

NEWSLETTER  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
FALL 2022

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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

JUSTIN MAXWELL

Dear all,

Greetings from Bloomington!

I started as Chair of the Department of Geography this summer and I'm excited to write my first newsletter. This fall semester was particularly beautiful, and as I write this, there are still some pops of bright yellow and orange from the maples and deep reds from the oaks in Dunn Woods. This is my eleventh fall here in Bloomington and as someone who thinks a lot about trees, I'd put this fall in the top 2-3 in that time span. That is saying something, since this campus is quite beautiful in the fall pretty much every year. It truly has been a spectacular fall!



Here in the office, there are a lot of new faces, including mine. Shalom Drummond transitioned to a new role of handling the department's finances and course scheduling, among other things. We also welcomed Melissa Adkins as our new Graduate Coordinator. If you're ever in Bloomington, stop by and say hello! Across the campus, we are seeing more in-person events and meetings, while still offering virtual options. While the pandemic continues to impact our community and life on campus, things are starting to appear and function more like they did prior to the pandemic.

It has been nice to get to know our majors a little more as Chair and we sent out our first call for the new scholarship to fund undergraduate research. We are excited to be able to give our undergraduates this opportunity to work in the field or lab with our faculty. We welcomed a new cohort of graduate students this fall and it has been great to watch them add to our community with their new perspectives and ideas. Our faculty and graduate students are continuing their research, and with international travel restrictions slowly being lifted, we are again able to directly see the global extent of the research, teaching, and service of our Department. I look forward to my first year as Chair and being a champion for the great work our students and faculty are doing.

Best wishes from Bloomington,

Justin Maxwell  
Associate Professor and Chair

INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

NOTE FROM  
CHAIR 1

IN MEMORIAM:  
CHARLES E.  
GREER 2

ALUMNI  
SPOTLIGHT 4

WELCOME  
MELISSA  
ADKINS 5

GRADUATE  
STUDENT  
SPOTLIGHT 6

## In memoriam: Charles E. Greer

Written by Scott Robeson

Charles Greer, faculty member in the Department of Geography from 1978 to 2006, passed away at the age of 80 on August 10, 2022. Fond memories of Charles have been shared by those here in Bloomington and by many former students across the country and world. In late August, a memorial service was held in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he and Sue had returned after living in Bloomington for nearly 30 years.



Charles received a BA in Geology in 1964 from Dartmouth College, where he also was a wide receiver on the football team. He and Sue then married and moved to Hong Kong where they lived from 1964 to 1966. During that time, Charles taught at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Charles then enrolled in graduate school at the University of Washington in Seattle, receiving both MA (1969) and PhD (1975) degrees in Geography. His research focus was always on integrated human-environment studies, primarily in China but later elsewhere as his interests and collaborations expanded. As a result, when Charles was hired at IU, he had a 50/50 joint appointment in Geography and East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC). In EALC, Charles taught a popular course called Geographic Patterns in China. In Geography, he was best known for teaching Environmental Conservation, where he had a following of undergraduates who loved his subtle interpretations of classic works such as *Walden*, *A Sand County Almanac*, and *Silent Spring*. They also loved his Zen-like charisma.

Later in his career, Charles successfully moved his appointment to 100% in Geography, in part because he was developing a number of strong connections within the department. In particular, Charles had close ties with Dan Knudsen, Roman Zlotin, and me – as well as a growing cohort of graduate students for whom he became a mentor, collaborator, and inspirational friend. During that time, Charles and Dan traveled to Denmark and Kazakhstan for field work and co-authored several articles and book chapters on landscape and tourism. Reflecting on those travels, Dan Knudsen related that “Charles was at home in the world on the world’s terms, not his.” Talk about Zen.

Charles and Roman were pals who did field work in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico while Charles and I spent time together mostly in the fall, when we would talk about hunting, the southern Indiana landscape, and more. Charles had a deep and profound relationship with hunting. Some of his teaching and writing surely was inspired by time spent in a tree stand. He loved the experience so much so that we would sometimes check one of his deer as mine so that he could continue spending time in the woods.



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## In memoriam: Charles E. Greer

Anyone who knew Charles also knew how much he loved horses. He, Sue, and their family had horses, for competitive and pleasure riding, at both their Bloomington and Fort Collins homes. Charles co-edited a volume of poetry titled "Say This of Horses," which was published by the University of Iowa Press. I saw some of this first hand as I would often stop by their Mt. Gilead home to get a truckload of horse manure and to chat if Charles were around. While Charles remained a steadfast Coloradan, we often talked about how much he "loved the hardwoods" of Indiana. You can get a sense of the depth of those feelings and interests from these recordings where Charles reads from his poetry:

<https://indianapublicmedia.org/poetsweave/charles-greer-galloping-big-trails.php>

<https://indianapublicmedia.org/poetsweave/guest-charles-greer.php>

Given the intellectual diversity, collegiality, and inclusiveness that has become a hallmark of our department over the last decade, Charles would have fit right in with his interests in landscapes, conservation, and environmental ethics that ranged from the humanities to the natural sciences. And, of course, we deeply miss his calm perspective and friendship.

These are just a few of our memories of Charles and we'd love to hear more from you. Having spent a lot of time with Charles and those who he influenced, I appreciate how important his contributions were beyond what we normally think of in academic careers, whether in the classroom or through publishing or other types of work. There's so much more to being a scholar and colleague than that. Charles was such an extraordinary example of someone who was influential in profound and immeasurable ways.

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home in  
Geography*

## Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Michelle Metro-Roland



Dr. Michelle Metro-Roland received PhD from the Department of Geography here at IU. Before her PhD, Dr. Metro-Roland received a BA in Classics at Loyola Marymount and an MA in History from the University of California Berkeley. Dr. Metro-Roland's research interests have mainly been in the areas of urban landscape, national identity, tourism, and semiotics. She has published on Eastern Europe as well as the mid-west of the US. Recently Dr. Metro-Roland has been collaborating with a Romanian linguist who has interests in landscape. They are completing the final revisions on an article dealing with ecosemiotics and marked nature trails using theoretical concepts from Peirce and Derrida to examine two trails, one in Lincoln Park in Chicago and other in the Tampa Mountains outside Brasov, Romania.

Since graduating with her PhD from IU Geography, Dr. Metro-Roland has been at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. There, she handles the entire Fulbright portfolio, both the student and scholar programs and both the domestic and foreign side as well as the Fulbright-Hays DDRA program. She serves as the International Student Advocate and works broadly on issues of international student inclusion at an institutional level as well as works with individual students who are facing serious problems and challenges whether those be academic or personal. Most recently this has revolved around getting Afghan alumni who were under threat from the Taliban out of Afghanistan. Dr. Metro-Roland is also an Affiliate Professor in the Department of Geography at Western Michigan University and teaches classes in that department and in the Honors College. Further, she serves on the International Education Council of the Faculty Senate. Lastly, she is serving her second term as the President of the Fulbright Association West & Mid-Michigan Chapter and is a founding member of a non-profit that supports international students in Kalamazoo.

Like many of us, Dr. Metro-Roland came to Geography late. When she was completing her MA at UC Berkeley, she took a class with the architectural historian Paul Groth that focused on landscape. She became very interested in the idea of space and place, and also started to spend time in Eastern Europe, and found the transformations happening in these post-socialist countries fascinating. While she initially applied to the Geography Department to study GIS with the intention of focusing regionally in eastern Europe and taking classes with the REEI program, she ended up eventually bringing a much more humanistic approach to her geographic inquiry.

Dr. Metro-Roland enjoys being outside where she spends most of her free time hiking locally in Michigan and also at the dunes in northern Indiana. During the pandemic she adopted a rescued Doberman mix who is her constant hiking buddy. This year, they are now about 20 miles away from completing the Hike 100 Challenge on the North Country Trail for 2022.

Looking back at her time as a graduate student in the Department of Geography at IU, Michelle would tell current graduate student to engage deeply and broadly in the intellectual life of the university. Go to lectures in the department, but also go to lectures in other departments. Be active not just in the department, but in the university broadly, and in the local community. Bloomington is a really special place, so make sure you enjoy it while you are there.

## Office Staff Spotlight: Melissa Adkins



Melissa Adkins joined us over the summer as the new Graduate Coordinator. She received a BLS from Indiana University with a concentration concentration in Social and Historical Studies. She also received a Certificate in Arts Administration and minors in Art History & Anthropology. Before joining our department, Melissa worked at Global Gifts, a local nonprofit and fair trade organization focused on ethical labor and environmentally sustainable practices for farmers, artisans, or producers who are most at risk for being exploited through international

trade. In her role, she served as the Volunteer Coordinator and Assistant Manager for over 4 years where she developed her interest in labor rights, economic inequality, climate justice, and diversity and inclusion education. At her previous job, she supervised a team of 40+ volunteers, managed daily store operations, and developed educational programming for volunteers, staff, and those throughout the Bloomington community. Before her time at Global Gifts, she worked on campus for 5 years and served students at IU RPS and at the Office of Sexual Violence Prevention & Advocacy.

In her role as the Department's Graduate Student Coordinator, Melissa will be helping students navigate everything needed to obtain their Master's and/or Ph.D. She will be working closely with Shalom Drummond our Financial Administration Specialist and Scheduling Officer to help serve students and keep our department running.

Melissa was born and raised as a Hoosier, she grew up in Evansville before moving to Bloomington nine years ago to get her Bachelors and then never left. She is a dog lover and has a 10lb chihuahua mix named Heidi that she adopted a year ago (Please bring in your dogs so she can pet them!). She collects 60s and 70s vintage. Her favorite show is Grace and Frankie. She loves to travel, especially to any city with a good art museum. When asked what she would like to tell everyone from Geography she said: "I has missed IU's campus, and feel honored to now be working with the students and faculty of the Geography department. I can already tell that you all are a wonderful and fascinating group of people, who share many of my own interests and values. I am thrilled to be serving as the new Graduate Student Coordinator and can't wait to get to know all of you. "

Welcome to the Department Melissa!

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Geography*

## Graduate Student Spotlight: Abdul Aijaz



Abdul Aijaz is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography. Before joining IU geography as a Fulbright Ph.D. student from Pakistan, Aijaz had completed an MA in English in 2003, another MA in political science in 2005, and an MPhil. in history in 2011. He has worked as Lecturer in English between 2005 and 2007 in a public sector college in Punjab. In 2007, Aijaz accepted a lecturer position in the department of political science in Government College University in Lahore where he taught courses in political theory and comparative politics to undergrad and graduate students until 2014. His academic interests have been varied and thus he has regularly jumped disciplinary boundaries seeking training in methods and traditions of knowledges in literature, politics, and history.

Aijaz came to IU Geography following a scholar of water politics in Pakistan named Dr. Majed Akhter. He appreciated his work and thought his research could benefit from his mentorship. Dr. Akhter left IU to join Kings College in 2018, though he still serves as a member of Aijaz's research committee. Another draw of IU Geography was the kind of project he wanted to pursue was best possible in a geography department because of the wide range of research it facilitates from hardcore natural science to critical social geographies. At IU geography, he has found a dedicated and supportive community of geographers who trained and encouraged him to look at and pursue his project in a truly interdisciplinary way. When looking back, Aijaz now says he could not have found a better academic home.

Aijaz's doctoral research project traces the history of the world's largest contiguous irrigation system in the canal colonies of Punjab and explores the multiple challenges it faces in the wake of climate change-induced water scarcity. He reads environmental fiction, policy documents and governmental reports, along with his ethnographic research among the semi-pastoral communities of the central Punjab in Pakistan to understand the intertwined transformation of literary milieu and socio-spatial landscape. In his work, he challenges the fact-fiction binary to pay attention to the world taking shape in between the empirical and the fictional.

Aijaz is focused on finishing his dissertation and then is planning on applying to academic jobs. He has a six-month old daughter Zohra and she is the cutest thing ever. Aijaz has a good work-life balance and loves spending time with his daughter, and observing her learn to smile, sign, and acquire a personality and wondering. He loves taking her on walks and hikes. His daughter keeps reminding him of the miracle of life as she mumbles a new word and stumbles a new step.