

SSCI 581 (35691), Concepts for Spatial Thinking

Syllabus

Units: 4

Term — Day — Time: Fall 2020; Tues. and Thurs.
9-10:50 a.m. PT

This class will be offered in a hybrid format. Lectures will be offered in person and streamed for remote access for maximum options and accessibility.

Location: TBD

Instructor: Elisabeth Sedano, JD, PhD

Contact Info: sedano@usc.edu

Office: (See course Blackboard for office links)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. PT

Please contact Instructor via email in advance of attending office hours. Instructor is also available by appointment.

Library Help: Andy Rutkowski

Office: VKC 36B

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10 a.m.-12 p.m. PT and Thursdays
4:30-5:30 p.m. PT

Contact Info: arutkows@usc.edu, 213-740-6390,
<http://bit.ly/andyhangout>

IT Help: Richard Tsung

Office: AHF 146

Office Hours: By appointment

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

Course Scope and Purpose

SSCI 581: *Concepts for Spatial Thinking*, is an introduction to geographic information science and spatial reasoning. Spatial is an enabling discipline. Thus, the course domain is inherently comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and collaborative, pertinent to problem solving in a wide range of academic and professional fields.

The course is designed to serve many audiences within the Spatial Sciences Institute and across the USC campus. It is the foundational spatial science course for five distance-learning programs¹ and three residential programs². To serve a range of academic objectives, students are provided with a variety of options in course topics and assignments so they can align with their own academic and professional goals.

The course is also designed for any student who wishes to improve their GIS skills and understand the concepts underlying GIS analysis. Students will leave the course understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the field of spatial science.

Fundamentals of GIS – The course provides a core foundation in the evolving field of geographic information science. The course explores geographic information science and its applicability to a variety of fields, such as transportation, human security, geospatial intelligence, spatial data science, public health, economics, land use planning, geodesign, environmental science and management, spatial science, archaeology, and the humanities.

The ArcGIS Ecosystem – Esri's ArcGIS is powerful, industry-standard software that can be used to analyze spatial questions and visualize the outcomes. All students in this course learn how to independently use ArcGIS to solve real-world spatial questions.

Spatial Data – The ability to understand and analyze data sets is an essential component of spatial thinking, reasoning, and application. Students will investigate fundamental geospatial datasets such as the U.S. Census and attain the knowledge and skills necessary for processing, interpreting, and analyzing GIS data. Students will also learn how to find, clean, and merge data sets and vet them for quality.

Spatial Thinking – Location is critically important in contemporary society and a spatial perspective can be applied to nearly every topic area. The course will use readings, discussions, and a variety of case studies to demonstrate the importance of spatial thinking in describing, analyzing, modeling, and visualizing the world, and how one can cultivate the habit of thinking spatially.

Geodesy – Geodesy is the branch of science concerned with the size and shape of the Earth and determining precise locations on its surface. This includes geodetic datums, geoids, coordinate systems, and map projections. Understanding what geodesy is and how it underlies the

¹The M.S. in Geographic Information Science & Technology (GIST), the M.S. in Human Security and Geospatial Intelligence, the GIST and Geospatial Intelligence Graduate Certificates, and the GeoHealth track in the Keck School of Medicine's Master of Public Health program

²The M.S. in Spatial Data Science, the M.S. in Spatial Economics and Data Analysis, and the M.S. in Transportation Systems Management

successful deployment and use of spatial technologies separates a novice GIS practitioner with one who is more advanced.

Maps – Maps communicate the findings of spatial analysis, and have been employed throughout history to make sense of geographic concepts. The course will review past, present, and future map use, and explore how maps depict and transmit geographic knowledge in the digital age. Students will gain expertise in designing clear, communicative maps that meet professional standards.

At the graduate level, students are responsible for their own learning. The instructor's role is as a guide on the path of academic exploration, and students will be rewarded through active engagement with both the material and with their fellow classmates. The challenge for the instructor is to provide a robust, challenging, and stimulating academic experience within the broader milieu of the digital era.

All course materials will be organized through the Blackboard Course Management System. Core theoretical concepts will be presented via lectures, videos, and assigned readings. Written assignments will give students the opportunity to analyze and apply the concepts and theories learned from the readings. Projects will primarily use Esri's ArcGIS Pro.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Summarize, interpret, and utilize fundamental spatial concepts such as orientation, projections and transformations, interpolation, dispersion, and pattern.
- Examine how maps have been used throughout history to organize and empower different groups of people and anticipate the evolution of maps in the future.
- Illustrate the role and importance of geodetic datums, geoids, coordinate systems, and map projections for identifying the position and the location of places, people, and features on the Earth's surface when conducting spatial analysis.
- Describe the spatial analysis, modeling, and visualization tools included in geographic information systems and how geospatial technologies can advance knowledge creation and communication across a variety of academic disciplines and professional fields.
- Examine, analyze, and manipulate core geospatial datasets from a wide range of fields to answer original questions for real-world decision support.
- Apply appropriate academic protocol with respect to research and writing.
- Apply spatial thinking and cartographic principles in the mapping and visualization of spatial data.

Students may vary in their competency levels on these abilities. You can expect to acquire these abilities only if you honor all course policies, attend classes regularly, complete all assigned work in good faith and on time, and meet all other course expectations of you as a student.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite(s): None

Recommended Preparation: None

Harassment, sexual misconduct, interpersonal violence, and stalking are not tolerated by the university. All faculty and most staff are considered Responsible Employees by the university and must forward all information they receive about these types of situations to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for assisting students with supportive accommodations, including academic accommodations, as well as investigating these incidents if the reporting student wants an investigation. The Title IX office is also responsible for coordinating supportive measures for transgender and nonbinary students such as faculty notifications, and more. If you need supportive accommodations you may contact the Title IX Coordinator directly (titleix@usc.edu or 213-821-8298) without sharing any personal information with me. If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) provides 24/7 confidential support for students (213-740-9355 (WELL); press 0 after hours).

Technological and Communication Requirements

ArcGIS Pro is provided online via the SSI Server; hence, students not need to install it on their own computer. Instead, 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
- An up-to-date-web browser to access the SSI server

If a student does not have access to any of these, please speak with the instructor at the start of the semester.

SSI Server and Tech Support – This course utilizes the SSI Server, which is a virtual desktop that allows access to different types of professional software. If students are unable to connect to the server or experience technical issues, they should send an email (via their USC account) to SSI Tech Support at spatial_support@usc.edu, making sure to copy (cc) the instructors on the email.

Communications – All materials will be provided via Blackboard. This allows you to engage in reading and class preparation assignments both ahead of synchronous sessions or asynchronously. All assignments will be submitted via Blackboard. In addition to email about time-sensitive topics, announcements will be posted on the Blackboard Announcement page. It is each student's responsibility to stay informed as to course activities and updates. All students are in charge of ensuring that email sent from the USC Blackboard account is not directed to junk mail.

The instructors are regularly online and will respond to student emails quickly. The instructors will endeavor to respond to email within 24 hours of receipt, aiming for no more than a 72-hour delay. An announcement will be posted in the rare instance when an instructor is offline for 72 hours or more.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The required textbooks for this course are:

- Bolstad, Paul. 2016. *GIS Fundamentals: A First Text on Geographic Information Systems*. 6th ed. Acton, MA: XanEdu. This text is available as a hardbound copy or e-book for purchase at: www.xanedu.com.
- Law, Michael, and Amy Collins. 2019. *Getting to Know ArcGIS Pro*. 2nd ed. Redlands, CA: Esri Press.

Supplementary readings will be assigned from various sources including but not limited to:

- Biehl, A., Ermagun, A. and Stathopoulos, A., 2018. Community mobility MAUP-ing: A socio-spatial investigation of bikeshare demand in Chicago. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 66, 80-90.
- Robertson, C. and Feick, R. 2018. Inference and analysis across spatial supports in the big data era: Uncertain point observations and geographic contexts. *Transactions in GIS*, 22(2), 455-476.
- Schuurman, N. 2004. *GIS: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, Chapter 1.
- Warf, B. and Sui, D. 2010. From GIS to neogeography: Ontological implications and theories of truth, *Annals of GIS*, 16(4), 197-209.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

There are different types of assignments, which are described in detail within each Module folder on Blackboard. You will note that the Modules are partitioned into multi-week units, each of which has a specific theme. Each theme includes readings, discussions, and a project that applies geospatial technologies to a specified real-world problem.

Resume Assignments – 2 worth a total of 5 points. All students are required to post and maintain a public resume, biography, and headshot on the SSI Student Community Blackboard site. Unless a student opts out, their resume will be included in the Spatial Sciences Institute Graduate Programs Resume Book, which is used to promote the program and highlight student skills, experiences, and professional aspirations. An updated resume will be submitted at the end of the course of study.

Projects – 5 worth a total of 45 points. The projects will be the major tool used to evaluate your learning in this course. The projects will be linked to course Modules. In support of these projects, students will complete some ArcGIS tutorials so that they are familiarized with the analytical capabilities of ArcGIS Pro and apply their proficiencies to problem-solving scenarios. Students will gain GIS skills from completing portions of the Law and Collins' *Getting to Know ArcGIS Pro* workbook and Esri web courses. In this, they will solve basic research questions, while reading, thinking, and writing about GIS projects.

Reading and Research Discussions – 5 worth a total of 20 points. These assignments call on students to critically analyze required readings, identify relevant case studies employing the

methodologies and concepts we cover in class, and to discuss them with the instructor and their classmates during synchronous meetings and/or online discussion forums via Blackboard. Critical thinking questions provide students an opportunity to apply their competencies to exploratory, open-ended scenarios and support spatial thinking problem solving.

Mid-Term Exam – 1 worth of a total of 10 points. The mid-term will cover material learned in the first half of the term. It may be mixed format and may consist of multiple choice, short answer, and simple problem questions.

Final Exam – 1 worth of a total of 20 points. The final exam will cover material learned over the duration of the term. It may be mixed format and may consist of multiple choice, short answer, and simple problem questions.

Grading Breakdown

Careful planning and a serious, consistent commitment will be required for students to successfully navigate the deliverables in this and other SSCI courses. The table below summarizes the SSCI 581 course assignments and their point distribution:

Assessment	Number	Points Each	Total Points
Resume Assignment 1	1	2	2
Project 1	1	5	5
Projects 2-5	4	10	40
Reading and Research Discussions	5	4	20
Resume Assignment 2	1	3	3
Mid-Term	1	10	10
Final	1	20	20
Total	14	-	100

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by the due dates specified in the Course Schedule. Attention to on-time assignment submission is essential. The instructors will aim to return feedback before the next assignment is due.

Strict penalties apply for late assignments as follows:

- All assignments will be penalized 2 points up to four days late. No points will be given for submissions more than four days late. Note that all assignments worth 2 points will receive 0 points if submitted late.
- Additionally, no written work will be accepted for grading after 5 p.m. PT on the last day of classes.

Workload – This is a four-credit, one semester course. Students should expect to spend 10-15 hours per week completing the work in this course.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
Module 1: Introduction to Spatial Thinking			
Week 1 8/25	Introduction to Course and GIS Introduction to class and use of geographic information systems	Reading and Research Discussion (RRD) 1 Resume Assignment 1 Project 1	
8/27	Fundamental Concepts The important keywords and ideas that underlie spatial reasoning		
Week 2 9/1	Spatial Data Models An introduction to vector, raster and other data models plus data and file structures		Resume Assignment 1 – Monday, 8/31
9/3	What’s Special About Spatial? The differences between spatial and non-spatial information, including spatial autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity		
Week 3* 9/8 *9/7 is a university holiday	The Power of Maps and Critical GIS The roles that maps have played throughout human history and the characteristics and uses of maps today		
Module 2: The Spatial Value Proposition			
9/10	Environmental and Data and the NWM An introduction to key environmental data sets and their use in the National Water Model (NWM)		

Week	Topic	Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
Week 4 9/15	Transportation The spatial data used to support mobility, logistics, access, and related applications	RRD2	RRD 1 (synchronously, in class; asynchronously, before and after class session)
9/17	Land Use and Population The spatial information used to support urban planning and social, governmental, and related applications		
Module 3: Spatial Data Handling			
Week 5 9/22	Geodesy, Datums, and Geographic Coordinate Systems Role of geodesy and datums in studying and communicating our three-dimensional world	Project 2	Project 1 – Monday, 9/21
9/24	Map Projections and Projected Coordinate Systems An introduction to the effects of project the three-dimensional world to a plane and benefits of doing so		
Week 6 9/29	Aerial and Satellite Imagery Introduction to passive and active remote sensing systems and the data they produce	RRD3	
10/1	Global Navigation Satellite Systems Introduction to geolocation systems and uses		
Week 7 10/6	Attribute Tables and Spatial Databases The importance of attribute information associated with coordinates and options for storing spatial data	Project 3	Project 2 – Monday, 10/5 RRD 2 (synchronously, in class; asynchronously, before and after class session)
10/8	Spatial Data Quality and Metadata Methods for assessing the quality and utility of spatial data and the importance of metadata		
Week 8 10/13	Volunteered and Crowdsourced Geographic Information Introduction to methods for collecting spatial data from non-professionals and the benefits and drawbacks of doing so		Mid-Term Exam (asynchronous) RRD 3 (synchronously, in class; asynchronously, before and after class session)

Week	Topic	Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
Module 4: Turning Spatial Data into Actionable Information			
10/15	Cartography Best practices for creating finished mapping products	RRD4	
Week 9 10/20	Modern Mapmaking Cartographic principles and methods for visualizing spatial data online	Project 4	Project 3 – Monday 10/19
10/22	Introduction to Spatial Analysis Basic methods for using GIS to mathematically analyze spatial data		
Week 10 10/27	Raster and Terrain Analysis Map algebra and raster functions. Land surface parameters and their uses		
10/29	Geospatial Intelligence Incorporation of location-based analytics, terrain, and other data to implement actionable intelligence in support of human security		
Week 11 11/3	Spatial Estimation and Interpolation Introduction to sampling and spatial interpolation methods	RRD5 Project 5	Project 4 – Monday, 11/16 RRD 4 (synchronously, in class; asynchronously, before and after class session)
11/5	Introduction to Spatial Modeling Introduction to the variety of models that are used to understand and predict spatial phenomena		
Week 12 11/10	Modeling with Machine Learning Introduction to workflows and platforms for modeling spatial phenomena with machine learning		
11/12	GIS Customization and Cloud Services Introduction to GIS in the cloud and to programming languages and platforms for modeling and automating spatial processes		
Module 5: Future of GI Science, Systems and Services			

Week	Topic	Assignments	Deliverables/Due Dates
Week 13 11/17	Looking Forward for GIS The changing character and impact of GI science, systems, and services.	Resume Assignment 2	RRD5 (synchronously, in class; asynchronously, before and after class session)
11/19	Looking Forward for Students Opportunities to acquire additional spatial skills		
Week 14* 11/24 *11/25-11/27 is a university holiday	Final Exam Review Class wrap-up and review for final exam		Project 5 – Tuesday, 11/24 Resume Assignment 2 – Tuesday, 11/24
Finals Period 12/2-12/9	Asynchronous Final Exam – Date TBD		

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” 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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.