

SSCI 594b or SSCI 594z | Master's Thesis

Units: 3

Term: Fall, 2016, Online

Location: Online at <http://www.usc.edu/blackboard>

Instructor: Jennifer N. Swift

Office: AHF B57D

Office Hours: Tues 10-11 am PT and Thurs 1-2 pm PT via Blue Jeans – please contact me via email in advance to ensure I will be online. Also available most days and times by appointment via email.

Contact Info:

Email: jswift@usc.edu, 213-740-5841 (Los Angeles)

Blue Jeans: www.bluejeans.com/3809089594

Library Help: Katharin Peter

Office: VKC B40A

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: klpeter@usc.edu, 213-740-1700 (office)

IT Help: Richard Tsung

Office: AHF 145D

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: ctsung@usc.edu, 213-821-4415 (office)

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.

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 held to discuss progress and review submitted documents. Once the research and necessary analysis and results compilation are completed, then individual thesis chapters will be written 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 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. (*Required* for remote thesis defenses!)
- 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.

Blackboard – While each student will complete his or her work independently, a course Blackboard site is available to provide guidance about the required administrative processes and manuscript format. Links to necessary timetables, procedures and forms will be found here as well as discussion boards through which you can share ideas and support with other thesis students. During the first week of the semester, you should confirm that you can access the Blackboard site. Please read promptly all communications that are sent through it.

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. 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. 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 Blue Jeans. See my meeting address above.

Individual meetings – You will meet with me, your Thesis Advisor, on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule to discuss your deliverables and progress. These meetings will usually be held using the web conferencing system Blue Jeans. See my meeting address under Contact Info above.

Required Textbooks

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

1. Turabian Kate L, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2013. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 8th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
2. Montello, Daniel R. and Paul C. Sutton 2013. *An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography and Environmental Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

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 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 such a schedule follows. Yours is likely to vary from this model.

Date	Tasks
Week 1	Prepare work schedule Meet with advisor
Week 2	Committee meeting Begin technical work
Weeks 3 to 6	Complete technical work
Weeks 7 to 10	Prepare thesis draft
Weeks 11 to 12	Revise thesis draft
Week 13	Defense
Week 14 to 15	Final revisions
Week 16	Upload final thesis

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://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b/>. 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://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/departement-public-safety>. 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 Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services* <http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/> 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.

Resources for Online Students

The Course Blackboard page and the GIST Community Blackboard page have many resources available for distance students enrolled in our graduate programs. In addition, all registered students can access electronic library resources through the link <https://libraries.usc.edu/>. Also, the USC Libraries have many important resources available for distance students through the link: <https://libraries.usc.edu/faculty-students/distance-learners>. This includes instructional videos, remote access to university resources, and other key contact information for distance students.