![USC Dornsife logo — Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, Spatial Sciences Institute]

SSCI 594z (Section 35776D), Master's Thesis
Syllabus

Units: 2

Term-Day-Time: Summer, 2016, Online

Location: Online

Instructor: Darren Ruddell, Ph.D.
Office: AHF B57F
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and Wednesdays, 9 – 10 a.m.
Contact Info: druddell@usc.edu**,** 213-740-0521
Bluejeans: https://bluejeans.com/7642488748

GIS Librarian: Katharin Peter
Office: VKC B40a
Office Hours: By appointment
Contact Info: kpeter@usc.edu, 213-740-1700

IT Help: Richard Tsung
Hours of Service: Monday to Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm PT
Contact Info: ctsung@usc.edu, 213-821-4415

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 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 continuing in SSCI 594z are expected to make substantial progress on their thesis research and manuscript with the intention of successfully defending their thesis within the current semester.

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 thesis draft 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.

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 the free VOIP and chat technology, Skype (http://www.skype.com/) or Bluejeans (to set up an account, visit Dornsife.usc.edu/bluejeanshelp) for individual chats.

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 ed. 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 ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; and
3. Montello, D.R. and P.C. Sutton 2013. *An introduction to scientific research methods in geography and environmental studies*.

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 digitally 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 will be converted to Passing (P), and students also will receive a Passing (P) for SSCI 594b.

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 (druddell@usc.edu) does not go into your junk mail.

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* http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/scampus/. 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.