

Where to go now?

CUGS introduction to
Cambridge Geography



Welcome.

Hello Freshers!

First of all, congratulations on your exam results and for getting into Cambridge to study Geography. I am sure you are all very excited about starting life in the Geography Department - I know I definitely was! Cambridge is the most incredible place in which to both live and study, and I have no doubt that your time here will be filled with amazing opportunities and wonderful experiences.

This booklet has been put together by the past and present CUGS committee to try and make those first few mind-boggling essays and daunting supervisions go just that little bit more smoothly and to help you settle into life at Cambridge just that little bit faster.

On behalf of the entire committee, I really hope you have a very enjoyable Freshers' year (and behold)! We all certainly did!

Geography and CUGS love, Laura!



Laura Whalley

President 15/16

Contents.

- 2 - President's welcome
- 3 - Contents
- 4 - Brief Course Outline
- 6 - How to do study stuff
- 8 - Student's top tips
- 10 - Finance advice
- 11 - Careers advice
- 12 - All about CUGS
- 13 - People to talk to

Course.

We have constructed this booklet to provide a light introduction to Geography, the department, and Cambridge ways of doing things. Information is a mix between a reading of the course guide and our own personal experience. It is not completely accurate and as much as some of us might think we're pretty clued up, this can't be taken as gospel on how to 'do Geography'.

Please consult the official course guide and your DoS with any enquiries for serious answers. This is not a certified guide!!

The Department

Situated on the Downing site, the Geography Department is an awesome place to study. Yet again the degree programme has been rated the best in the UK by the Guardian University Guide for the commitment to research practice and teaching. Reflecting the expansive reach of geographical thought and research, the student and staff population have developed work in many different backgrounds.

Tripes

Tripes is a Cambridge term for a course divided into three parts (1A, 1B, II). About 100 students are admitted to read Geography on the Tripes system each year to engage with the range of lectures, practicals, and supervisions provided. An emphasis is placed on examination at the end of the year, but practical classes and coursework provide assessment throughout the year as well.

Most people are aware that previous experience in geography might be limited to a couple of areas of study (Think in A-level, IB etc). The first year modules often teach from the ground upwards to cater for those new to the topic. This might seem simplistic to those who have already covered material but supervisions offer room to push the boundaries.

Examination

Alongside marks from your coursework and practical submissions, assessment in first year emphasises final year examinations in two papers. Papers are essentially modules studied through the year. Each paper is taken over a period of three hours and students will have a variety of different questions to answer.

Paper 1: Human Geography: People, Place and the Politics of Difference

- A: Geopolitics and Political Geography
- B: The Historical Geography of Globalization
- C: Understanding Cultural Geographies
- D: Society, Environment and Sustainable Development
- E: Unequal Geographies
- F: Economic Globalization and its Crises
- G: Contemporary Urban Geographies
- H: Current Issues in Human Geography

Paper 2: Physical Geography: Environmental Processes and Change

- A: The Earth
- B: The Cryosphere
- C: Atmospheric Processes and Climate
- D: Oceans and Coasts
- E: Environmental Change during the Quaternary
- F: Life on Earth
- G: Current Issues in Physical Geography

Geographical Skills and Methods

- A: Working with Geographical Databases
- B: Cartography and GIS
- C: Statistical Methods
- D: Introduction to Human Geography Methods
- E: Field, Laboratory & Desk Skills for Understanding the Physical Environment

In the first year, papers generally provide introduction to key concepts and theories within geography. It is constructed in such a way to offer both a balanced view of the discipline between tastes of 'physical' and 'human' geography, but also to show how links may be drawn between different sections. It must be said that the wide variety of sections studied offer much to an open mind. You might approach the course with a particular love for Human Geography and progress into second year with a new found fascination for Ecology!

How to do.

It is sometimes the small things which stump you. These simple needs are essential, but often taken as given knowledge. Please read through and have a look at what we think might be useful!

DoS (Director of studies) Relations.

A DoS is the contact between your College and the Department. Your DoS is not a personal tutor; it is his/ her job to organise supervisions on behalf of you, and to monitor your progress through the academic process. Their advice is pretty solid, so make use of their meetings extensively!

Lecture Notes.

In first year Lectures are usually held in the Large Lecture Theatre at the base of the department so it is quite hard to get lost. Taking effective notes is a skill acquired rather than taught. People often gain a personal style by either typing or quickly writing. Most find word-for-word writing is hard work and inefficient; get down the main points instead. However you do it, notes (and their summary equivalents) are essential for essays and revision later on.

Supervisions.

Your DoS should organise these for you! Supervisions are the strength of the Cambridge system and offer an in-depth exploration of a topic. Typically, you may have one or two hour-long supervisions each week led by researchers in that field. You're often expected to do preparatory work for this in the shape of an Essay, set reading, or a Book Review. You will critically discuss the topic so being underprepared is a bit silly, but coming with questions is encouraged.

Good Essays.

Good question. There isn't a magic formula to writing fantastic essays. Those which do best must engage critically with the question posed, and present good knowledge of the subject. Often this question is best placed with your DoS who will guide you through etiquette and writing style. However, it is important to grasp the good scholarship of reading and reference. Often the first Essay you complete isn't your best, but we are here to learn - you will improve! Also, hand in on time and to the word limit!

Referencing

Avoid plagiarism by referencing properly. Referencing differs by University and department, but generally Geography follows the Harvard system. When taking notes, reference the Author's name and year of publication i.e.

(Squarepants 2002)... or, if referencing a quote then note the page:

Supposedly, "he lives in a pineapple under the sea" (Squarepants 2002, p.72)

Please consult your DoS & Tutor how to do this to their satisfaction!

No Plagiarism.

Please see the Department's policy on plagiarism when you arrive. It is essentially copying other person's ideas and language without due reference. The Uni takes it pretty seriously, so please be aware.

Reading Lists

Reading lists can be the most daunting aspect of starting a new course at Cambridge.

Thinking of the seemingly extensive reels of key reading, supplementary reading, lecture reading, supervision reading already raises my blood pressure a few bars.

However, think rationally. It is practically impossible to read literally everything before you from cover to cover. Through good planning and efficient techniques you can gain the useful skill of finding relevant chapters, points, quotes, and arguments for your essays amongst the irrelevant. If you are finding this difficult, please consult fellow geographers and your DoS for study tips. We are in Cambridge, and we certainly do *read* geography. When it comes to revising, you'll realise you have probably read more this year than you have before and that's pretty impressive.

Libraries

For your essays, the library resources within your College and the Department are probably your first port of call. In Freshers' week it is strongly advised you attend your inductions as the Librarians will show you where things are, how to check out books, and any library manners you're expected to observe. Also, use the University, Economics, HSPS, Plant Sciences, Geology, History, Central Science, SPRI, and Whipple libraries for extra copies. There are few excuses for not reading Key Texts!

<http://searchplus.lib.cam.ac.uk/> (For articles, ebooks, newspapers, archives)

<http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/> (For books you can hold in your hand)

Top Tips.

We have asked several CUGS members to provide some advice they wished they had received when they arrived at Cambridge. It is hoped that you can learn from our past mistakes to make your transition into academic life as painless as possible.

“Think carefully about working efficiently! Except for maybe a couple of key text chapters, you will get more out of your reading lists by getting a general flavour of the arguments of lots of authors instead of being bogged down in just one or two”

“Find the right balance! Between extracurricular, social, and academic needs, your time should be divided in a way to make you happy. Don’t work yourself into the ground”
(Ben Peacock, Robinson)

“You won’t know everything! There may (probably) be people who appear to be more intelligent than you. Don’t let this stump you, you are here for a reason. In fact, talk to them as they’re probably interesting”

“Plan ahead! It is easy to let things slip and then suddenly end up with three deadlines in a fewer number of days. That isn’t fun, remember to leave a lion share to relaxation and doing things with mates”

“Capitalise on your love for the subject! Research and interest are expansive; if you find something about what you learn fascinating then it makes studying much more easier and healthy”
(Joseph Chroston-Bell, Tit Hall)

“Don’t be ashamed to ask for help! Your supervisors, your DoS, upper years and your fellow classmates are all resources to utilise for advice”

“Try to avoid working too hard! University is also about trying new experiences, and Freshers should try to take the opportunity to attempt new activities and meet new friends. Don’t graduate wishing you spent less time in the library”
(Janice Chui, Murray Edwards)

“Uni is very, very, very, scarily short! It may not seem like that now, BUT IT IS! Make the most of the time you have here with Geography and all the opportunities on offer at the University. Join loads of clubs, societies, socials, and events as possible”

“Don’t compare yourselves to others! You may be the top at home, but this is Cambridge. You’ve been chosen to come here because you’re really quite clever and the Uni wants you to excel. Be yourself, and try your best”

“Your supervisors are actually really cool. At first they may seem boring, terrifying and old academics, but after some time and field trips you’ll realise they are super awesome. They want to help you, don’t be afraid to ask!”

“Be nice to other students! Other Geographers in your year can help you work during the year and are a font of knowledge during exam terms! You can help each other revise, share the reading list between you, and teach each other through the process. It is much better than trying to slog away in the library for hours alone!

(Emily Varley, Emma)

“Use all the libraries! We have over 100 libraries in the University and a fantastic selection of ebooks available. Don’t get tied to the College-Department duo and expand your choices”



Finance.

Like most students, when you get your student loan you're probably incredibly excited because it's more money than you've ever had in your life. However, soon the dreadful realisation that you have to budget kicks in.. Here are some helpful tips for managing your money whilst studying geography.

Field Trips

We do fieldwork! The only time you have to pay is for the overseas field trip in second year, which is pretty good value at approx. £150 for about 5 nights food, accommodation and flights (and some colleges may completely subsidise the trip for you!).

Dissertation

Without a doubt the most costly part of your degree will be your dissertation, especially as most geographers like to travel somewhere interesting! You will be expected to pay for all your accommodation, food, travel etc., but fortunately there is plenty of help available through travel grants & bursary.

Travel Grants

- University-wide - there are numerous grants available through the university, with the most commonly applied to being: the Mary Euphrasia Mosley Fund; the Bartle Frere Exhibitions; and the Worts Travelling Scholars Fund. Bare in mind that these will have conditions however – find out more through the CamFUNDS website.
- College-specific – most colleges will offer one or several travel grants. To find out more, check out your college website or ask your tutor.
- Department-specific – though the geography department does not offer grants, it will reimburse approximately either £400 (overseas), £350 (EU) or £250 (UK) for dissertation research only.
- CUGS Bedford Travel Grant – every year we have £2,500 to award to our members, with most successful applicants receiving between £180-190. You can also apply for our travel grant twice, giving you the opportunity to use it for travelling as a fresher. Check out our website for more info.

Any more questions?

Email Lucy Pickworth at lcp44@cam.ac.uk

Careers.

Studying Geography at Cambridge enables you to develop skills that are greatly sought after by top employers in many fields, and therefore, Cambridge Geography graduates find that a very wide range of career opportunities are open to them.

As a fresher, you don't need to be too worried about deciding which career path you might want to pursue once you leave Cambridge – leave this worrying to the second and third years! However, if you would like to start exploring your career opinions early then there are lots of career events open for you to attend both in your colleges and university wide. Throughout the year, CUGS host both a Careers in Geography evening, led by our sponsor EY, the global professional services giant, and, after its great success last year, our flagship Geography Careers Fair, which brings together a diverse range of employers who are specifically interested in recruiting Geography graduates.

Any more questions?

Email Andre Woolgar at aw626@cam.ac.uk

OR the University Career's Service at <http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/>

Our Sponsor is EY who offer a large variety of employment opportunities and experience for undergraduate geographers.

Please enquire at <http://www.ey.com/UK/en/careers>



CUGS.

We think Geography is pretty cool, and we hope you do too.

The Cambridge University Geographical Society (CUGS) is the student-run society for geography students at the University of Cambridge. Our active committee works for the service of one of the largest society memberships in the University. Our number one concern is to provide a space for members to share in their passion for all things geographical.

Socials (or, ENTS)

Despite the College system providing a fantastic social and academic atmosphere, it can sometimes prove challenging for people to meet friends beyond dividing walls. Through the year, the committee will aim to provide a few social evenings to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere. Sometimes our sponsor, EY, may pay for our first couple of rounds which is always good. Your first will be a Freshers' drinks evening!

Speakers Events

The speakers officers work tirelessly to try to grab interesting speakers for your attention. For members these events provide free access to leading persons in research and society on geographical themes. Usually in the intimate setting of a lecture theatre or over drinks, members can have their questions asked and satisfy their interests. In the past we have entertained the likes of Saskia Sassen, Derek Gregory, Jasson Dittmer, NatGeo Photographers, and Klaus Dodds. If you don't know who some of these people are now, you will do soon!

If you want someone *so bad*, recommend them to Charlie Whitehead and Kavish Shah (cjdw2@cam.ac.uk kbs27@cam.ac.uk)

Garden Party & Christmas Dinner

In the winter, we are one of the few societies who hosts a lovely Christmas dinner for our members at a host College. With black tie, good wine and great food, members can enjoy a festive end to Michaelmas term in the company of staff and peers. In the summer, we round off the year with a large garden party which, for a relatively cheap price, provides some food and a fair amount of refreshment in elegant surroundings.

Keep an eye out each term for the CUGS Term Card to stay up to date with when and where all the exciting events that CUGS host will be taking place.

People.

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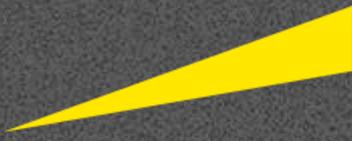
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