GIS in R: Course Logistics

The discussion board

The discussion board is really the heart-and-soul of this course. Here, you will have the opportunity to develop your understanding further by engaging in peer-to-peer learning. Moreover, consulting with your peers can be a great time-saver when you're stuck on a question! We will check the discussion board often but will only weigh in if we feel that a question was left unaddressed for too long, a question was inadequately addressed, or if a provided answer was incorrect.

In writing a post on the discussion board, please adhere to the following:

- Lead each discussion board thread with a question or request for input from your peers, not a comment.
- Be specific! Your questions should target specific issues that you are experiencing (either conceptually or in practice).
- When posting or answering a question regarding a weekly problem set, do not include your code for the question – instead, come up with an example dataset that mimics the problem you are experiencing. Any question or answer that includes homework code will be deleted.
- "Trolling" will not be tolerated. We expect everyone in this course to treat each other (and us) respectfully – any posts that we perceive to be in violation of this will be deleted.

To get the most out of sharing code in the discussion board, we strongly recommend using Blackboard's tool for inputting code. To do so, click the button **{;}** (choose any code language you like … they don't have R). If you do not see the code button, click the ellipses (…) to view more formatting options.

For more information on how to ask a good question, this guide from Stack Overflow may help: https://stackoverflow.com/help/how-to-ask.

Live classroom sessions

Weekly review sessions:

- **When**: Mondays (except 4 Sept) from 10:30-11:45 Eastern time
- **Zoom meeting link**: https://smithsonian.zoom.us/j/85262664398?pwd=OE44aEITYnJCNmRYZWEvdnNVMm5DZz09
- **Purpose**: We will review the answers to the problem set that was due on the previous night. We will typically go over questions that students had difficulty with and then open the floor for further questions. Please feel free to ask questions throughout! *Note: The first weekly review session will be dedicated to introducing the course.*
- **Can't make it?** We will post videos of these sessions on the following Tuesday morning.

Question and answer sessions:

- **When**: Fridays from 10:45-11:30 am Eastern time

- **Zoom meeting link**: https://smithsonian.zoom.us/j/84858662771?pwd=aFNCTmNPdVZQS0xjdm5yMUJQS1VuZz09
- **Purpose**: We will address any questions you may have for the current problem set. This session is guided by you, so please come prepared to ask questions! When all questions for the current problem set have been addressed, we will open the floor for additional questions.
- **Can't make it?** If you can't make it to the session, please be sure to post questions in the discussion board. We will post videos of these sessions on the following Saturday morning.

Office hours

Office hours are your opportunity to get one-on-one help from your professors. At least initially, please limit office hours to content relating to the course – we are happy to help you address problems in your personal data sets as we near the end of the course.

- **When**: Office hours are on Thursdays, from 08:00-09:30 am Eastern Time and Fridays, from 1:30-2:45 pm Eastern Time.
- **Signing up for office hours**: Office hours are by appointment only. Please sign up for your appointment at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AS12Th3HziMv22GNI6E-ytMZ9fnct20Dx9UbQVnH1-Q/edit?usp=sharing
- **Zoom meeting link**: https://smithsonian.zoom.us/j/86009064739?pwd=TmJrM3BDVHQ2dGo5VEdkbmxqZFIndz09
- **Important notes regarding signing up for office hours**:
    - Please do not sign up for sessions more than 7 days in advance
    - You must sign up for your session no later than the previous day
    - Each office hour session is 15 minutes
    - Please do not sign up for more than one session on a given day. Your time can be extended if no one has reserved the time slot after yours.

Weekly problem sets

Weekly problem sets will be provided to you as R Markdown documents. Problem sets are due at 11:59 pm on Sunday of each week. We will post the answer key to the problem sets at 12:01 am on Monday – as such, *no late work will be accepted*.

Grading:

The grading rubric for each problem set will be provided to you within the R Markdown document itself. As this is a coding class, *you may lose considerable points even though your code produces the correct answer*! To avoid this, please be sure to review the scoring penalties associated with each problem set. Of note:

- You will be given a list of "functions that you may use in this assignment" that includes operators (e.g., `[x, …]`), named R functions (e.g., `c(x, …)`), and functions from community packages (e.g., `dplyr::filter(x, …)`). This is intended to help you with your problem set, but you will incur a major point deduction for using functions outside of the approved list!
- Global assignments are rare in proper tidyverse coding – unless explicitly approved for a given question, assigning objects to the global environment unnecessarily will result in a major point reduction!

- Improper code formatting (e.g., spacing and indentation) will result in small deductions to the allotted points.

A note on problem sets: While completing the weekly problem sets can sometimes take considerable time, the difficulty of each question varies. For example, you will be given points for each problem set simply for saving the document and adding your name as instructed (*avoid losing these points!*). Most of the questions will then ask you to apply existing code from the lectures and tutorials to a new dataset. One or two questions per problem set will ask that you integrate knowledge across the content provided thus far.

Contacting us

We may only be directly contacted via email. **Do not use the email system within Blackboard, as sends your messages to an unattended mailbox.** We will answer your emails within 24 hours. You can reach us at:

- Brian Evans (Brian, he/him, instructor): evansbr@si.edu
- Joseph Kolowski (Joe, he/him, co-instructor/course logistics): kolowskij@si.edu

Important! For questions regarding clarification of code or methodology, please consult with your peers using the Blackboard discussion board. This is meant to be a peer-to-peer learning device – we will monitor the discussion board but will only weigh in if/when we deem it necessary.