

SSCI 594z (35777), Master's Thesis

Syllabus

Units: 2

Term – Day – Time: Spring, 2017, Online

Instructor: Jennifer N. Swift

Office: AHF B57D

Office Hours: Tues 10-11 am PT and Thurs 1-2 pm PT via Blue Jeans. Also available most days and times by appointment via email.

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Blue Jeans: www.bluejeans.com/3809089594

Library Help: Katharin Peter

Office: VKC B40A

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

IT Help: Richard Tsung

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Course Description

SSCI 594z is undertaken if a student does not complete all thesis requirements within the first two semesters of SSCI 594ab. The purpose of these courses is to complete a capstone project in the spatial sciences, culminating students' experience in the M.S. in GIST Program and validating them as master practitioners.

Students taking SSCI 594z are expected to make substantial progress on their thesis research and manuscript with the intension of successfully defending their thesis within this current semester.

Learning Objectives

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

- Design and execute a meaningful research project that demonstrates spatial thinking and uses the knowledge and skills learned while in the GIST Program.
- Undertake the research process and be aware of research obligations and 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Course Structure

This course requires individual effort that is overseen by the course instructor, 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.

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) grade for SSCI 594b.

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.

SSI server and tech support – Unlike other courses in the GIST Program, students in this course will utilize the Spatial Sciences Institute Server 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 SSI Tech Support at spatial_support@dornsife.usc.edu and copy (cc) me on the email. Be sure to be specific in email sent to SSI Support with respect to the problem you are experiencing.

Meetings and presentations (including defenses) – Blue Jeans 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 individual meetings and presentations. To use Blue Jeans, you'll need a web cam on a computer with a fast internet connection. It is useful also to have a phone (mobile or landline) on hand in case there are issues with the web cam audio.

Communications – This is a distance learning course, so many 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 directly from my usc.edu account does not go into your junk mail!

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.

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, Daniel R. and Paul C. Sutton 2013. *An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography and Environmental Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

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 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.

Course Schedule

In consultation with me, your thesis advisor, each student will develop his or her own work schedule with the aim to defend the thesis no later than Week 13, complete manuscript revisions by Week 15 and upload the final version during Week 16.

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/departments/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 SSI 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.