USCDornsife

Dana and David Dornsife
College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
Spatial Sciences Institute

SSCI 594z (Section 35810), Master's Thesis
Syllabus

Units: 2

Term-Day-Time: Summer, 2015, Online

Location: Online

Instructor: Daniel N. Warshawsky, Ph.D.
Office: AHF B55B
Office Hours: Mondays 9-10 am and Thursdays 1-2 pm
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Course Description

This course and its prerequisites, SSCI 594a and SSCI 594z, 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 these courses is to accomplish a project demonstrating ability (PDA) in the spatial sciences, culminating the student's experience in the M.S. in GIST Program and validating them as a master practitioner.

Students should be undertaking SSCI 594z prepared to complete their thesis writing and successfully defend their thesis.

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

- Distinguish different styles and qualities of writing, critically evaluate your own and others' writing, and write better yourself;
- Understand the research process, be aware of research obligations and pitfalls, and design a credible, meaningful research project for yourself;
- 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;
- Understand the competencies that must be demonstrated in the form of a master's thesis manuscript in the M.S. in GIST Program; and
- Describe your master's PDA succinctly, in written and oral forms, to faculty, mentors, and potential sponsors.

  Prerequisite(s): SSCI 594a and b
  Co-Requisite (s): None
  Concurrent Enrollment: None
  Recommended Preparation: Students must be enrolled in the M.S. in GIST Program, have a thesis advisor and committee members assigned, and have a draft thesis substantially underway.

Course Notes
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.

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

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Every student must satisfy 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 modern web browser, Firefox recommended, to access the GIST Server

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 (e.g., to explore datasets and perform initial analysis). Even then, relative to other courses in the program, work on ArcGIS on the server is not expected to be a major component of activity in this course. You can access the GIST Server at: 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 make sure to copy (cc) me on the email. GIST Tech Support is available Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. PT. Please be sure to be specific with respect the problem you are experiencing as whatever work is required on will be unique to each thesis project.

Live meetings, recorded meetings, & presentations (including defenses) – Adobe Connect is a browser-based service that facilitates synchronous, interactive sessions with voice/video and shared desktop capabilities between two or more people; this is the primary forum for our group discussions and presentations. There are also recorded research presentations from USC SSI and SSI-affiliated faculty available on Adobe Connect. 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 – For one-on-one meetings, we generally find it easier to use Adobe Connect or the telephone

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Students will continue to refer to the textbooks which were required in SSCI 594a:

1. Strunk, W. and E .B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. 4rd. Edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon
2. Turabian K. L, W. C. Booth, G. G. Colomb, and J. M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 8th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

3. Montello, D. R. and P. C. Sutton. 2013. *An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography and Environmental Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Chapter 4	1	20
Chapter 5	1	20
Presentation Slides	1	10
Defense	1	40
Thesis Upload	1	10
TOTAL		**100**

Assignment Submission Policy
Assignments will be submitted for grading via Blackboard using the due dates specified in the Course Schedule below. And finally, it is important to note from the outset that: (1) late postings and assignments will be docked one grade and no grade will be given for postings or assignments turned in more than one week late; and (2) no written work will be accepted for grading after 5:00 p.m. PT on the last day of classes (i.e. 8/11/15).

Additional Policies
Communications – This is a distance learning course, so most of our interactions will be asynchronous (not at the same time). All materials to be handed in will be submitted via Blackboard or via email. Please be sure that you read as soon as possible all email sent from Blackboard or from me. Check now to make sure that mail sent from both the USC Blackboard accounts and my private domain (warshaws@usc.edu) does not go into your junk mail!

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Assumes student has completed Chapters 1 – 3 and has made a successful methods presentation to the full committee in SSCI 594b.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Deliverables/ Due Dates
Week 1 5/18	Complete *Chapter 3: Methods* and send to advisor. Revise the working Chapters 1-3 draft.	Send Chapter 3 to advisor
Week 2 5/25	Send *Chapter 3: Methods* to committee for review (revision from previous semester)	Send Chapters 1-3 to committee

Week 3 6/1	Complete *Chapter 4: Results* and send to advisor. Begin work on *Chapter 5: Conclusion*.	Send Chapter 4 to advisor
Week 4 6/8		
Week 5 6/15	Complete *Chapter 5: Conclusion* and send to advisor. Begin work to revise Chapters 4-5.	Send Chapter 5 to advisor
Week 6 6/22		
Week 7 6/29	Complete Chapters 4-5 revision and send to advisor. Begin work to revise full draft of thesis.	Send Chapters 4-5 revision to advisor
Week 8 7/6	Complete full thesis draft and send to advisor.	Send full draft to advisor
Week 9 7/13	Revise full thesis draft and send to advisor.	Send full draft revision to advisor
Week 10 7/20	Send full draft to full committee and schedule defense date.	Send full draft to full committee and schedule defense date
Week 11 7/27	Prepare presentation slides for defense.	Prepare presentation slides
Week 12 8/3	Conduct defense.	Conduct defense
Week 13 8/10	Complete final revisions and collect signatures on Approval to Submit form.	Complete revisions and upload Approval to Submit form

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 of the 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 http://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.