



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

SSCI 594b – Master's Thesis

Units: 594(a+b+z) = 6 units

Term: Fall 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 insure 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. 10 am – 5 pm PT

Contact Info: GISTsupport@usc.edu

Course Description

This course and its prerequisite, SSCI 594a, 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 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 be undertaking SSCI 594b to make substantial progress on their thesis research with the intention of completing their thesis writing and successfully defending their thesis in this 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/>. 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:

1. Turabian K.L, W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, and J.M. Williams 2013. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations*. 8th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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.

2. Montello, D.R. and P.C. Sutton 2013. *An introduction to scientific research methods in geography and environmental studies*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

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. Yours is likely to vary from this model.

Date	Task Completed	Deliverable	Description
Week 1	Work schedule	Timetable	
Week 2/3	Committee meeting	Slides and presentation	Presentation of research plan to committee
Week 5	Preliminary results	Maps and summary tables	Maps and summary tables of preliminary analysis results
Week 6	Results chapter draft	Draft of results chapter	
Week 8	Complete thesis draft	First draft	
Week 10	Revised thesis draft	Second draft	
Week 13	Defense draft	Defense draft	Deliver thesis draft to committee
Week 14	Defense	Defense slides and presentation	Defense slides and presentation
Week 16	Thesis revisions	Final thesis	Approved final version ready for upload

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/departments/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.