

UIS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021



Happy New Year and welcome to the spring semester! We hope 2021 will be healthier and brighter for all of us. While some courses will be on-campus, most students and faculty will again, be working remotely. There are a few schedule changes to be aware of this spring:

- All classes will be remote January 19-29
- The five days of Spring Recess will be distributed throughout the semester, resulting in the following five non-instructional days:
 - Tuesday, March 2 and Wednesday, March 3
 - Monday, April 26
 - Thursday, May 6 and Friday, May 7 (Reading Days)
 - Be sure to check with your instructors if you have questions about how this will affect your courses.

While this semester may look a little different, please know the staff and faculty in the Department of Environmental Studies is always available to assist you. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, our ENS faculty, staff, and students have been busy with research, teaching, and service. We highlight some of their achievements below. If you have news to share, please contact Abby Mifflin (awald3@uis.edu). We would love to hear from you!

NEWS

RESEARCH ON PLASTIC BAG LEGISLATION, DR. MEGAN STYLES

This past summer, ENS Chair Dr. Megan Styles and PA faculty member Dr. Junfeng Wang, conducted research on the adoption of plastic bag legislation in Illinois communities. They interviewed city officials and community leaders in the five IL municipalities that have adopted plastic bag laws (e.g. bans or fees



designed to deter the use of these bags) to understand why these communities adopted these laws and their experiences with implementation. Drs. Styles and Wang found that these laws have successfully reduced plastic bag use and municipalities have not faced many issues with implementation. This research has now been published in the December 2020 issue of the ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL POLICY JOURNAL. Read the [peer-reviewed article here](#), beginning on page 91.

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GIS WORKSHOP ON MAPPING COVID-19, DR. YUN ZHAO AND DR. JUNU SHRESTHA

On November 14, 2020, the GIS Lab, joined by Junu Shrestha from the UIS Public Health Department, offered a virtual GIS workshop titled “Mapping COVID-19 Using GIS.” The workshop introduced the use of desktop and online GIS tools in visualizing COVID-19 to help in the decision-making process. Two example products are included here. This is the first time the GIS Lab offered an online workshop. Watch for future workshop offerings, which are open to UIS students, faculty, and staff and community members.

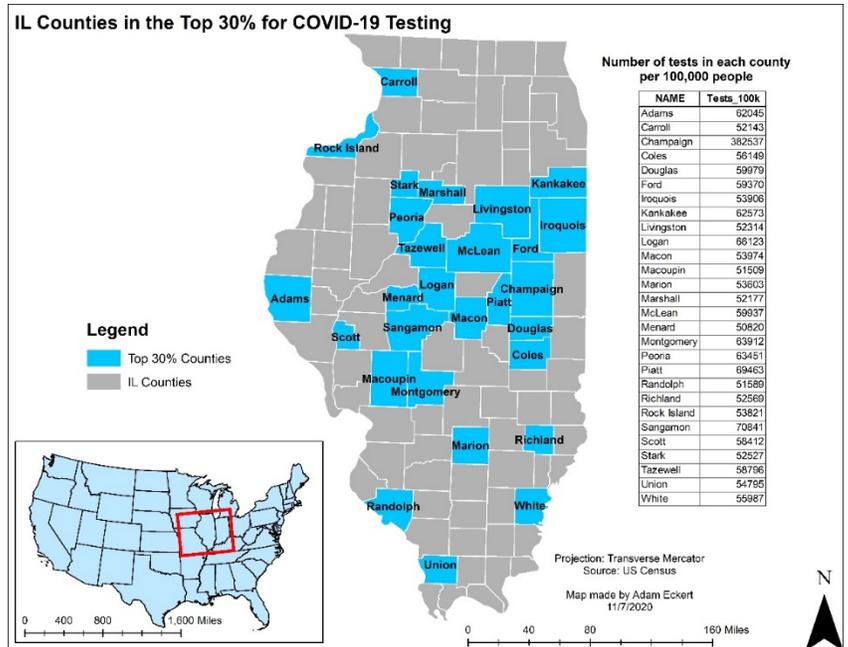


Figure 1 Mapping spatial patterns of COVID-19 in Illinois using ArcGIS Desktop

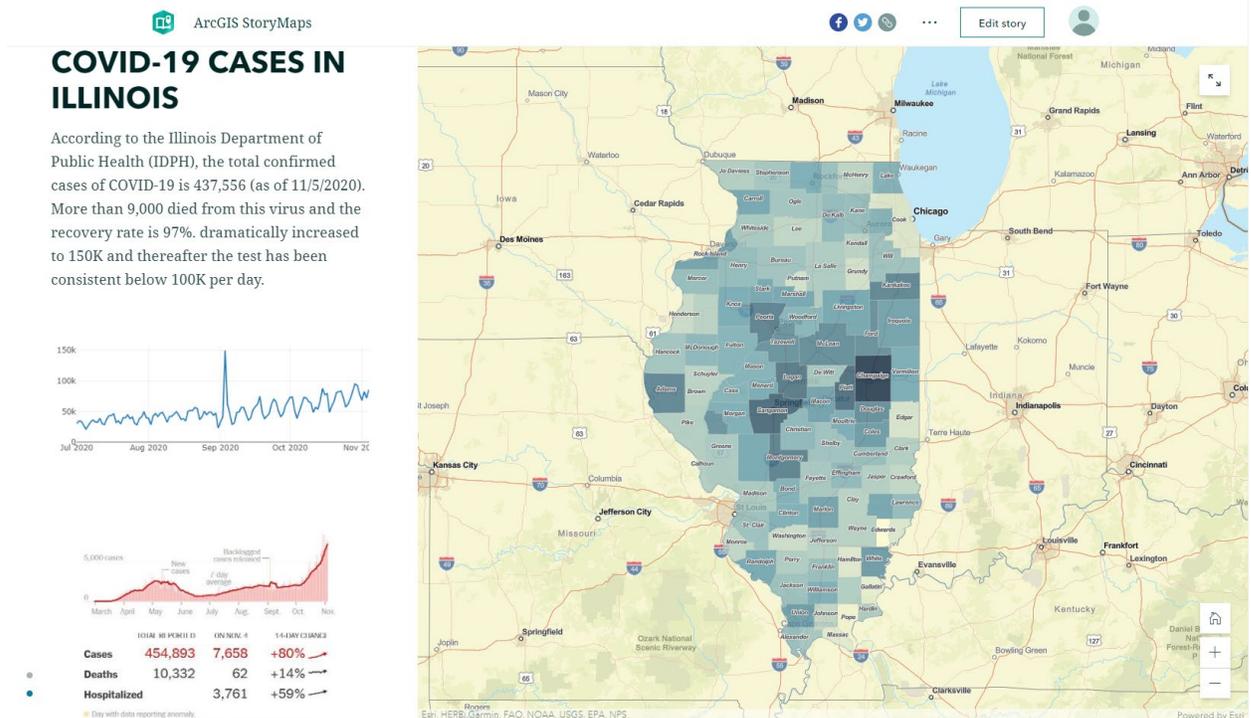


Figure 2 Visualizing and presenting spatial patterns of COVID-19 in Illinois using online ArcGIS StoryMaps

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INTRODUCING NEW ENS GRADUATE ASSISTANT, DAVID BEM

Our new Department of Environmental Studies Graduate Assistant is David Bem. (You can call him Bem.) He comes to UIS from Lagos, Nigeria and is pursuing an MS Environmental Planning and Management. Below, Bem answers a few questions so we can get to know him better.

1. Why did you choose to attend UIS?

UIS offers a unique concentration in [the MS in] Environmental Science, which is Environmental Planning and Management, and this aligns with my academic and research interests. What this UIS program entails has strong relations to tackling problems and providing solutions in a place like where I am from. [The ability to use this knowledge to help my own community] has always been on the forefront of my mind when considering graduate studies. Lagos, where I grew up in, is a business hub as well as an industrial city, but with insufficient attention paid to environmental regulation and wellbeing as a result of the large population and daily influx of businesses into the city. With this in mind, UIS seemed like the best fit for me in terms of the educational and research quality. UIS also places high value on humanitarian and community services . . . these values are important to me.

2. What are you most excited to learn as a Graduate student?

In my giddiness towards graduate studies, the day-to-day application of studies to real life is what excites me the most, as Environmental studies is a very practical educational discipline.

3. What do you like to do for fun?

I like to watch soccer, play soccer, make beats, play the piano and collect old songs to make a playlist.

4. What motivates you?

My biggest motivation lies in the optimism for the future ahead and in the fear of being just average. Constantly having to pep talk myself each day/moment isn't something I prepared for, but the voice in my head says "I have that fear too, but look how far we've come, we keep doing the work." So I won't stop now.

5. What do you want to do after school?

I want to work as Environmental Consultant/Specialist, focusing on the maintenance and sustainability of the growing sector involved in transitioning the energy world into going green. I would also like to create environmental awareness and consciousness through outreach, seminars, and educational events in many parts of the world.

6. What is your favorite food?

I love custard for breakfast and would have Nigerian jollof rice at any time of the day.

Welcome, Bem! We look forward to enjoying environmental science, soccer, and jollof with you.

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NEW INTERSESSION COURSE OFFERING, DR. BRANDON DERMAN

During the new Winter Intersession term between Fall and Spring semesters, nine students from ENS and other programs enrolled in Dr. Derman's Topics in Environmental Studies course "Understanding Struggles for Climate Justice." The course examined the ways in which climate change is increasingly being understood as an issue of intergenerational, racial, and global justice, building on Derman's longstanding research interests, explored in his new book. After examining the uneven impacts of climate change, and some pathbreaking institutional and popular mobilizations for "climate justice" at international, national, and region levels, each student prepared a paper, story map, or TED talk-style presentation analyzing an effort or theme related to climate (in)justice of their own choosing. Among other topics, students examined the legacy of racialized housing segregation in the US, climate impacts facing Midwest farmers, and sea level rise in populated areas around the globe. Stay tuned for future offerings of this course and other ENS intersession options as UIS works to increase credit-earning opportunities between our regular terms!

CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

This spring semester, ENS faculty and staff are working remotely. If you wish to contact someone, please send an email or leave a message when you call the office phone number.

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