

**SSCI 601a, Population, Health & Place Research  
Practicum**

**Units:** 2

**Term — Day — Time:** Summer 2019 (Session 050) –  
Tuesdays and Thursdays – 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**Location:** KAP 150

**Instructor:** Robert O. Vos, Ph.D.

**Office:** AHF B57B

**Regular Office Hours:** Thursdays 9 a.m.-10 a.m. PT  
Also available by appointment via email.

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## Course Description

The overarching goal of this course is to support Ph.D. students in Population, Health and Place (PHP) as you develop the skills to conduct interdisciplinary research. The Research Practicum, which is taken over consecutive summers (i.e., SSCI 601a followed in the next summer by SSCI 601b), targets the development of research skills by: (1) providing research experience through participation in one or more supervised research projects prior to the dissertation; (2) involving students in conducting research early in their doctoral studies; (3) increasing the students' research skills; and (4) developing skills in communicating with an interdisciplinary audience – in writing journal articles, conference papers, extended abstracts, thesis proposals, grant proposals, and speaking at professional meetings.

## Learning Objectives

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

- Integrate population science, public health, and spatial science theory and practice into research design.
- Assess complex population science, public health, and geospatial data for fitness in research designs.
- Discuss how methodologies are integrated in at least two research designs that straddle the intersection of population, health, and place.
- Formulate and execute a collaborative research project at the intersection of population science, public health, and the spatial sciences.
- Formulate a review article at the intersection of population, health, and place that may serve as a key element of the dissertation proposal.

On completion of the successor to this course, SSCI 601b, students will be able to:

- Write a publishable quality manuscript (i.e. a journal article or a substantial refereed conference paper) on research findings that includes stating a problem and research question, identifying relevant literature, detailing a methodology, reporting results, and reaching conclusions.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-Requisite (s):** None

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None

**Recommended Preparation:** Students must be enrolled in the USC PHP PhD program

## Course Notes

This course is intended to help students along their research trajectories, not to impose arbitrary hurdles or busy work. Therefore, relative to other courses in the PHP program, there will be a limited set of required readings and related assignments. Instead, the course will be devoted to three major goals: a collaborative research projects, an individual review article, and a learning

contract leading to your dissertation qualifying proposal. The course meets for the first 7 weeks of the summer and the collaborative research projects will be completed in this time. However, as fellowship support extends throughout the summer, the review article will be due at the end of the summer term. The learning contract will include goals and activities extending slightly longer than one year.

To produce the collaborative research projects, we will work together with PHP PhD students from SSCI 601b, and possibly with summer undergraduate research assistants. At meeting of the first class, you will hear pitches for collaborative projects. You will have a vote on which the class will focus on. You are not required to pitch a collaborative project, but you may elect to do so. Some of this collaborative project will be accomplished during class, especially at times in shared afternoon sessions with SSCI 601b with the instructor acting as a “guide” and sounding board, and much of the effort will be accomplished outside of class both individually and in collaboration with classmates.

The second goal is to produce a review article according to your own research interests. It is likely that this article will synthesize and develop existing research designs and methods in population, health, and place to create a new, interdisciplinary frame to solve an important public health problem. To facilitate this, we will discuss your research interests, look at relevant examples of review articles, and develop a learning contract that will guide your work through the summer and into the next academic year. The article will likely become a key part of your dissertation qualifying proposal and eventually be revised to be included in your dissertation manuscript. Moreover, I aim to have you submit it for publication to a carefully targeted journal during the next academic year.

In writing the individual learning contract, students should declare activities and goals for the entire upcoming academic year that spans SSCI 601a and 601b with milestones for each semester. The major milestone for SSCI 601a is the review article. The milestones for SSCI 601b should include a research article and a dissertation qualifying proposal. The qualifying proposal will incorporate the review article as well as proposed methods for a series of discrete research projects that will form the chapters of the dissertation. The research article produced at the end of SSCI 601b will function as a pilot for one of these chapters.

Substantial time will be devoted to assisting students with formulation of the review article and the learning contract. The expectation is that achieving this research goal will help you move forward towards your PHP Ph.D. degree. In general, this course will give you the opportunity to talk about your research with other scientists and among yourselves, to help clarify the specific hypotheses or research questions you want to explore and the methodology you will use to pursue your goals.

This class can only work as intended if research goals are rapidly developed. By the end of Week 3, the collaborative projects and related individual tasks will be clearly delineated. By the end of Week 5, your individual learning contract for the review article must be submitted for approval.

## Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

The modeling software and geospatial data required for research projects will be accessed using computing resources provided by the Spatial Sciences Institute.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The following three textbooks are required for this class; these are available from online outlets such as Amazon. Please purchase these immediately because reading assignments from these are required starting in Week 2 of the course:

1. Guest, Greg and Emily E. Namey. 2015. *Public health research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (~\$100 hard cover, ISBN: 978-1-4522-4133-3 and ~\$50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-4833-1142-5)
2. Montello, Daniel. R., and Paul C. Sutton. 2013. *An introduction to scientific research methods in geography and environmental studies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. (~\$39 paper; ISBN-10: 1412902878)
3. Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory.G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2018. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (~\$10 paper; ISBN-13: 978-0-226-430577)

In subsequent weeks, article and book chapters will be used as indicated on the course schedule and will be made available on Blackboard under the Readings tab.

On the Course Schedule, each reading is labeled in one of three categories with expectations as described below:

- **All** – All students will read in detail and be prepared to engage in a discussion led by the instructor or a guest scholar.
- **Assigned** – One student will be assigned to read and present this reading in detail with the expectation that other students will have familiarity suitable for a general discussion during seminar.
- **Optional** – One student may choose to read and present this reading in detail if it suits his or her interests and needs.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students must achieve the three major goals of the course, stay abreast of course readings, and participate in class discussion on a regular basis.

**Class Participation – 4 pts.** A class participation grade for the semester will be assigned based upon how actively students engage in the course, with the instructor, with guest scholars, and with fellow students.

**Lead Discussion of Readings – 21 pts.** Students will read, present, and raise questions for discussion of selected assigned or optional weekly readings. For these readings, students will provide a brief written outline for classmates to follow during their presentation. Specific assignments will be determined at the first meeting of the class. When leading discussions of seminar readings, students should strive to address the following aspects of the reading:

1. **Central theme** – Organize your presentation in terms of central themes or main points in the readings you are covering. Please relate the reading to methodological themes in the course and describe how ideas in the reading have been applied in other research you have read at the intersection of population, health, and place.
2. **Interdisciplinary connections** – Think of the central themes in terms of how they inform the intersection of the population, health, and place disciplines. If the method being described comes primarily from geography, sociology, or public health explain how it might be used in coordination with the other disciplines.
3. **Critical Evaluation** – Carefully assess the ideas in the reading and think about how the reading might or might not apply to research tasks at hand for yourself or others in the course. Describe how it does or does not inform your own research.
4. **Questions** – Raise questions for discussion and ideas needing clarification.

**Model Review Article Evaluation - 10 pts.** Students will choose a review article from a journal (or closely analogous journal) to the one they are targeting for eventual publication of their own article. Students will evaluate this article by “reverse engineering” its outline and comparing it against the style guide and stated standards of the journal in which it appeared.

**First Collaborative Project Presentation – 5 pts.** As a team, students will present the results of a rapid yet deep survey of the literature for the collaborative project topic. The presentation will conclude with a carefully formulated research question or problem statement. The form of the final written deliverable will be discussed and agreed to at this class meeting or shortly thereafter.

**Second Collaborative Project Presentation – 10 pts.** As a team, students will present on data and methods that will be brought to bear to answer the research question or achieve the project objectives.

**Final Collaborative Project Presentation – 10 pts.** As a team, students will deliver a slide presentation on the overall project the conclusion of the semester.

**Collaborative Project Written Deliverable – 15 pts.** Students will produce a written deliverable in the form and format agreed to in the first week of the course. The form of the final written deliverable for the collaborative project will be appropriately matched to the nature of the topic

selected (e.g., a manuscript submission to a journal, a professional report delivered to a public health agency).

***Draft Learning Contract – 5 pts.*** To create a firm basis for further discussion, students will individually author a short briefing paper that expresses the topic for their review article and how they hope to use it to support their dissertation research, i.e., how it relates to potential dissertation topic(s).

***Revised Learning Contract – 10 pts.*** To create a foundation for writing the review article throughout the summer, students will provide a revised description of the purpose and scope of the article and an abbreviated annotated bibliography of a minimum set of initial sources. Students will also specify goals and anticipated work through the next academic year, leading to the dissertation proposal.

***Review Article Preliminary Presentation – 10 pts.*** Students will give a short slide presentation outlining their thoughts about specific sources and suggesting main claims they will make in their review article positing the value of some new intersection of the population, health, and place domain or extension of an existing body of work already at the disciplinary intersection.

***Review Article Written Draft – 0 pts.*** Students will provide a written draft of the review article in the style and length of the identified target journal. Because this assignment is due at the end of the general Spatial Sciences Institute summer term, rather than the end of the course, it is ungraded. However, it is key for students to present this to ensure timely progress toward the qualifying proposal and ultimately toward completion of the dissertation itself.

## Grading Breakdown

The following table summarizes the SSCI 601a course assignments and their point distribution:

Assessment	Number	Points Each	Total Points
General Assignments			
Class Participation	1	4	4
Lead Discussion of Readings	3	7	21
Model Review Article Evaluation	1	10	10
Collaborative Research Project Components			
1 <sup>st</sup> Collaborative Project Presentation	1	5	5
2 <sup>nd</sup> Collaborative Project Presentation	1	10	10
Final Collaborative Project Presentation	1	10	10
Collaborative Project Written Report	1	15	15
Review Article/Learning Contract			
Draft Learning Contract	1	5	5
Revised Learning Contract	1	10	10
Review Article Preliminary Presentations	1	10	10
Review Article Written Draft	1	N/A	N/A
Total			
	16	-	100 points

## Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be submitted for grading via Blackboard using the dates specified in the Course Schedule below.

## Additional Policies

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class session and to complete and upload all assignments before the deadlines detailed in the Course Schedule. Late work will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day and zero grades will be assigned for work that is more than one week late.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> 5/16	<b>Introduction:</b> Introduction to the course, including pitches for the collaborative research projects.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 6 (All)	
<b>Week 1*</b> 5/16 *Join with SSCI 601b from 1-3 p.m. at WPH 400	<b>Team Formation:</b> Form teams following the selection of the collaborative projects and conduct initial working meeting.		
<b>Week 2</b> 5/21	<b>Research Design:</b> Overview of principles and major types of research design in research on population, health and place.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 1-2 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), pages 723-746 (All) Montello & Sutton (2013), Ch. 1-3 & 8 (All) Turabian et al. (2013), Ch. 1-2 & 5 (All)	
<b>Week 2</b> 5/23	<b>Population Science:</b> A discussion of methods and data sources that population scientists typically deploy to examine one or more aspects of human well-being built around a presentation and class discussion with a guest from USC Sociology.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 9 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 14 (Optional)  Reading from USC Sociology Guest TBD/TBA.	Draft Learning Contract
<b>Week 3</b> 5/28	<b>Data Use and Collection:</b> A discussion of different types of data, as well as sampling and means of collecting and using data for research in population, health, and place. Identification of data for collaborative projects.	Montello & Sutton (2013), Ch. 9 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 17 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 12-13 (Assigned) Montello & Sutton (2013), Ch. 4-7 (Assigned)	
<b>Week 3</b> 5/30	<b>Spatial Sciences Research:</b> A discussion of existing social and physical spatial data and spatial methods for deriving health data, and how these may be used in conjunction with health studies with guest speaker in professional PHP practice.	SSI Core Geospatial Datasets (All)  Miller, H. and M. Goodchild. 2015. Data-driven geography. <i>GeoJournal</i> 80: 449-461. (All)  Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 5 (Assigned) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 20 (Optional) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 21 (Optional)  Reading from PHP professional TBD/TBA.	



	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
<b>Week 3</b> 5/30* *Join with SSCI 601b from 1-3 p.m. at WPH 400	<b>Research Team Meeting and Presentations:</b> Deliver first collaborative project presentations.		First Collaborative Project Presentation
<b>Week 4</b> 6/4	<b>USC's Global Health Research:</b> A an overview of links between policy, human rights law, and health with guest from the USC Institute on Inequalities in Global Health.	Reading from USC Institute on Global Health faculty TBD/TBA.	
<b>Week 4</b> 6/6	<b>Health Research:</b> A discussion of methods and data sources that public health researchers typically employ with a guest from USC Preventive Medicine.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 7 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 18 (All) Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 8 (Optional)  Gauderman, W.J. et al. 2015. Association of improved air quality with lung development in children. <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> 372(10): 905-913. (All)  Reading from USC Preventive Medicine guest TBD/TBA.	
<b>Week 5</b> 6/11	<b>Literature Review:</b> A discussion of the centrality and importance of the literature review in shaping research projects and as elements within manuscripts. Discussion of initial sources and approaches for individual review articles.	Turabian et al. (2013), Ch. 3-4 (All)  Boote, D. and P. Beile. 2005. Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. <i>Educational Researcher</i> 34(6): 3-15. (All)  Hart, C. 1998. <i>Doing a literature review: releasing the social science imagination</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Ch. 1-4. (Two Assigned Presentations)  PRISMA Checklist ( <a href="http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/Checklist">http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/Checklist</a> ) (Optional)	

	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
<b>Week 5</b> 6/13	<b>Mixed Methods:</b> Overview of qualitative methods in sociology, public health, and geography and the application of such methods in mixed methods research.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 15 & 19 (All)  Putnam, R. (2000). <i>Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community</i> . New York, NY: Simon and Schuster. Ch. 1 & Appendix 1. (Assigned)  Pulido, L., S. Sidawi, and R.O. Vos 1996. An Archaeology of Environmental Racism in Los Angeles. <i>Urban Geography</i> 17: 419-439. (Assigned)	Model Review Article Evaluation
<b>Week 5</b> 6/13* *Join with SSCI 601b from 1-3 p.m. at WPH 400	<b>Research Team Meeting and Presentations:</b> Deliver second collaborative project presentations		Second Collaborative Project Presentation
<b>Week 6</b> 6/18	<b>Community-Based Research:</b> A discussion of the value and ways in which scholars promote co-learning among researchers, public health professionals, and communities.	Guest & Namey (2015), Ch. 4 (Assigned)  Balazs, C.L. and R. Morello-Frosch. 2013. The three R's: How community based participatory research strengthens the rigor, relevance, and reach of science. <i>Environmental Justice</i> 6(1): 1-11. (Assigned)	
<b>Week 6</b> 6/20	<b>Building and Maintaining Scientific Reputation:</b> A discussion of the ways in which scholars can build and sustain a stellar scientific reputation in an interdisciplinary context, including writing and presentation styles.	Turabian et al. (2013) Ch. 13-14 (All) Montello & Sutton (2013) Ch. 11 (All)  Bourne, P. E. and V. Barbour. 2011. Ten simple rules for building and maintaining a scientific reputation. <i>PLoS Computational Biology</i> 7(6): e1002108 (All)  Dogan, M. and R. Pahre. 1990. <i>Creative marginality: innovation at the intersection of the social sciences</i> San Francisco, CA: Westview Press. Introduction, Ch. 1,7, and 9-10. (Two Assigned Presentations)	

	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
<b>Week 7</b> 6/25	<b>Research Ethics:</b> A discussion exploring the ethical aspects of research designs, subject recruitment, and data collection, as well as the various ways in which institutions are required to safeguard privacy, confidentiality and related outcomes. Also, deliver preliminary article review presentations.	Guest and Namey (2015), Ch. 3 (Assigned) Montello & Sutton (2013), Ch. 14 (Assigned)  <b>USC Health Sciences Review Board (HSIRB)</b> , <a href="https://oprs.usc.edu/hsirb/">https://oprs.usc.edu/hsirb/</a>  <b>USC University Park Institutional Review Board (UPIRB)</b> , <a href="https://oprs.usc.edu/upirb/">https://oprs.usc.edu/upirb/</a>	Revised Learning Contract  Review Article Preliminary Presentations (at class)
<b>Week 7</b> 6/25 *Meet from 1-3 p.m. to join SSCI 601b at WPH 400	<b>Research Team Meeting and Presentations:</b> Deliver final collaborative project presentations.	Collaborative Project Presentations (All)	Collaborative Project Written Report
<b>End of Summer Term for SSI</b> 8/9	<b>Review Article Feedback:</b> You will receive feedback from the instructor and designated USC PHP faculty at the beginning of the Fall 2019 term.	Submit review article via email no later than 5 p.m. on 8/9/19.	Review Article

## 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/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>.

### *Support Systems*

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.  
<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://titleix.usc.edu/reporting-options/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC –*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)