SSCI 594z – Master’s Thesis

Units: 594(a+b+z) = 4 units
Term: Spring 2015
Location: Online at http://www.usc.edu/blackboard

Instructor: Karen K. Kemp
Office: Holualoa HI
Office Hours: Mon 12-1pm PT and Wed 3-4pm PT. Please contact me in advance via email to ensure I am online. Also available most other days and times, just send email any time to request an appointment.

Contact Info:
Email: kakemp@usc.edu
Blue Jeans: www.bluejeans.com/8081234567
Skype: kkkemp
Adobe Connect: usccollege.adobeconnect.com/kakemp

IT Help: Richard Tsung.
Hours of Service: Mon.-Fri. 9 am – 5 pm PT
Contact Info: GISTsupport@usc.edu
Course Description

This course’s prerequisites, SSCI 594a and b, are required for the Master of Science degree in Geographic Information Science and Technology (GIST) Program; they are not applicable to the GIST Graduate Certificate program. The purpose of this course is to complete a major project demonstrating ability in the spatial sciences, culminating the student’s experience in the M.S. in GIST Program and validating them as a master practitioner.

Based upon the thesis proposal completed in SSCI 594a and with the approval of the Spatial Sciences Institute faculty, students should undertake SSCI 594b to make substantial progress on their thesis research with the intention of completing their thesis writing and successfully defending their thesis in 594b or the subsequent SSCI 594z semester.

The preparation and defense of your master’s thesis is the culminating experience in the M.S. in GIST Program. Students are expected to work with a high level of self-motivation. Successful students exercise initiative and exhibit strong communication skills in working with their advisors and committee members.

Learning Objectives

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Design and undertake a meaningful research project that demonstrates spatial thinking and use of spatial evidence, using the knowledge and skills of Spatial Science learned while in the GIST Program.
- Describe the research process, research obligations and potential research pitfalls.
- Articulate research or project objectives clearly.
- Situate research within an academic or scholarly context.
- State claims and evidence clearly.
- Assess validity of claims, evidence, outcomes, and results.
- Narrate the research process clearly in the form of a formal multi-chapter master’s thesis manuscript, structured according to the approved M.S. in GIST thesis style.
- Describe your master’s research clearly and succinctly, in written and oral forms, to faculty, mentors, and potential sponsors
- Utilize the Microsoft Office software suite and a bibliographic reference manager competently and efficiently to produce documents that meet M.S. in GIST Program requirements and show your work to advantage.

Course Structure

This course requires individual effort that is overseen by me, your Thesis Advisor. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings will be used to discuss progress and review submitted documents. Once the research and necessary analysis and results compilation are completed, then individual thesis chapters will be reviewed and revised iteratively until we both agree that the document is
ready for submission to the Thesis Committee. If the committee agrees, then a Defense of your thesis will be held. Following successful completion of the Defense, the manuscript is revised a final time and once approved, can be uploaded.

**Technological and Communication Requirements**

Every student must have the following technology requirements:

- A computer with a fast Internet connection.
- A functional webcam and a microphone for use whenever a presentation or meeting is scheduled.
- A current web browser - generally it is a good idea to have more than one installed on your computer as browser requirements are constantly evolving and their ability to work with various applications varies.

**GIST server and tech support** – Unlike other courses in the GIST Program, students in this course will utilize the Spatial Sciences Institute GIST Server, which is a virtual desktop, only for independent thesis work. You can access the GIST Server at: [https://gistonline.usc.edu/](https://gistonline.usc.edu/). If you are unable to connect to the server or experience any type of technical issues, send an email to GIST Tech Support at gistsupport@dornsife.usc.edu and copy (cc) me on the email. GIST Tech Support is available Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm PT. Be sure to be specific in email sent to GIST Support with respect to the problem you are experiencing.

**Presentations (including defenses)** - will usually be held online using Adobe Connect. See my room address above. Adobe Connect is a browser-based service that facilitates synchronous, interactive sessions with voice/video and shared desktop capabilities between two or more people. In our experience, Adobe Connect works best if you have both a phone (mobile or land line) and a computer with a fast Internet connection available during our live meetings.

**Individual meetings** – You will meet with me, your Thesis Advisor, on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule to discuss your deliverables and work plans. These meetings will usually be held using Blue Jeans. In the event that Blue Jeans does not work, then Skype is the backup system. See my meeting address under Contact Info above.

**Required Textbooks**

The main textbooks used in SSCI 594a provide the necessary guidance in 594b as well. These are:


   This book provides a detailed reference to the Chicago 16th edition reference and citation style that must be used to meet the SSI GIST thesis format requirements.

This book provides guidance on the undertaking and design of research in Spatial Science.

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

There are no formal assignments in this course. In consultation with me, your Thesis Advisor, students develop a personal work schedule with specified deliverables. Weekly or bi-weekly individual meetings will be held online to discuss submitted deliverables and revise the work plan if needed.

**Grading Breakdown**

Since there are no assignments, there is no assignment grades in this course. Completion of this course is determined when each member of your Thesis Committee signs the Approval to Upload form. This form is signed after successful completion of the oral defense and acceptance by each committee member of the thesis document.

Upon successful completion of the thesis, the In-Progress (IP) grade received in SSCI 594a and 594b (and 594z if needed) will be converted to Passing (P).

**Course Schedule**

In consultation with me, each student will develop his or her own work schedule for the course. An example of this schedule is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task Completed</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Work schedule</td>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Committee meeting</td>
<td>Slides and presentation</td>
<td>Presentation of research plan to committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Preliminary results</td>
<td>Maps and summary tables</td>
<td>Maps and summary tables of preliminary analysis results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Results chapter draft</td>
<td>Draft of results chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Complete thesis draft</td>
<td>First draft</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Revised thesis draft</td>
<td>Second draft</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Thesis draft</td>
<td>Thesis draft</td>
<td>Deliver thesis draft to committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>Defense slides and presentation</td>
<td>Defense slides and presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Thesis revisions</td>
<td>Final thesis</td>
<td>Approved final version ready for upload</td>
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</table>
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism—presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words—is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Resources for On-line Students

Our course Blackboard site provides links to several different resources that you may need. In particular, you will be making frequent use of the on-line USC Library that is available to all registered students through the link http://www.usc.edu/libraries. Once on this site, you can find additional resources for distance students under the link “Library Services”. Many other resources and links to key people you may need to contact are also listed on the Blackboard site under Other Resources and Contacts.