



DEPARTMENT OF  
**GEOGRAPHY**

College of Arts and Sciences

# Geography Newsletter

April 2022

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## April Happenings

If you want to open a fun time-capsule, go back and read the March and April 2020 newsletters. Oh, what a naïve time it was! Well, two years into the pandemic we *think* we are on the cusp of a return to normalcy. To wit:

- On Monday, April 4, at 3:30 PM in 035 SSH, the department will host another live colloquium. **Dr. Christian Rossi**, Ph.D., Swiss National Parks, will give a talk titled "Birds-eye view of a protected nature reserve in the Alps: Quantifying the effect of a non-intervention policy on biodiversity."
- A university-wide observation of national walking day will take place on Wednesday, April 6 at noon starting at the student union (north plaza upper level). Several members of the department will be walking in our pursuit of being designated a Certified Healthy Department.
- FoGG is holding its final meeting of the semester in-person at Fuzzy's Taco Shop (305 S Washington St.) on Thursday, April 14 at 5:00 PM. Everyone in the department is welcome to attend. There will be a discussion of interest for those considering running for officer positions for the Fall 2022 semester. Event planning will also occur.
- On Thursday, April 21 at 5:00 PM in 035 SSH, the usually-annual Geography Awards Gathering will take place. See [March 2022](#) newsletter for scholarship and awards winners.
- FoGG and GTU are hosting an informal end-of-semester potluck at Boomer Lake on Friday, April 22 at 5:00 PM in honor of those students who are graduating or otherwise leaving Stillwater this spring. Everyone in the department is invited to attend and bring a dish that is meaningful to them if they would like to.



Geography

## Departmental News

**Geography** was one of five departments on campus selected through a competitive application process to pilot a new internship program through our department and Cartography Services. Beginning in the fall, we have a paid internship position for 10 hours/week for work as a Mapping/Geospatial Technician. The goal is to give students hands-on experience with map design, production, and related software and equipment. Students need to apply via this link (which works only for them): [Mapping/Geospatial Technician Internship](#).

**Dr. Thomas LaVanchy** received the Olen P. Matthews & Kathleen A. Dwyer Fund for Water Resources Award from the Water Resources Specialty Group of the AAG. The award of \$800 is for his work to disseminate water research to impact policy change in Cape Town, South Africa. He was in Cape Town over spring break; see more starting on page 4 of this newsletter.

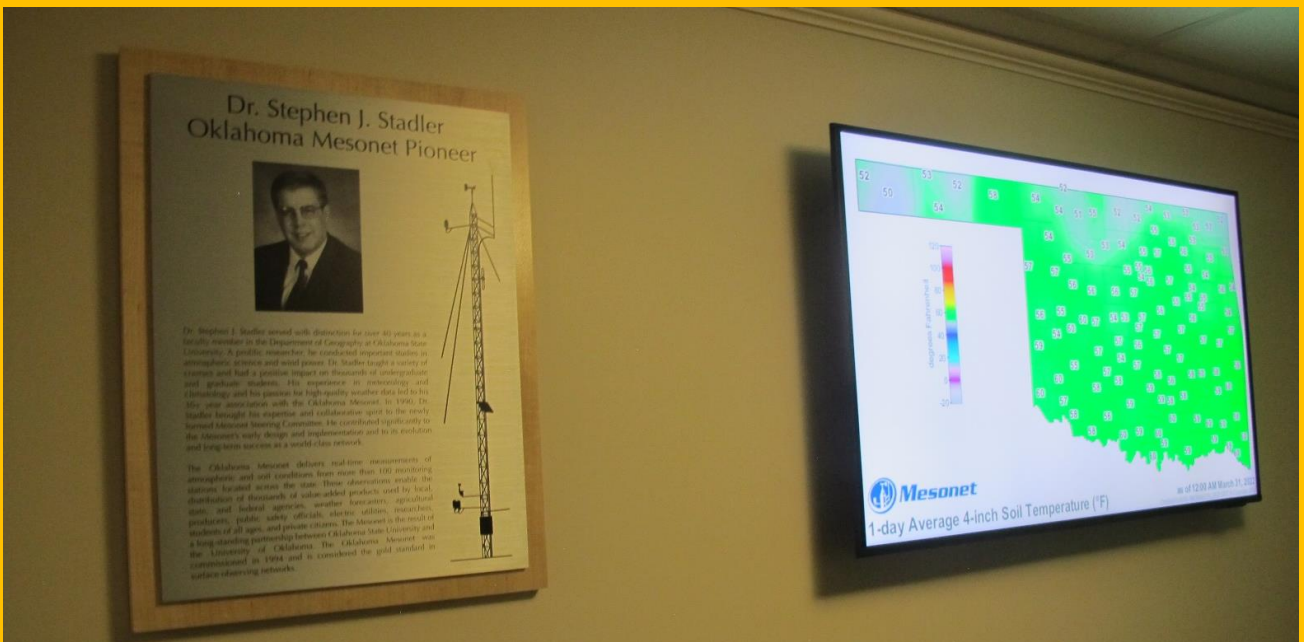
**Dr. Tao Hu** has developed a [Ukraine Crisis Tracker](#) dashboard. Due to the data sensitivity, it is only accessible via OSU O-key. The dashboard is to track the impact of the Ukraine-Russian crisis on local population in Ukraine. It leverages a large-scale collection of near-real-time data provided by the Facebook platform to characterize the effect of population movement.

**Dr. Brad Bays** will provide an online presentation titled “Three-Bay and Crib Barns in Oklahoma” on Tuesday, April 26 at 6:00 PM. The presentation is Part 2 of a 6-part series hosted by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Oklahoma Historical Society. The series highlights findings from the comprehensive survey of historic barns and agricultural outbuildings funded by the National Park Service and conducted by personnel of the OSU Department of Geography between 2009 and 2014. There is no charge to access to the live presentation and Q&A session, but it does require [preregistration](#).

## Departmental News (cont.)

MS student **Katrina Ward** presented research she is conducting with **Dr. Rebecca Sheehan** titled "Tracing Racism through Efforts to Solve Food Inequity in OKC's Ward 7" at the AAG meetings in late March.

The Mesonet display honoring **Dr. Steve Stadler** is finally up and running outside the physical geography lab (SSH 345). It features a plaque shown in an earlier newsletter and a live Mesonet feed:



On Monday, March 21, **Dr. Mikhail Blinnikov**, Ph.D., Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning & former Director of the Global Studies Program, St. Cloud State University, gave a talk titled "Political Ecology of Moscow Parks."



**Dr. Thomas LaVanchy** writes: I was able to travel to South Africa over spring break to (1) disseminate previous research findings, (2) extend my networks for potential research collaboration, and (3) introduce my advisee, first-year MS student Emma Riddle, to my research site in Cape Town.

### *Giving back to the community*

My research team conducted interviews (n=501) on water insecurity in a township in Cape Town in 2019. A central purpose of the research was to identify the risks and challenges faced by community members during the historic “Day Zero” drought event that occurred from 2015-2018. My team has published several articles on our findings, but have been unable to return in person to the community due to the COVID pandemic. Over spring break, we were able to meet with members of the community to share our findings and to check in on their current experiences with water. I enjoyed being back together with community members and hearing about their families. What I took away from the conversations was that water security was challenging even before Day Zero and remains difficult today. Although Cape Town municipal water is safe to drink, it often remains unaffordable to traditionally marginalized groups, thus leaving them water insecure.



*Lunch meeting with community members in Langa township, Cape Town, South Africa.*



### *Extending the network*

I was able to meet with several faculty from University of Cape Town to discuss research ideas and potential collaborations. Each of them is involved in various aspects of water and its connection to society. These visits reminded me again that Capetonians are a thoughtful, inclusive, and fun group of people!



*Meeting with Dr. Kirsty Carden (left) in her lab at University of Cape Town*



*Meeting with Dr. Kevin Winter (left) of University of Cape Town at the Water Hub (research site) in Franschhoek.*





*(L-R) Dr. Thomas LaVanchy, grad student Emma Riddle (OSU), Dr. Michael Kerwin (U of Denver), PhD candidate Meghan McCarroll (U of Denver), Dr. Gina Ziervogel (U of Cape Town), and Dr. Johan Enqvist (U of Cape Town).*

### *Introduction to new landscapes*

I invited Emma to join me on this trip to meet my research team and get a sense of the opportunities to research water-related topics in a unique, global setting. (I remember being a first-year doctoral student and getting invited by my advisor to travel to Guatemala and Nicaragua. I ended up choosing a dissertation research topic from that trip). During this visit to Cape Town, Emma was able to see a variety of human-environmental issues and meet a range of people, in and out of the academy. I always enjoy introducing people to new places and seeing familiar places through the eyes of a new visitor. Thanks for joining me Emma!





*View of the Twelve Apostles mountains from Clifton Beach.*



*View of Cape Town from Lion's Head.*

*Postscript*

Being in the field is not all work. Recharge and relaxation are also possible!



*View of iconic Table Mountain from a kayak in Table Bay*