



Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science

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GGG 900: GGS Colloquium
Crosslisted with:
GGG 400: Colloquium GIScience

1. General Information

Instructor: Dr. Andreas Züfle
Where: Exploratory Hall 3301
When: Thursday: 4:30pm – 6:20pm
Course website: Blackboard
Credits: 1
Prerequisites: None
Office Hours: By appointment only due to social distancing. Just email me! (azufle@gmu.edu)

2. Course Description

In this course students prepare for, attend, and reflect on topics (varying from week to week) in Geography and Geoinformation Science. The purpose of this course is to help your professional development as a researcher. Contemporary scholars will present students with material designed to engage their critical thinking and further their professional development. Students will either write short reflections or meet with the instructor for post- colloquium discussions. I expect all students to participate actively in our class discussions and to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and questions to our collective exploration. I especially encourage you to bring your questions to class.

3. Textbooks

Reading might be supplied by presenters.

4. Course Outline (tentative)

Overall, we will meet at least **12 times**
Talks will be announced on Blackboard as speakers confirm.

5. Grading

Students will be graded in the following manner

Attendance	80%
Reflection/Discussion/Presentation	20%

Final grades at the end of the course will be assigned using **ONLY absolute achievements** not considering relative standing in the class. Grades generally follow 90/80/70 with plus/minus being within 3 percent of the cutoffs. I reserve the right to alter the exact boundaries at the end of the semester.

Attendance credit is acquired by signing a sign-in sheet at the beginning of class. Each sign-in yields 10% of the attendance credit (=8% of the total course credit). Students are required to attend 10 for maximum score. Students are allowed and encouraged to attend more than 10 meetings.

Reflection / Discussion / Presentation (RDP) credit can be acquired in multiple different ways:

- Reflection Assignments:
You may submit an (up to 1.5 pages) reflection assignment for each meeting. These assignments are **due at the beginning of the following class** (see more details on assignments below). Each assignment yields up 20% of the RDP credit (=4% of the total course credit).
- Discussions:

Each week, we will have a discussion thread on the discussion board. Active participation in one of these threads yields up to 10% of the RDP credit (=2% of the total course credit)

- **Presentation:**
Students who are already working on their thesis research may present their research in class in a 30 minutes presentation (25 minutes presentation + 5 minutes Q+A) for 50% of the RDP credit.

6. Reflections:

After each course, you may write and submit a 1.5 page essay expressing your reaction to the presentation. In these reflections you will discuss the content and delivery of the presenter. Besides the information in class, you will incorporate one of two other sets of content into your reflection:

- Aspects of your personal research profile or goals. Here, it is a personal observation, experience, activity, or event that stimulates a response. Feel free to draw upon your outside experiences in crafting your reaction essays.
- Aspects of the domain field the speaker's talk draws from. This reflection may dive deeper into the speaker's field, or present ideas for future research directions.

Producing finely polished products regularly is less important than expressing your thoughts and ideas. I am looking for agility, flexibility, and creativity in expression. You should seek interesting ways to express ideas through word choices, analogies and metaphors, phrasing, and varying sentence structure. The goal of these reflections is not to recite and summarize the presentation, but express your own thoughts, opinions and ideas!

Note that you are not required to submit an essay each week. My idea is that you focus your energy on the topics that interest you and my goal is to help students find research topics (and faculty) to work on (and with) that they are interested in.

Students may submit an essay each week. For grading, I will count the best essays (combined with the best forum discussions).

Assignments should be done **through the Blackboard course website**.

Please note: Assignments should be submitted only through the Assignment submission section of the Blackboard system - DO NOT email assignments directly to the instructor.

7. Forum Discussions

Forum discussions follow the same guidelines as assignments and should reflect your own ideas/thoughts rather than reciting what you have heard. You are also welcome to start discussions (e.g.: Did anyone understand part XYZ of the presentation?) and to discuss supplementary material (such as research papers that may or may not be provided each week). I will be scanning the discussions regularly for constructive posts, research ideas, connection to your own research, and so on!

Note that forum posts that do not contribute any of your own thoughts will not yield any RDP score. For example, posts such as "I agree!" and "First post!" won't yield any score (sorry forum trolls!).

In a nutshell, you can see the forum discussions as a public version of reflection assignments.

8. Presentations

Presentations are completely optional, and should be seen as an offer of the department to allow you to present and discuss your research. If you are working on a research topic that you feel has relevance to other students, let me know either in class or per email!

I encourage students that are planning to present at a conference, or students who are defending their thesis soon to present in the colloquium (in a semi-casual environment) for preparation.

Note that there may not be enough time slots (meetings) available for all students to present. I will decide time slots first-come-first-serve.

9. Hybrid Meetings (COVID-19 Special Section)

At the time of creating this syllabus (06/27/2020), I do not know if we can meet in person at all. And if we can meet in person, I don't know if all of us can be in the same room at the same time. The most likely scenario (as of now and in my humble opinion) is that we can meet in person, but the number of people in the room will be limited.

Therefore, I plan to have hybrid presentations: A speaker may present in person in class, or may present online via Zoom, depending on the speakers preference. I don't want to pressure a speaker to present in-person if they are not comfortable.

The same goes for you: You may choose to attend presentations on Zoom or in person.

If the number of students allowed to attend in person is limited, I will try to prioritize such that each student can attend talks that they are most interested in.

To make this fair, I will give you a list of (tentative) topics (such as Data Mining, Remote Sensing, Simulation, Drones, Spatial Statistics) at the beginning of the semester. I will ask you to rank the topics you're most interested in, for example Data Mining > Simulation > Spatial Stats.

Then, each week I will invite students who ranked the topic of the week highly until all seats are filled.

(Invited students may still choose to attend online if they prefer. In this case other students are invited until all seats are filled).

For this hybrid plan, the room that we have is perfect – it's the COS conference room (Exploratory Hall, 3rd Floor). I requested this room and I'm happy that we got it, because this room has some nice technology installed that I want to leverage: It has microphones installed in the ceiling across the room. Thus, if someone in the back of the room asks a question, this question should still be audible on Zoom.

The room also has an auto-tracking camera. It will automatically focus on the person who is speaking. So if someone in the room asks a question, the camera will automatically target them, and then go back to the speaker.

If we cannot meet in person at all, then we will have all presentations on Zoom... frankly, that would be unfortunate, as live interaction with a speaker is important. Not only to discuss research, but also to choose potential PhD advisor from our faculty.

If everything suddenly returns back to normal and there will be no limit on the room capacity (unlikely...) we will still use the Hybrid option (because just because we can crowd a room, doesn't mean that we should... and some folks, including speakers, may feel uncomfortable sitting/presenting in a crowded room).

10. Electronic communication:

All course related email correspondence, including submission of assignments, should be made through the course Blackboard website. Please DO NOT send emails to the instructors' @gmu.edu address.

11. Student Expectations:

- **Academic Integrity:** Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance/>].
- **Honor Code:** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- **MasonLive/Email (GMU Email):** Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

[See <https://masonlivelogin.gmu.edu>].

- **Patriot Pass:** Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See <https://password.gmu.edu/index.jsp>].
- **University Policies:** Students must follow the university policies. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>]. Responsible Use of Computing - Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing>].
- **University Calendar:** Details regarding the current Academic Calendar. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/index.html>].
- **Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].
- Students are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette at all times; see <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html> for more information regarding these expectations.

2. Student Services:

- **University Libraries:** University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See <http://library.gmu.edu/distance> and http://infoguides.gmu.edu/distance_students].
- **Writing Center:** The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#).
- **Counseling and Psychological Services:** The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].
- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

Disclaimer: Any typographical errors in this Course Outline are subject to change and will be announced in class.

Note: Recording is permitted only with the prior written consent of the professor/speaker or if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan.