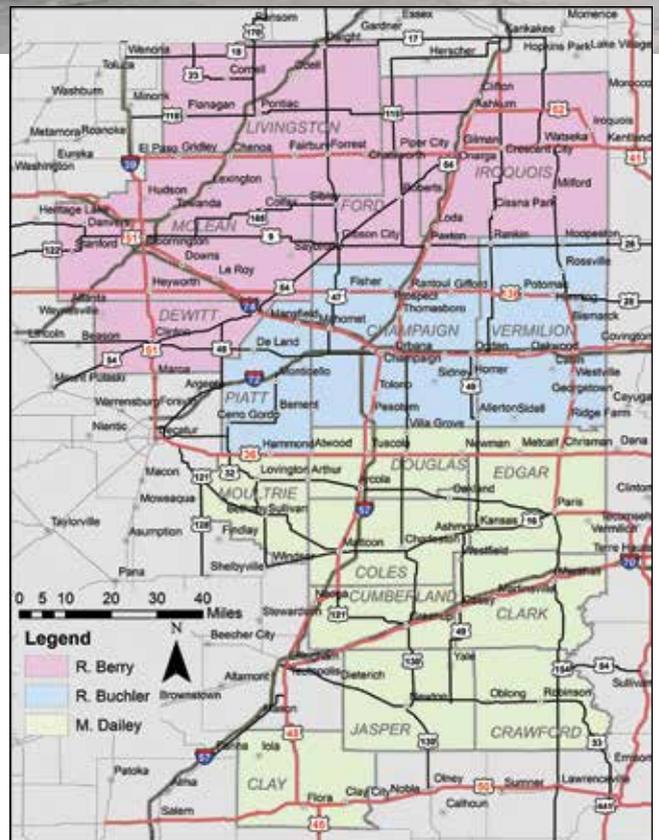
"We were in need of an updated service area map to help us geographically identify areas of need, proximity between existing agencies and food sources such as grocery stores, and essentially help us strategize how to best address the need in our newly acquired counties," said Costello.

Quinn Lewis, a Geography & GIScience Ph.D. student, volunteered to help the Foodbank with this new map.

"Creating this map was an interesting change of pace from the geomorphic mapping I commonly do. It was fun to work with a few basic instructions, yet have the freedom to make decisions about how to display the data," said Lewis. "Making this map reminded me to always have the audience in mind, which is not often something I think about when making topographic maps or plotting the locations of ground control points."

Once Costello and Lewis finalized the map, the Foodbank printed a poster-sized version for the wall of their Urbana headquarters, and Costello and other staff members keep printed copies at their desks.

"Our work with the Department of Geography & GIScience is a great example of skills-based volunteering," said Costello. "The Foodbank relies heavily on the support of our community and the University of Illinois is a great resource of volunteers. The Department of Geography & GIScience was



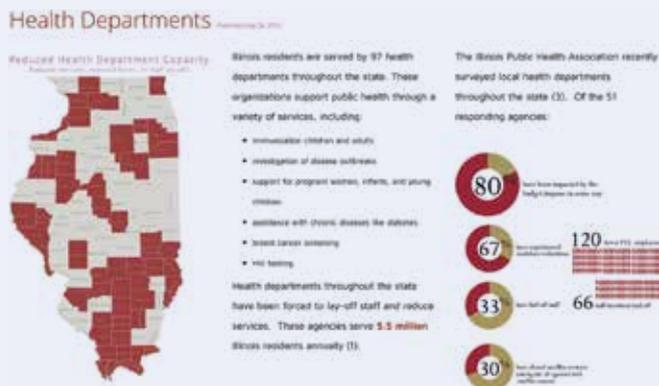
able to help us by providing these valuable maps that enable to us to effectively target food insecurity in eastern Illinois," said Costello. \*

## GRADUATE STUDENT PROFILE

# Melissa Heil Mapping Community Development and the Illinois Budget Impasse

Melissa Heil's interest in geography began after college, when she was working for a community development organization in Detroit, Michigan. She began to observe that neighborhoods throughout the city were changing—some were attracting new investment at rates not seen for decades, while others were continually neglected. Also, racial and economic demographics of some neighborhoods were rapidly changing. In her position, Melissa could see residents often had little influence over the future of their neighborhoods. She came to the Department of Geography & GIS to study under **Professor David Wilson**, and is now working to understand the forces shaping these neighborhood changes.

Melissa completed her Master's thesis here in Spring 2016, entitled *"Community Development for Whom?: The Role of Community Development Corporations in the Neoliberal City."* Her thesis research took her back to Detroit, where she conducted interviews with residents of two Detroit neighborhoods, as well as community development practitioners, city officials, foundation program officers, and community development industry leaders; to understand the forces shaping their decisions and programs. However, some subjects were more willing than others to open up. "In my research so far, I've been able to talk to some influential individuals, and I like that our conversations prompt them to reflect on the decisions they make, even if it is sometimes difficult to get them to deviate from a 'script' about their work."



Source: [illinoisausterityatlas.com](http://illinoisausterityatlas.com)



As a graduate teaching assistant for several introductory geography courses, Melissa has found that teaching undergraduates provides a similar, and equally gratifying challenge. She has consistently been featured on the campus list of instructors rated as "excellent," and the chance to continue teaching was a factor in her decision to pursue a doctoral degree in geography.

*"Having the opportunity to influence how my students think about challenging topics—economic inequality, colonialism, racism, gender inequality, segregation—is a huge part of why I wanted to continue on to doctoral studies. Prompting people to express their thoughts or reflect on things they normally wouldn't is also what I find so valuable about teaching, which I think of as being an equally important part of my work as my research."*

In addition to teaching GEOG 204—Cities of the World online this summer, Melissa also created a website, **Illinois Atlas of Austerity**, to illustrate and examine the fallout from Illinois's 2016 budget impasse. She gathered publicly available data to create a series of striking figures and maps that capture the struggles and shortfalls faced by employees and clients of behavioral health centers, after-school programs, and of course our state university system. "I am really interested in how geographers make their work more accessible to the general public. Very few people have any idea what geographers do, and I think we can offer a point of view that is helpful to people, for example, as they try to understand current events." ✨

## Professor Ribot Talks in Myanmar, Mexico City, and Beyond on Climate-related Vulnerability

Local and national governments around the world are scrambling to predict, model, and plan for the infrastructural and economic effects of climate change.

Unfortunately, some of these plans end up displacing the most disadvantaged and underrepresented residents of climate-affected areas. Professor Jesse Ribot, whose research focuses on risk, vulnerability, and climate-change adaptation, has been traveling the world this year to discuss these topics with government officials, scholars, and members of affected communities.

In January, he spoke on the *Generation of Climate-related Vulnerability in Forest-dependent Communities* as part of a National Dialogue on Myanmar. His keynote address examined how farmer's rights and representation, or lack thereof, shape their climate-related vulnerabilities. "Forest-based farming communities are being hemmed in and displaced by agricultural concessions given out by their government, and by environmentalists pushing for park and reserve expansion," Ribot said. "This meeting was aimed at bringing land-rights activists and environmentalists together to negotiate land-use and conservation policies, so this unjust displacement can be stopped."

In February, Dr. Ribot traveled to Mexico City, where he gave a keynote address: *Vulnerability, Cause and Responsibility under Changing Skies* at the International Conference of the Thematic Group of Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty of the

International Sociological Association (ISA). He discussed some challenges to society's ability to understand the causes of climate-related crises—which arise because of the political implications of blame and responsibility. In particular, he argues that the causes of crisis, and related responsibility, can only be discerned within social and moral expectations—such as who *should* be prepared to protect people from extreme events. His work locates responsibilities within social policies and the political-economic relations, as well as with the agents and agencies behind them, that shape access to public and private goods, services, and social protections.

Dr. Ribot traveled to Bern, Switzerland in May as keynote speaker at the European Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Commons. The conference, *Commons in a "Glocal" World: Global Connections and Local Responses*, examined the role that large institutions, such as governments and multinational corporations play in changing local governance structures, and the effects of these changes on local communities, or "the commons."

In late May and June, he gave invited talks on similar themes at China Agricultural University in Beijing, and at the Cooperative University of Shandong.

Dr. Ribot does not plan to travel quite as much in the coming year, though he will still be away from Illinois. He has been selected as a 2016-17 Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. ✪

对话世界顶尖学者 享受“独立之精神,自由之思想”

**“农政与发展”系列讲座**

二零一六年春季学期第五讲 (总第72讲)

COHD SEMINAR SERIES - Critical Issues in Agrarian and Development Studies (CIADS) No. 5, Spring 2016 (Total No. 72)

**主题: 气候与社会脆弱性: 原因与责任**

**TOPIC: Climate and Social Vulnerability: Analytics of Cause and Responsibility**

**主讲人: 杰西·里博**

**Speaker: Jesse Ribot**

中国农业大学人文与发展学院主办

## Exchange Program Established with Heidelberg University Institute of Geography



**Professor David Wilson led the effort to establish a new faculty and graduate exchange program**

between Geography & GIScience at Illinois and the

Heidelberg University Institute of Geography in Germany. Wilson has visited Germany several times in recent years to present his research and collaborate on projects with Dr. Ulrike Gerhard, professor of Human Geography of North America at the Institute of Geography and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at Heidelberg University. Dr. Gerhard and Heidelberg graduate student Daniel Bumiller also visited our department in Summer 2015, and Dr. Gerhard has been appointed as an adjunct professor. These mutual visits provided encouragement for our institutions to join forces, and provide cross-cultural travel and research opportunities for other faculty and graduate students.

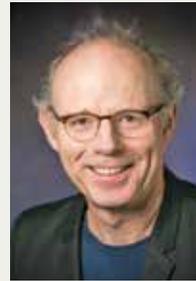
“The urban studies and geography faculty at the University of Heidelberg are very distinguished scholars who are conducting important research, and their faculty is extremely eager to work with Illinois geography faculty and graduate students,” Wilson said.

Though the exchange program is currently intended for graduate students and faculty, we plan to build on the partnership and establish exchange opportunities for undergraduate majors in the near future. ✨



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

## Professor Bassett Retires



**Thomas J. Bassett is retiring after over three decades of research, teaching, and service at the University of Illinois.**

He joined the department in 1984 as Visiting Assistant Professor, and was promoted to Full Professor in 2002. Tom served as Acting Director of the Center for African Studies in 1992-93, and as Interim Director in 1994-95.

Most recently, he was Director of LAS

Global Studies between 2013 and 2016. Tom's research has focused broadly on development geography, with specific foci on cotton, food, and land rights in Côte d'Ivoire and beyond. He also writes on the history of cartography of Africa. Tom's most notable contribution to the discipline has been his work on political ecology, an approach that combines political economy, environmental history, and ecology to better understand relationships between nature and society. An early contributor to the political ecology framework, Tom was the first to use the term “political ecology” in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers (AAG)* in 1988.

Tom's work has been widely recognized. His book *Atlas of World Hunger* (co-written with Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson) was awarded the James M. Blaut Innovative Publication Prize from the Cultural and Political Ecology Group of the AAG in 2011, and he received the University of Illinois' Sheth Distinguished Faculty Award for International Achievement in 2014. Tom's teaching was also highly regarded by students; his introductory course in development geography routinely enrolled 500+ undergraduates, and he also taught upper level courses on development geography, geospatial technologies and society, and political ecology.

Despite his retirement, Tom's impact will continue to be felt throughout the department and the discipline. He is part of a major National Science Foundation project on food insecurity until 2021, and his Ph.D. and Master's advisees work, teach, and conduct research in the United States, France, and West Africa. With his newfound free time, Tom plans to surf, play fretless banjo for *The Young and the Fretless*, and write about the history of the cartographic conquest of colonial West Africa. ✨

# Exploring Cities, Crime, and Space with Dr. Jefferson

**Assistant Professor Brian Jordan Jefferson** researches urban policing to explore how the criminal justice system affects people and neighborhoods in U.S. cities, with a focus in New York City and Chicago. He spent the summer of 2015 in Englewood, a neighborhood on Chicago's south side, researching how police and residents were using geographic information systems to reduce crime.

We asked Dr. Jefferson to reflect on the problems facing Chicago communities such as Englewood, and to explore possible solutions from a geographic perspective.

## What is the biggest challenge facing the Chicago Police Department?

What's happening with the Chicago Police Department is so complex it can be difficult to think about a starting point to turn things around. As a human geographer, I am inclined to look at the policing crisis from the standpoint of the spatial relations that foster conflict. From this perspective, two major obstacles to substantive police reform in Chicago come to mind. The first and most difficult issue to deal with is the concentrated and trenchant poverty in parts of the west and south sides. There are several pockets of the city where schools have been shut down, and jobs offering livable wages have all but disappeared. The scenario is a recipe for illicit drug markets, and the gang violence that often accompanies them. I think this can encourage an us-versus-them mentality for officers working beats in these areas, which fans the flames of antagonism.

Chicago's city government is considerably decentralized and fractured, which complicates issues of accountability. A centralized and independent review board with subpoena power might overcome some of these structural obstacles. It seems to me only after these issues are resolved that we can turn to police reforms such as mandatory body cameras or non-lethal weapons.

## How can communities, cities, and states make their police forces more accountable?

The research I did in New York yielded two basic insights I think Chicago activists might find useful. First, in New York, there was a concerted effort to mention the many different social groups who found themselves subjects of discriminatory policing. In addition to communities of color, Communities United for Police Reform made sure to emphasize that the LGBTQ community, homeless people, the drug addicted, and sex workers also found themselves targets of selective policing. I really believe this commitment to giving voice to a variety of social groups helped build a critical mass that forced the hands of candidates in the 2014 mayoral election.

Second, in researching police accountability activists, I noticed they seldom connected dots between policing tactics and the economy. In the New York case, "quality of life" and "zero tolerance" approaches to cracking down on homeless and indigent people in the 1990s were directly tied to urban redevelopment. The NYPD was in many ways deployed to remove "undesirable" populations from the city's main shopping, tourist, and gentrifying areas. While I feel this economic dimension could be stressed a bit more in current critiques of police violence, it seems that activists in Chicago demonstrated great awareness of this connection during the 2015 Black Friday protests. ✨

*Dr. Jefferson is teaching a new Geography & GIScience course this fall:  
GEOG 484—Cities, Crime, and Space.*



## Further reading

Jefferson, B.J. (2016) Broken Windows Policing and Constructions of Space and Crime: Flatbush, Brooklyn. *Antipode*, doi: 10.1111/anti.12240.

Vitale, A. and Jefferson, B.J. (2016). "The Emergence of Command and Control Policing in Neoliberal New York" in Camp, Jordan T. and Heatherton, Christina. (eds). *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*. London: Verso, 157-172. [versobooks.com/books/2107-policing-the-planet](https://www.versobooks.com/books/2107-policing-the-planet)

## NEW FACULTY PROFILES

### Dr. Shakil Kashem

#### What is your academic background, and how did you become interested in geography?

I was trained as an urban and regional planner, so spatial problems have always thrilled me. While working on urban issues, I learned how geography matters in explaining the dynamics of urban growth and struggles of socially vulnerable people to find places in a rapidly growing city. My doctoral research focused on the dynamics of social vulnerability in a multi-hazard urban environment and explored the role of policies and plans in these dynamics. Before obtaining a PhD in Regional Planning from the University of Illinois, I completed my bachelor's and master's in Urban Planning in Bangladesh. I want to be more involved in the advancement of GIScience and its applications in research and policy making, and I found that geography ultimately gives me a better vantage point for that.

#### What are your research interests, and what field work have you done?

My research revolves around social vulnerability, climate adaptation, and urban growth management. My doctoral research explores the changing patterns of social vulnerability in Houston, Tampa, and New Orleans over a 30-year time period and focuses on Houston to evaluate how low-income housing programs may contribute to these changes. I integrated spatial analysis with qualitative case studies in this research. I have also worked on climate adaptation and social vulnerability issues in Bangladesh.

#### What drew you to our department?

I was excited to join GGIS in Fall 2015, as it allowed me to expand my GIS teaching experience and also offered the opportunity to collaborate in cutting-edge research with world renowned faculty in this department. The opportunity to advise the newly launched Professional Science Master's (PSM) in GIScience also drew me to this department. My work as a CyberGIS fellow further inspired me to be part of this vibrant community of geography and GIScience scholars.



### Dr. Piotr Cienciala

#### What is your academic background, and how did you become interested in geography?

My academic adventure with geography began with a BSc degree at the University of Southampton. Upon graduation, I moved from the UK to Canada and a few years later received my PhD in Geography from the University of British Columbia with specialization in fluvial geomorphology and stream ecology. Before eventually arriving at UIUC, I also spent some time as a visiting research scholar at the University of California, Davis. Like many, I first got interested in geography through my love for the outdoors.

#### What are your current research interests, and what field work have you conducted?

My research interests cut across disciplinary boundaries. To study how living organisms interact with the physical landscape—especially water and sediment—I strive to integrate the understanding of geomorphic, hydrological and ecological processes. To date, my work has focused on environments associated with running waters: streams and river channels as well as their floodplains. Although the linkages between fish and the “riverscape” have been the primary subject of this research, I am also interested in and have studied habitat for other organisms (e.g. aquatic invertebrates and riparian vegetation). Ultimately, through my research I hope to advance our understanding of the interconnections between organisms and their physical environment and help design strategies for conservation and restoration of river ecosystems.

I have conducted field work in glacier-fed mountain streams in the Swiss Alps, upland streams in England and the Scottish Highlands, and montane forest streams in the Pacific Northwest. During my visit at UC Davis I also got involved in a project focused on the floodplain of the Yuba River in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada mountains.

#### What drew you to the Illinois campus?

UIUC is a fantastic place to be for those who, like myself, are interested in river science. I am thrilled about being able to interact and collaborate with an amazing group of researchers with expertise in fluvial geomorphology and sedimentology, aquatic ecology, surface hydrology, and environmental engineering. ✨



## 2015–2016 ROEPKE UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### Study Abroad Scholarship

#### Spring 2016: Edison Orellana Sustainable Field Expedition in Costa Rica

Thanks to the Roepke Study Abroad Scholarship, I was able attend a 2016 spring break trip to Costa Rica as part of the course ESE 389: Environmental & Sustainable Field Expedition. There was a lecture component; but we also hiked, took farm tours, snorkeled, did bat mist netting, and had some free time to experience the local culture. Each of these activities touched on aspects of sustainability, the environment, and conservation. Of the many places we went and people we met, my favorite experience was a guided nighttime tour of the Children's Eternal Rainforest, in Monteverde.

Our guide imparted amazing facts about local flora and fauna, and showed us a perspective on the environment that I had never considered before. As we turned off our flashlights and paused on the trail to listen for all the layers of sound, he pointed out that every part of the musical scale is represented in the rainforest, so that no creature is drowned out by another. We did the rest of the hike without flashlights; which gave me an appreciation for how nocturnal species use their non-visual senses.

For the course's final project, I used hemispherical photography to compare the degree of canopy cover in four forests we visited during the trip. This project allowed me to use skills I learned in GEOG 477: Introduction to Remote Sensing, such as R, the statistical computing language. For results, and more details about my project, I have it linked at my website, [edison.me](http://edison.me).

#### Winter 2016: Joshua Silic Disaster Recovery in Japan

I received a Roepke Study Abroad Scholarship to attend a Disaster Recovery study abroad trip in Japan, during the 2016 winter break. It was whirlwind of activity, as we visited nine different cities in two weeks, averaging ten hours of walking per day. In every city, we saw how different areas of Japan face different problems, such as tsunamis on the northern coast and earthquakes in the southern areas. It was interesting to see how every area uniquely dealt with disasters, such as raising an entire town by a meter to reduce future tsunami damage



or putting gigantic pendulums in skyscrapers to steady them during earthquakes.

I was amazed to see that every city we visited is designed with disasters in mind. Many have designated earthquake gathering areas, with portable toilets that connect directly to the sewage system, and easily assembled makeshift housing, to name a few examples. It was not until I traveled abroad that I realized that the way things are done in the U.S. are not “just the way things are,” or the best way.

Gaining these valuable perspectives, and seeing so much of Japan had a large impact on my academic trajectory—I decided to return to Japan for an intensive summer language course, and am looking for post-graduation jobs that incorporate GIS, Japanese language skills, and travel to and from Japan.

### Junior/Senior Research Scholarship

#### Fall 2015: Nathan Leadbetter, Jacob Jasek, and Jessie Wang Municipal Interactions in Melbourne

Nathan, Jacob, and Jessie worked with Dr. Julie Cidell on a project concerning local government, urban sustainability, and social networks of institutions in Melbourne, Australia. They gathered data from municipal reports and strategies concerning sustainability issues, including water, energy, climate change, and biodiversity, and compiled a spreadsheet to determine which cities interact with which other cities, as well as state and federal governments and non-governmental organizations.

#### Spring 2016: Joshua Silic Researching Historical Maps of Africa

I worked with Dr. Thomas Bassett on a mapping project, to see if there is any overlap in political boundaries on maps drawn by African tribes, and those later drawn by French *Cercles* (colonial administrators). Since it is based around historical maps, I have learned a lot about projections and older geographic coordinate systems. I was also completely unaware that there was such a thing as a “Paris meridian” until I realized that the maps I had georeferenced were off by 2.33 degrees. Not only did I gain technical skills in learning how to correct this, but I also became aware of the assumptions that I unknowingly make when I look at a map, such as Greenwich being the zero line of longitude. It made me realize that maps are more fluid than I had previously thought, and can change rapidly over the course of a few years.

## Roepke Undergraduate Academic Scholarship (Freshman/Sophomore)



### Scott Constantine

My deep-rooted love for maps and geospatially-oriented problem solving has led me on a fascinating academic journey, which is ongoing as I continue my studies as a Geography & GIScience major. I am studying both the fields of Geographic Information Science and Geology, and have spent the last two semesters

and the summer of 2015 as a research assistant using GIS to analyze spatial LiDAR data of riverbeds, specifically those of the Trinity River in Texas, as well as

the Chehalis and Columbia rivers in the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, in Spring 2016, I began working as a Geospatial Analyst Intern at Agrible, a cutting-edge technology company in the Champaign research park uniting GIS with agricultural data. The Roepke Scholarship has been immensely helpful in furthering my academic and professional goals.

### Siqi Deng

I am fascinated by cartography, GIS, logistics, transportation, and remote sensing; and hope to learn more about them through geography research opportunities, courses, and internships. The Roepke Scholarship can definitely help me engage in these activities as I work toward my degree. ✨



## Announcing the Evans and Judith Mank Undergraduate Scholarship

The Department of Geography & GIScience received a generous gift from Evans and Judith Mank to endow a scholarship for undergraduate student majoring in Geography and GIScience. The Evans and Judith Mank Scholarship will ensure access to higher education for well-qualified students in our field and support our department's continued excellence.

Thank you! ✨

## Professional Science Master's in Geographic Information Science Class of 2017



Front row, from left: Ruoxin Li, Fik Winata, Stephanie Zhang, Wenhan Kong, Edmond Lai. Back row: Dale Lee, Det Yang, Daniel Zhang, Dr. Shakil Kashem-PSM Advisor, Hao Zhang, Xu Li.

## NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS



**KATHRYN ABELT** has a B.A. in geography from Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. After working as a GIS analyst for two years, she joined

the department in August 2015. Her research interests involve using geospatial technologies to explore the relationship between urban green space and various aspects of human health.



**AUSTIN DAVIS** completed a B.S. in Geosciences, and a Certificate of Geospatial Information Systems and Remote Sensing on a Department

of Defense Scholarship for Service Program at Mississippi State University, and an M.S. in Geographic Information Science and Technology from the Spatial Sciences Institute at the University of Southern California. His Ph.D. work is focused on developing platform technologies for spatial simulation systems. Austin is the Geospatial Sciences Team Leader for the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Environmental Laboratory.



**DANIEL GONZALEZ** received a B.A. in geography and a B.S. in environmental science and policy management from the University of California-Berkeley.

Prior to joining the department, he worked as a community organizer on issues pertaining to farm workers' rights, environmental injustice, and affordable housing in California. In general, his

research centers on the historic and ongoing reconfigurations of identity, space, and urban development in U.S. cities.



**TING LI** received both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in GIS from Peking University in China. She is interested in increasing the

modeling and computation capacity of GIScience from both methodological and application points of view. She also has a strong interest in spatial statistics and machine learning.



**JIANGDONG LIU** earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in geography and geographic information science here in Spring 2015, and has continued on as our first Professional Science Master's student. His current research interests involve the use of HTML and web map programming with GIS to perform decision making analysis that aids companies in location selection.



**DONALD PLANEY** earned a B.A. in political science from Augustana College, and an M.A. in political science from the University of Chicago. His research

interests include the 21st-century industrial geography of the Chicagoland area, trends in metropolitan land use since the 2000s, and the role of finance in the continued development of North American industrial infrastructure.



**REBECCA SHAKESPEARE** earned a B.A. in history from Indiana University, and an M.A. in international communication from American University.

Prior to joining the department, she was a Presidential Management Fellow at the Broadcasting Board of Governors, where she developed and managed online audience analytics for US international broadcasting agencies. Rebecca is interested in urban neighborhood change, global housing affordability, and GIS.



**RYAN STOCK** has a M.S. in environmental policy and environmental justice from the University of Michigan, and a B.A. in

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