

# THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY & ENVIRONMENT



2021 Graduate Retreat at Stevenson Children's Camp

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

2021 has been a year of transition - we began the winter term in online mode for most activities and transitioned over the summer back to a largely in-person delivery of courses to our students. Overall, this transition seems to have been successful and it has certainly been nice to see more life return to campus. In June, we celebrated our second virtual convocation with a graduating class of 47 students. This year's graduates were a very high achieving group of students: among them six Gold Medal winners, recognizing superb academic performance in their particular modules, and 22 certificates of merit for academic excellence. Over the summer, a new Interdisciplinary Initiative entitled Climate Change, Sustainable Food Systems and Health Nexus, led by Isaac Luginaah, was awarded. It includes faculty members from across campus as well as in Geography and Environment. This success formed the basis for a new Research Centre - WeCLISH - Western Centre for Climate Change, Sustainable Livelihoods and Health - on the same theme. The release of the new University Strategic Plan highlights a number of elements that are Geographic in nature, including a concentration on place, engaging the world and sustainability as an imperative that will provide important opportunities for us moving forward.

We welcomed a big incoming class of new graduate students to the program in September and we were happy to resume our orientation activities in-person. Our undergraduate program enrolments have now risen for the third year in a row and overall course enrolment demand is strong with over two thirds of courses at 90% capacity or above. The past year saw new courses offered in Urban Data Science and Climate Change, Culture Change, and the initiation of our new major in Climate Change and Society. Course instructors have been working to implement lessons learned from our COVID virtual delivery experience as we readjust our course delivery modes to make use of new tools and skills we have learned over the past year.

We have been experimenting with new modes of getting together - with in-person guest speakers and a live audience streamed to a virtual audience, and a virtual guest speaker streamed to both virtual and in-person audiences. These developments provide new accessibility to speakers and events in the Department and on campus, more broadly, and I hope will help to build connections to the broader community.

I will complete my term as Chair in June 2022 and beginning July 1, 2022, we will welcome a new Chair. So I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support and hard work over the past five years as well as to wish you all a very Happy Holiday and Best Wishes for 2022!



# CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIETY

Climate change has received a lot of media attention this year, with COP26 attempting to address policy issues and various extreme weather events in Canada – such as the “heat dome” and more recently the “atmospheric river” event that caused significant flooding and landslide damage in British Columbia – illustrating the types of events expected to become more frequent with climate change.

This year saw the introduction of a new major in Climate Change and Society that examines climate change. It is impossible to overstate the urgency of responding to climate change which is at the forefront of the challenges that human societies face today. Mitigating the extent of climate change and adapting to changes that are unfolding require major responses politically, economically, socially, and culturally on every scale from individual action to municipal governments to nation states to multilateral organizations.

The pressing challenges posed by climate change are simultaneously scientific and technical in nature, and inseparable from social, political, and economic systems. Climate change poses complex and global problems for human societies and requires an array of technological, social, and cultural knowledge – and profound levels of change. The multidimensional challenges posed by climate change underlies the philosophy of this module that provides a broad-based program integrating science, social science, and humanities. It is intended for students who recognize the enormity of climate change and who want to pursue a wide range of career paths where they can contribute to solutions to the many and diverse problems that are arising from climate change. As part of this module, we have introduced three new courses: a first year course: The Climate Emergency; a third year course: Climate Change, Culture Change; and a new fourth year course: Climate Change and Collective Action. The themes of culture change and collective action are important elements that underlie the need for us to re-think and re-orient our human-environment relationship through the lifestyle choices we make as individuals, as well as considering on a range of other scales, the current economic, political, and social structures we collectively create and support – i.e. the culture we have collectively developed and the need to reorient it to help address climate change. These courses join other existing courses such as climate change and environmental change to form the core of the module to which students add other courses that give them a broader perspective of climate change from a physical science, social science and humanities perspective. The interest in climate change across campus has grown such that we are now able to draw upon courses from Anthropology, Biology, History, Political Science, Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies.

## PHD STUDENT RECEIVES VANIER CANADA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

By Mark Wolfe



**Research focus:** Urban governance and the politics of everyday survival for street traders in Harare, Zimbabwe. In Harare, street trading accounts for about 58 per cent of urban informal employment, taking place in open spaces, sidewalks and pavements. Street traders are often subjected to forms of control that deepen their marginalization. Yet, little is known about the interface between urban governance and their livelihoods.

Elmond Bandauko is investigating how urban governance impacts street traders’ lived experiences and their access to public space in Harare. He is analyzing the strategies traders use to negotiate that access and claim those spaces as their ‘right to the city’; and exploring the gendered implications of appropriation of urban space.

Bandauko hopes his findings will help inform the design of pro-poor urban policies in African cities, and support Canada’s

international development priorities as articulated in the Feminist International Assistance Policy (2017), which seeks to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, including women.

### OGS - Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Masters)

Victoria Barlow      Brittany Brasier  
Rebecca Poisson      Jody Yu

### SSHRC Scholarship (Masters)

Zoe Askwith  
Sara Wilson

### OGS - Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Doctoral)

Elmond Bandauko (Int’l OGS)  
Corey Dawson      Haley Everitt  
Bo Shan              AJ Wray

### Edward G. Pleva Fellowship Award

Emilia Cameron      Nils Mann

### E. G. Pleva Teaching Assistantship Award

Austine Stastny      Sara Wilson

### CGS/PGS (Doctoral)

Ismahan Yusuf

## NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Professor Katrina Moser, instructor for our Geog 2133A/B Climate Change course, received a Teaching Fellowship and Digital Content grant from the eCampus Ontario Virtual Learning Strategy to redesign the course. This work will integrate Indigenous ways of knowledge with Western Science and will broaden the scope of the course from the science of climate change to incorporate actions for addressing climate change. The work will involve developing eight modules that can be delivered online and will be more broadly available to other departments and universities. The course is one of the required courses in the new major in Climate Change and Society.



## NEW FIELD METHODS AND PRACTICES SECTION

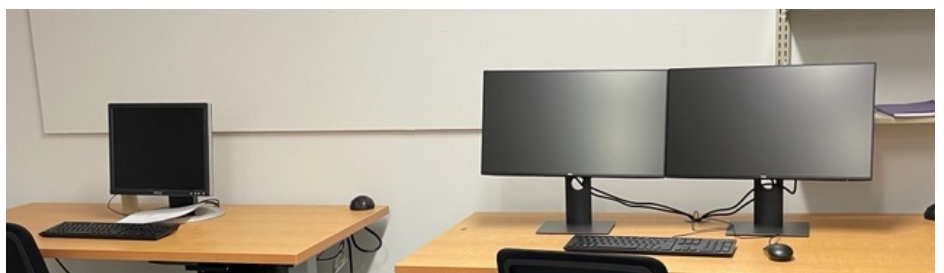
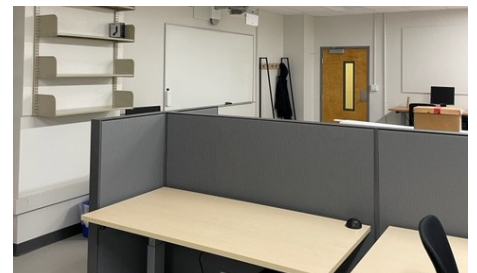
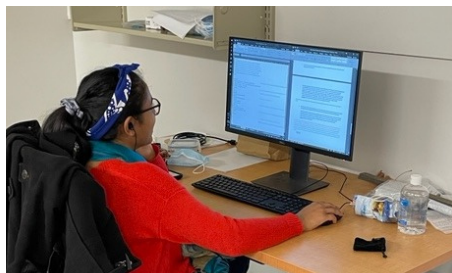


Prof. David Goldblum and Geog 3000Y students stopped at Big Swamp forest in North Middlesex.

The Fall 2021 version of Field Methods and Practices course (GEOG 3000Y) focused on forests in southwestern Ontario. The class started at Pinery Provincial Park, kicking off with a field lecture from Pinery's park ecologist, followed by two days of studying forest structure and species composition along a shore to inland gradient from young to older dunes. The next day was spent driving south to Leamington, just outside the entrance to Point Pelee National Park where students spent two more days collecting field data. In both field sites, the students learned about tree coring, collecting forest data using plots and other techniques, and collecting understory light measurements. Topics discussed in the field included the history of the two parks, fire ecology, park and First Nations management strategies for deer and fire, invasion of exotic species, and climate change impacts on forests. Once back in London, students analyzed their field data to determine common metrics used in forest ecology, modelled future species composition of the forests, and characterized the understory light environment. For fun, they took a few nature walks and hikes through the parks, ate lunch on the beach, and dodged huge patches of poison ivy (mostly successfully).

## NEW GISCIENCE RESEARCH SPACE

To support our new appointments in the area of GIScience, we have merged two rooms (the former SSC 2410 and SSC 2424) to form one new large space to house workstations for graduate students working with Professors Lee, Leszczynski and Long. Work was slowed by COVID protocols and supply chain and parts shortages mean that some new computers have yet to arrive, but the room was ready for occupancy later this term and should help improve our graduate student workspace.



**The Brian Luckman Award**  
Austine Stastny

**Jim Kennedy Scholarship Award**  
Alvina Lin

**CAG Award**  
Jody Yu

**Allen K. Phillbrick Scholarship Cultural Geography**  
Eunice Annan Aggrey

**Michael J. Troughton Graduate Students Bursary**  
Senanu Kutor

**Elaine Bjorklund Award**  
Hin Lok (Tommy) Li  
Kaven Wijeyekoon

**Faculty Association Scholarship**  
Matthew William Bowery

**NSERC Scholarship (Masters)**  
Austine Stastny

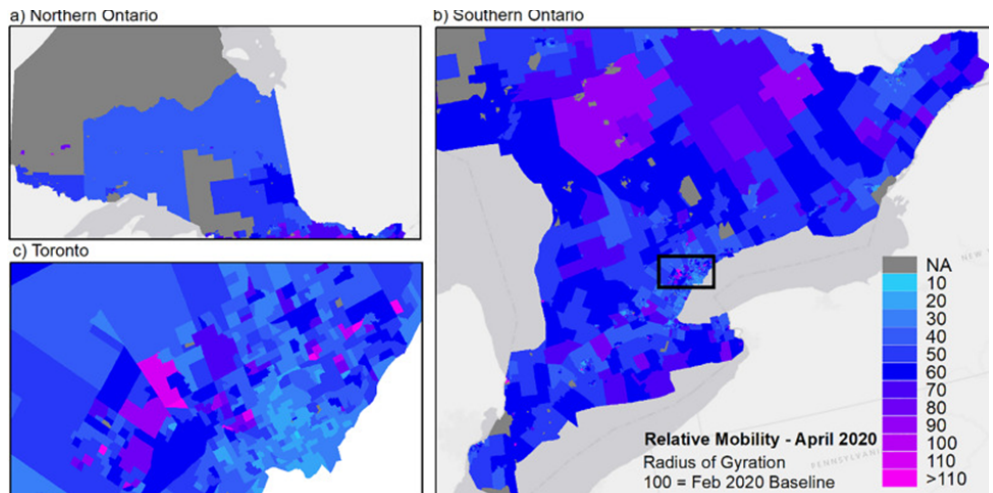
**Imran Jaffer Memorial Award in Urban Development**  
Sara Neiman

**McIntosh Prize in Geography**  
Bevan Kenneth Bearss

# GEOGRAPHY IN A TIME OF COVID

Professor Jed Long and his research team have been studying human mobility changes in Ontario over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with TELUS through their Data for Good program. The accompanying graph shows the change in mobility over time for the 'Geographical Range of Mobility' metric over the course of 2020. The maps show geographical variation in these changes for April 2020, the peak of the first lockdown. In their analysis, Jed and his team examined whether regionally targeted lockdowns in Ontario during the pandemic would lead to people leaving regions with high levels of restrictions to regions with lower levels and the extent to which socio-economic factors were associated with mobility patterns and their changes through 2020. The team's research shows that mobility of persons from neighbourhoods with greater incomes demonstrated sudden reductions in mobility associated with shifts to working from home, whereas persons with lower incomes did not demonstrate much change with mobility linked to their need to continue to travel to workplaces. When comparing mobility between regions, the team did not see much change, suggesting that people did not preferentially leave areas with greater restrictions when other areas had lower levels of restrictions.

You can inspect spatial patterns yourself at the [Geospatial Lab COVID19 Mobility Dashboard](#) and read about the groups research in their articles on [Associations between mobility and socio-economic indicators vary across the timeline of the Covid-19 pandemic](#) in the journal *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems* and [Do regionally targeted lockdowns alter movement to non-lockdown regions? Evidence from Ontario, Canada](#) published in the journal *Health & Place*.



## CAGONT 2021



Our long-awaited hosting of the Ontario Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers Annual meeting - delayed from 2020 by COVID-19 - took place virtually on Nov 12 and 13. In total, we welcomed over 200 conference participants. As feature events, we hosted three special panels: Climate Change, Sustainable Livelihoods and Health chaired by Isaac Luginaah. It examined multidisciplinary climate change research and research needs arising out of the recently completed COP26 and on their suggestions as to what actions Ontario Universities, students and faculty should be doing to address climate change. Unsettling Geography: Opportunities and challenges for engagement in Indigenization, organized by Chantelle Richmond, offered insight into the opportunities and tensions associated with engaging in processes of Indigenization in geographic research and teaching. It featured the lived experiences of

Indigenous faculty and students as well as the initial outcomes from research examining the successes and limitations of how Geography Departments in Canada are addressing Indigenization and Decolonization. COVID and Geographies of Academic Work, organized by Michael Buzzelli, wrapped up the conference and examined the experiences of faculty and graduate students arising from COVID-19 requiring us to undertake new ways of teaching and research. Is teaching changed forever? Is remote research viable? Is the 'rethink' associated with COVID-19 for the better or could we lose the strengths and positives of our work? The panelists' opinions varied, but I think it is safe to say there is significant demand to retain the in-person element that characterizes much of teaching and research. More info is available from our [webpage](#).

## THANK YOU

The Department of Geography and Environment is grateful to its alumni and friends for their financial support over the years. As we strive for higher standards and increasingly broader opportunities for our students, we depend on the caring and generous nature of alumni and friends like you to meet these ever increasing financial needs. Your gift to the Department of Geography and Environment can take many different shapes. If you're interested in giving a gift that best meets your needs, the impact you want, and the way you want to give, please contact Alumni Relations & Development at 519-661-4200 or 1-800-423-9631 for more information.