



News Release

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Century Offers High-Tech Geography

This is not your grandmother's geography class.

Advanced technology has drastically changed the study of geography, says Century College geography Prof. David Lyons.

Century offers a new course called Fundamentals of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that has applications in the fields of law enforcement, environmental sciences, transportation, social sciences, marketing and public services. The course introduces students to geo-spatial technologies and tools such as GPS, GIS and satellite imaged data. The development of these computer-based systems has led to major advances in how geographic information is collected and mapped.

"Twenty years ago, we were drawing maps by hand," said Lyons, a graduate of the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin Madison. "Now that mapping is all done by computer. In my class we learn geographic concepts and principles, but we also learn about the sophisticated new computer tools. "Up-to-the-minute maps' are now the norm. Because a locational component is important to most data gathering, knowing how to use GIS is an asset to anyone's resume."

Lyons said Century geography students learn about how to use geographic technology tools to address the world's problems. "An overwhelming theme in geography is our increasing global interconnectedness," said Lyons. "To use a pop culture example, look at how Michael Jackson's funeral was viewed in real time by people all over the world. Today, when something happens in one country, the world community weighs in."

Lyons noted that all levels of government hire geographers and extensively use these emergent geospatial technologies for local and state economic planning, conducting research in recreation and park use and mapping land use from satellite images. The private sector also hires GIS professionals. For example, Best Buy uses a GIS team to determine future store locations.

In the last five years, Century has received two National Science Foundation grants to teach law enforcement students how to use geographic systems to address public safety issues.

"The new geographic technologies are simply fascinating," said Lyons. "The interdisciplinary nature of geography appeals to people who want to examine problems from multiple points of view."



Photo: David Lyons