



SSCI 594a Master's Thesis

Syllabus

Units: 4

Term Day Time: Summer 2025, Tu. 11:00am-12:50pm

Location: AHF 145D and DEN@Dornsife

Instructor: Katherine Lester, PhD

Office: AHF B55A

Regular Office Hours: Tu. 2-4:00pm Also available by appointment via email.

Contact Info: lesterk@usc.edu, 213-740-5612

Library Help: Andy Rutkowski

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Office Hours: By appointment via email

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Course Description

This course and its successor, SSCI 594b, are required for the Master of Science in Geographic Information Science and Technology (GIST) Program; they are not applicable to the GIST Graduate Certificate program or any other SSI programs. The purpose of these courses is to accomplish a capstone project in the Spatial Sciences, culminating students' experiences at USC/SSI and validating them as master practitioners. The project can be a spatial analysis application or research project, a cartographic portfolio, a GIS programming implementation (e.g., web GIS, mobile GIS), or some other sizable, professional study based in the spatial sciences or their application to another field. Although the content varies widely depending on the subject, all capstone projects culminate in a thesis manuscript that upon completion becomes publicly available at the USC Libraries and on the Spatial Sciences Institute (SSI) website.

Since the undertaking of a thesis project is a very personal process, by the time students get to this course, progress on the project varies significantly. Some students may already have in-hand a well-drafted prospectus that they would like to develop further. Others may just now begin embarking on developing their project ideas. This course is designed to move all students towards the goal of a successful thesis by helping them craft a project plan that is accepted by the faculty of the Spatial Sciences Institute and write a project proposal that consists of preliminary drafts of the Introduction, Related Work and Methods chapters of the thesis document by the close of this semester.

Students who fail to produce these deliverables may be asked to repeat SSCI 594a before being cleared to move to SSCI 594b.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify different styles and qualities of writing, critically evaluate written work, including one's own, and improve one's own writing;
- Outline the steps of the research process, state key research obligations and pitfalls, and design a credible, meaningful research project;
- Use the Microsoft Office™ software suite and manage academic sources and citations to competently and efficiently produce documents that meet GIST requirements;
- State and demonstrate the competencies that are required to prepare a Master's Thesis manuscript in the GIST program; and
- Describe their Master's project succinctly, in written and oral forms, to faculty, mentors, and potential sponsors.

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

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Students must be enrolled in the M.S. in Geographic Information Science and Technology (GIST) program and ideally, they should have completed all the required and elective courses before enrolling in this course

Class Conduct

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).

Diversity and Inclusion – It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful to everyone, and you are also expected to respect of others regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity and expressions, cultural beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, abilities, ideas and perspectives, or socioeconomic status. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Feel free to let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students.

Course Structure

As a result of individual student thesis work existing in various stages of development, this course accommodates both students who are working to further develop an existing prospectus and/or those who want to take on a new topic. In discussions with the instructor, students will determine during the first week whether they will continue on with an existing prospectus or start the term by rapidly developing a new prospectus.

In addition to specific individual work on thesis projects, all students in this class will participate in several common components during the semester:

Reading and Writing – During the course, students will read Strunk & White's *The Elements of*

Style and Turabian et al.'s A Manual for Writers along with completed theses from our program. Other readings of varying lengths and styles, including encyclopedia entries, journal articles, and book chapters are indicated in the syllabus and also decided upon individually with each student depending on their topic development. The faculty and students in the course will discuss points to learn from these texts for shaping the thesis project development in on-line discussions, small group teleconference sessions, and instructor office hours.

Research Methods – Participants in the course will read sections from Montello & Sutton's An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography & Environmental Studies. Methods will be discussed in seminars as students narrow down from project ideas to specific workflows.

Technical Tools – Course participants will learn/brush-up on modern technical tools for publication, including the MS Office suite (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and its interfaces with add-ins for bibliographies, equations, illustrations, and automated citation tracking tools. Participants will also learn to prepare documents using the required document format and citation style for GIST thesis manuscripts.

Communications – All assignments given and all materials to be handed in will be submitted via Brightspace. The instructor will also create and monitor discussion forums through which students can discuss issues and assignments as needed. Students should read all email sent from Brightspace or from course instructor(s) as soon as possible. Also, students who do not regularly use their USC email accounts should double-check to be sure that mail sent from both the Brightspace accounts and the instructor's account (noted above) to your USC account is forwarded to an address used regularly and does not go into junk mail. The instructor will endeavor to respond to all email within 24 hours of receipt, aiming for no more than 72 hours delay. In the rare case that an instructor is off-line for an extended period of time, an announcement will be posted to the class Brightspace site. Due to the synchronous and asynchronous nature of this course, it is each student's responsibility to stay informed and connected with others in our course. In addition to email, students are expected to login to Brightspace regularly to check for announcements.

Workload – This is a two credit, one semester course. However, as students aim to accomplish about half of the thesis work in this semester, they should plan to spend at least 10-15 hours per week working independently and 1-2 hours in synchronous online sessions in weeks where Seminars are scheduled.

Seminars – Four seminar meetings will take place over the course of the semester to provide students with an opportunity to share their proposed research ideas and to receive real-time feedback from the instructor and classmates. The seminar meetings will take place synchronously and will be scheduled to accommodate students' weekday and evening availability.

Peer Review – Early in the semester, students will be paired for reviewing and constructively critiquing each other’s work. The instructor will pair students based on similarity of topic, methods, and/or progress towards completion. The expectation is that students will share drafts of written work with the peer review partner at least a few days prior to any due date, thoughtfully review one another’s work, and improve one’s writing based on comments received prior to submission to the instructor.

Faculty Juries – Three times during the term, a committee of SSI faculty will review student submissions. To pass the jury review process, each student’s proposed project must meet the two specific criteria detailed below. Typically, the faculty jury will view a student’s documents 2-3 times, requesting refinements and revisions each time, before a passing mark is obtained. The jury will provide students with valuable advice to fine tune the planning of the thesis research. After students pass the faculty jury, they will be assigned a thesis advisor with whom they will work in SSCI 594b.

Final Deliverable – The most important deliverable in the course is a Proposal for the thesis project that contains preliminary drafts of the first four chapters of the thesis manuscript and an abstract, which each student will submit to Brightspace during the final week of the semester. To achieve this goal will require early commitment to a viable thesis topic and sustained effort on all assignments throughout the term. The precise length of each chapter in this working draft varies depending on the nature of the project and on how quickly each student is able to develop and focus the project idea.

Advisor Meeting – Also in the final week of the term, each student will present a short slide presentation to the assigned thesis advisor. In addition to details of the project work to be undertaken, this presentation must contain a complete and viable plan for finishing the thesis by the end of SSCI 594b.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposed other than individual or group study is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which has been distributed to students or in

any way has been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

All course materials will be organized through Brightspace. The main theoretical concepts will be provided through assigned readings. The editing and writing exercises are designed to improve student's writing skills as necessary for completion of the thesis.

ArcGIS is provided online via the GIST Server; hence, you do not need to install it on your own computer. Instead, every student must have the following technology requirements:

- A computer with a fast Internet connection
- A functional webcam and microphone for use whenever a presentation or meeting is scheduled
- An up-to-date web browser to access the GIST Server

If a student does not have access to any of these, please speak with the instructor at the start of the semester. And see the USC ITS Student Toolkit here:

<https://keepteaching.usc.edu/students/student-toolkit/>

A limited number of computers with all the necessary software is available in the SSI Suite (AHF B55) during regular business hours, Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm. To reserve a computer, please use this link <https://calendly.com/hilaryj-usc/the-ssi-suite-ahf-b55-student-computers>. These computers are available to any student in an SSCI or GSEC course and can be used as a resource if you experience difficulties in accessing the SSI server or using the GIS software on your personal computer.

Brightspace – This course will utilize the Brightspace learning management system which allows students to access course content, upload assignments, and participate in discussion forums, among other learning experiences. The Brightspace platform provides flexibility in the learning experience where students can participate in the course residentially or remotely, synchronously (meeting together at the same time) or asynchronously (accessing videos and course content outside of class).

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 instructor on the email. Students should be sure to be specific with respect to the problem being experienced, as technical issues often vary according to each thesis project.

Technical Tools – Course participants will learn/brush-up on modern technical tools for

publication, including the MS Office suite (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and its interfaces with add-ins for bibliographies, equations, illustrations, and automated citation tracking tools. Participants will also learn to prepare documents using the required document format and citation style for GIST thesis manuscripts.

Communications – All assignments disseminated and all materials to be handed in will be submitted via Brightspace. The instructor will also create and monitor discussion forums through which students can discuss issues and assignments as needed. Students should read all email sent from Brightspace or from course instructor as soon as possible. Also, students who do not regularly use their USC email accounts should double-check to be sure that mail sent from both the Brightspace accounts and the instructor's account (noted above) to your USC account is forwarded to an address used regularly and does not go into junk mail. The instructor will endeavor to respond to all email within 24 hours of receipt, aiming for no more than 72 hours delay. In the rare case that an instructor is off-line for an extended period of time, an announcement will be posted to the class Brightspace site. Due to the synchronous and asynchronous nature of this course, it is each student's responsibility to stay informed and connected with others in our course. In addition to email, students are expected to login to Brightspace regularly to check for announcements.

Google Drive – The course will use the cloud-based service Google Drive to organize and store materials for peer review. A shared folder will be created early in the course for students to share work with each other. Deliverables to the instructor are always delivered via Brightspace for grading.

Zoom – Zoom is a browser-based service that facilitates synchronous, interactive sessions with video and shared desktop capabilities between two or more people; this is the primary forum for seminars and presentations. In addition to a web cam on a computer with a fast internet connection, it is useful to have a phone (mobile or landline) on hand in case there are issues with computer audio.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The following textbooks are required for this class; these are available from online outlets such as Amazon. They should be purchased immediately.

- Strunk, William and E.B. White. 2000. *The elements of style*. 4th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. (~\$7 paper; ISBN: 0205313426)
- 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. (~\$10 paper; ISBN: 0226816389)
- Montello, Daniel R., and Paul C. Sutton. 2013. *An introduction to scientific research methods in geography and environmental studies*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. (~\$39 paper; ISBN: 1446200752)

Other supplemental readings include existing M.S. GIST theses, which are found on the Spatial Sciences Institute website or the USC Library (the link is also posted under the Readings tab on Brightspace). One that will be read together is:

- Valenzuela, Chelsea. 2022. "A Spatiotemporal Analysis of Racial Disparity in the Distribution of Superfund Sites within Santa Clara County, California." Master's thesis, University of Southern California.

Note that supplemental readings will also include two additional existing M.S. theses (from the GIST program or others) and books and articles in the research literature relevant to each student's chosen thesis topic.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

This course has many assignments; each furthers progress towards successful completion of a Proposal containing drafts of the first three thesis chapters and the assignment of a thesis advisor by the end of the semester. Each assignment will be assessed quickly and thoroughly to help each student move towards their goal swiftly. Deadlines are provided in the course schedule, but students are encouraged to work ahead on assignments whenever possible.

Resume Assignment – 1 point. SSI requires all current students to post and maintain a public resume, short biography and recent photo on our shared GIST Student Community site. With permission, student photos and resumes will be posted to the Spatial Sciences Institute website and resumes will be included in the SSI Resume Book. The latter is compiled annually and, along with our web presence, is used to promote our programs and more importantly, our graduates' skills, experience, and professional aspirations.

Introduction Discussion – 2 points. Using a Brightspace Discussion Forum post, each student will give a brief introduction to their background and professional aspirations, provide some initial thoughts on their thesis topic, and announce whether they intend to build upon an existing prospectus or to work on a new topic.

Thesis Sample Discussion – 2 points. The class will discuss one previously completed GIST thesis in a Brightspace Discussion Forum. This helps to develop a common understanding of thesis expectations. Each student is required to respond to several questions and comment on other students' posts.

Thesis Reviews – 2 for a total of 10 points. Each student will read two previously completed theses (inside or outside the GIST program), chosen for their relevance to each students' thesis topic. For the first thesis review, each student can choose based on their general topic of interest, but for the second thesis review, each student will locate a thesis that serves as closely as possible as an "exemplar" or "model" of what they are aiming to produce. Each student will submit a short written summary, following questions provided by the instructor.

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Initial Statement of Research Interest (StoRI) or Initial Prospectus Revision – 5 points. The Initial StoRI is a summary of a student's ideas about a research project. Students will only complete this assignment if they are writing a new prospectus. Alternatively, some students may have an existing thesis prospectus, and in these cases, they can revise and submit this work according to their current ideas and increased knowledge since time of writing.

Expanded StoRI or Continued Prospectus Revision – 5 points. This is a major revision and expansion of the Initial StoRI, designed to help prepare each student to draft a Prospectus. Students will only complete this assignment if they are writing a new prospectus. If not, they will continue to revise their prospectus.

Related Work Investigation – 5 points. Each student will create an annotated bibliography organized in subsections to situate their proposed project amongst existing scholarly or professional work and as preparation to write the draft related work chapter. Each student will research the literature with guidance from the instructor and the faculty juries.

Topic Prospectus or Revised Topic Prospectus – 15 points. Each student will either turn in a new prospectus or revise an existing prospectus. The revision will be based on learning acquired in elective SSCI courses, SSCI 594a instructor comments, peer reviews, and additional research.

Methods Outline – 5 points. This is a detailed outline of the proposed workflow and represents the core of what will become the Methods Chapter (Chapter 3) of the thesis, completed according to a structured assignment. This is an important deliverable for the faculty juries.

Data Exploration Slide Presentation – 5 points. This assignment requires each student to acquire and explore data needed for the thesis work. As appropriate to the type of project proposed, this task may include importing datasets into ArcGIS or other software and completing initial analysis, programming activities, and/or defining fieldwork procedures. Each student will prepare a short slide deck demonstrating these results.

Proposal with Related Work Chapter – 5 points. Building on all of the input received during the term, each student will combine and revise all of the content previously prepared and place it into the GIST Thesis format. In this proposal of the thesis, students will pay particular attention to the related work chapter (Chapter 2 of the Proposal and Thesis).

Proposal with Methods Chapter – 5 points. Building on all of the input received during the term, each student will prepare a draft of the methods chapter (Chapter 3 of the Proposal and Thesis).

Proposal with Preliminary Results Chapter – 5 points. Building on all of the input received during the term, each student will prepare a draft of the results chapter (Chapter 4 of the Proposal and Thesis).

Proposal Slide Presentation – 5 points. Each student will create and submit to Brightspace a slide presentation using the SSI template. These slides will be the basis for the presentation of the thesis work completed to date and plans for completion to be given to each student’s appointed thesis advisor via Zoom at the end of the semester.

Proposal Abstract – 5 points. A clear abstract is absolutely critical to communicating the intention for the thesis project to the entire USC SSI and SSI-affiliated faculty.

Final Proposal with Abstract – 20 points. Each student will polish all the pieces and put together a final written package, including drafts of the first three chapters and abstract.

Deadlines

Weekly deadlines for course assignments are provided in the course schedule, but students are encouraged to work ahead on assignments whenever possible.

Faculty Jury Assessments

The faculty juries will review written materials submitted by each student and will use the two criteria stated below to decide whether to pass a student by the end of the semester. Both criteria must be met to warrant a pass and a pass is required in order for a student to be assigned a thesis advisor.

Research Question/Design – Graded Pass or Fail. A pass indicates that in the opinion of the faculty the research questions or programming objectives are viable to answer within the student’s skill set and the timeframe allotted to the thesis.

Data Needs – Graded Pass or Fail. A pass indicates that in the opinion of the faculty the data type and quality needed to implement the research design are available or can be acquired with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort, and thus that the proposed project is feasible.

Grading

It is important to note that the final type of grading in a thesis course is different from the type of grading in other GIST courses. An In-Progress (IP) grade is automatically assigned for SSCI 594a; this converts to Passing (P) when SSCI 594b (and, if necessary, SSCI 594z) is/are completed. It is possible to drop from SSCI 594a by the drop/add date and receive a tuition refund. However, in SSCI 594a after the drop/add date there is no “W” grade recorded if a student drops the course. Instead, an IP grade is recorded and students incur a requirement for ongoing registration.

Although all students in SSCI 594a receive an IP grade on the transcript, student work in SSCI

594a is graded for points on each assignment. Students should utilize this adherence to standard grading protocols as a signal, throughout the semester, as to whether they are “on track” towards successful completion of the thesis, aiming for “A” work throughout (i.e. at least 90% of available points).

Equally important, students must successfully pass the faculty jury during the SSCI 594a term or they will not be assigned a thesis committee. In this no pass case, students will be required to retake SSCI 594a. **In such cases, students will receive a written warning, and students who do not complete the deliverables for SSCI 594a after the second offering may be dismissed from the program for a lack of satisfactory academic progress.**

Grading Breakdown

Assessment	Number	Total Points (% of Grade)
Resume Assignment	1	1
Introduction Discussion	1	2
Thesis Sample Discussion	2	2
Thesis Review	2	10
Initial StoRI/ Initial Prospectus Revision	1	5
Expanded StoRI/Continued Prospectus Revision	1	5
Topic Prospectus/Revised Topic Prospectus	1	15
Related Work Investigation	1	5
Methods Outline	1	5
Data Exploration Slide Presentation	1	5
Proposal with Related Work Chapter	1	5
Proposal with Methods Chapter	1	5
Proposal with Preliminary Results Chapter	1	5
Proposal Slide Presentation	1	5
Proposal Abstract	1	5
Final Proposal with Abstract	1	20
Total	17	100

Grading Scale

Assignments in this and other SSCI courses, are graded on the letter grade scale where A is exemplary, B is very good, C is satisfactory, D is unsatisfactory, and F needs improvement. Final grades use the same letter grade scale with C being the minimum passing grade for credit at the graduate level. The grading scale follows:

A	> 93 points		B-	80-82 points		D+	67-69 points
A-	90-92 points		C+	77-79 points		D	63-66 points
B+	87-89 points		C	73-76 points		D-	60-62 points
B	83-86 points		C-	70-72 points		F	<60 points

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be submitted for grading via Brightspace using the dates specified in the Course Schedule below. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due no later than 11:59 p.m. PT on the Sunday at the end of the week in which they are listed on the syllabus. The Final Thesis Proposal is due no later than 5 p.m. on the last day of classes as noted on the Course Schedule below. Students are encouraged to submit assignments more quickly than the minimum deadlines.

Additional Policies

Finally, it is important to note from the outset if the written thesis proposal is not submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of classes, the student may not obtain a thesis committee. This is likely to result in additional semesters of thesis work and delaying and/or failing graduation with an M.S. degree.

SSI Policy on the Creation of Original Work and Use of Generative AI

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of an assignment or reuse work prepare for courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Developing strong competencies in research, writing, and the technical execution of geospatial technologies are foundational to SSI academic programs that are designed to prepare you for success in the workplace. Therefore, using generative AI tools – unless explicitly specified otherwise – is strictly prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Grading Timeline

My goal is to provide grading and feedback on each course assignment in time for you to take my feedback into consideration as the course progresses. Generally, this means that you can expect feedback within 1 week after a given assignment's due date.

Learning Experience Evaluations

Please note Learning Experience Evaluations for the course take place at the end of the

semester and are facilitated by the University. These evaluations provide an important review of student experiences in the course.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

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How to Read and Use the Course Schedule

Students who do not have existing prospectus or who want to start again on a new topic will start from the very beginning of the assignment schedule with the Initial Statement of Research Interest (StoRI) and the Expanded StoRI. Students who will further develop an existing prospectus will start by sharing the current status of their work with the instructor. For students working from an existing prospectus, the Initial StoRI and Expanded StoRI are not required.

In either case, the assignment deadlines in the course schedule should be read as a minimum set of expectations. All assignments will be posted at the start of the first week of classes on Brightspace. Students are encouraged to submit assignments more quickly than the minimum deadlines in the course schedule. Careful planning and consistent commitment will be required for each student to be successful.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables
Week 1 5/21	Introduction Introduction to the course and to the research process. Online discussion of expectations for the GIST Thesis.	Montello & Sutton (M&S), Ch 1 Valenzuela (2022) Resume Introduction Discussion Sample Thesis Online Discussion Initial StoRI or Prospectus Revision	Resume Introduction; Sample Thesis Online Discussion
Week 2 5/27	Thesis Topics and Resources Discuss potential topics of investigation along with resources and requirements for the MS GIST.	Strunk & White, all Turabian et al., Ch 1 Thesis Review #1	Initial StoRI or Prospectus Revision
Week 3 6/3	Developing a Research Topic Overview of processes to develop and focus your research questions/objectives. Attend Seminar #1	Turabian, Ch 2 M&S, Ch 2 Thesis Review #2 Expanded StoRI or Continued Prospectus Revision	Thesis Review #1
Week 4 6/10	Research and Report Writing How to write a good report including discussion of pitfalls in long-form writing and the use of referencing tools. Attend Seminar #2	Turabian, Ch 3-4 M&S, Ch 3 594a Prospectus	Related Work Investigation Expanded StoRI or Continued Prospectus Revision
Week 5 6/17	The Research Process and Human Subjects Discuss research as a process and the important of revision in writing. Introduce ethics in scientific research and the use of human subjects	Turabian, Ch 5-6 Related Work Investigation	594a Prospectus
Week 6 6/24	Scientific Communication Understanding the structure of scientific reports, including “what goes where” in the GIST Thesis.	M&S, Ch 4-7 GIST Thesis Style Guide GIST Thesis Template	Thesis Review #2 Note: Faculty Jury Review
Week 7 7/1	Citations, References, and Jury Feedback Review GIST citation requirements and thesis format guidelines and template. Discuss feedback from faculty jury review. Attend Seminar #3	M&S, Ch 8 Methods Outline	Resume, Methods Outline
Week 8 7/8	Data and Methods A review of different types of data and how to evaluate data for your project.	Turabian, Ch 7-8 Proposal with Related Work Chapter (Chapter 2)	Data Exploration Slide Presentation
Week 9 7/15	Best Practices in Writing Tips to develop and deepen the Thesis Proposal.	Turabian, Ch 15, 17- 19 Data Exploration Slide Presentation	Proposal with Related Work Chapter (Chapter 2)

	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Deliverables
Week 10 7/22	Providing a Proof of Concept Formulate research design to provide a proof of concept demonstrating the viability of your proposed work.	Turabian, Ch 9-12 Proposal with Methods Chapter (Chapter 3)	Note: Faculty Jury Review
Week 11 7/29	Jury Feedback and Next Steps Review feedback from Jury Review 2 and discuss next steps in developing the Thesis Proposal. Attend Seminar #4	M&S, Ch 9, 10, 12 Proposal with Preliminary Results (Chapter 4)	Proposal with Methods Chapter (Chapter 3)
Week 12 8/5	Advancing the Thesis Proposal Work to advance and finalize thesis proposal and final deliverables.	Turabian, Ch 26 M&S, Ch 11 Proposal Abstract Revise All Chapters	Proposal with Preliminary Results Chapter (Chapter 4) Note: Faculty Jury Review
Week 13 8/12	Final Writing and Deliverables Revise and pull together all the draft chapters into one final submission.	M&S, Ch 14 Final Proposal (Chapter 1-4 and Abstract) Proposal Slide Presentation	Final Proposal (Chapters 1-4 and Abstract) Proposal Slide Presentation Due at 5:00 p.m. on 8/15/25

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others (including AI generated) or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

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For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

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

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.