

Course Syllabus

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GEOG 476: GIS Practicum

Course Information

Course Number: GEOG 476
Course Title: GIS Practicum
Section: 930
Time: MW 4:10PM - 5:25PM
Location: CSA 303
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dan Goldberg
Office: CSA 305 & OMB 707F
Phone: 979-845-6395
E-Mail: dan@tamu.edu (<mailto:daniel.goldberg@tamu.edu>)
Office Hours: MW 11:15AM–12:00PM pm or by appointment. All office hours must be scheduled in advance.

Catalog Description

This course is the capstone learning experience of the Department of Geography's Geographic Information Science & Technology (GIST) major. Through seminar style discussions course participants are introduced to current topics in the spatial sciences profession. An accompanying independent research project will build professional research skills. The course introduces students to professional ethical issues surrounding spatial technologies and information. Professional presentation of scientific and technical results will be taught and practiced. The course will also introduce students to GIST certification activities and help them to construct a professional GIST portfolio.

Course Description

Introduction to current topics in Geographic Information Science including ethical and legal issues surrounding spatial technologies, proper GIS management practices and professional certification. Development of professional research, technical and communication skills through participation in a coordinated internship or independent research project.

Course Prerequisites

GEOG and GIST majors; sophomore classification or approval of instructor. No other Prerequisites.

Special Course Designation

W-Course Designation

This class is a W (writing intensive) class. See the "Assignment Types and Weights" section below as well as the [**"Best Practices for W & C Courses"**](#) (<https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/360731/pages/how-to-be-successful-in-a-c-course>) for grading details including what students will have to write and speak to earn credit for the course.

W-Course Grading Requirements

Grading for this course will be based on completion of the University "W" course requirements. 35% of the graded assignments for the course will include individual writing assignments totaling at least 2000 words of finished written materials. In addition, another 45% of the course assignments will be group writing assignments totaling at least 2000 words of finished written materials which will be complemented with a combination of oral presentation slides, handouts, scripts, web sites, and posters which accompany any oral presentation (5 minutes). The "public speaking" component of the course will be completed by individual students and groups electronically, for example in video or podcast formats. Student assignments (individual and group) will be provided with formative feedback including review and assessment by the instructor as well as peer-review by fellow students.

To pass this course, students must pass the Writing (W) component.

Course Learning Outcomes

The intent of this class is to provide students with a professionalizing academic experience. This will be accomplished in two ways. First a set of structured discussions and projects will introduce students to topics that will affect them in their professional careers as well as to develop their oral, written and cartographic communication skills. Secondly, an independent research project will provide students an opportunity to apply the geospatial skills they have learned in previous classes to an individual project. The progress on the project will be articulated in writing, through oral presentations and by the creation of maps and other graphics.

At the end of this class, each student will be able to:

1. Explain current ethical and legal issues surrounding Geospatial technologies; and
2. Articulate the current state of professional certification in the Geospatial arena and how obtaining professional certification may affect career opportunities; and
3. Define and describe current national and international standards applicable to spatial data; and
4. Apply appropriate GIS analytical techniques to successfully solve a research problem; and
5. Communicate the methods used and results achieved in an independent research project via written, oral and cartographic methods.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

There are no required textbooks. Course readings will include online and other videos and resources and materials provided by the instructor.

Grading Policy

Grading Scale

The typical grading scheme for this course has the following cutoffs: ≥90% A, 80-89% B, 70-79% C, 60-69% D, <60% F An average performance in the class will earn a satisfactory grade.

Grading Policy, Due Dates, and Time Zones

All homework and other assignments will be due at the start of the following the class in which they were assigned, unless otherwise indicated on the assignment. Late work will not be accepted for inclusion in a student's grade without prior authorization from the instructor or in compliance with the University Excused Absence and Makeup Work policies as defined in [Student Rule 7 \(https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07\)](https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07).

Assignment Grading Breakdown

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Type	Weight
Class participation	15%
Writing (W) course writing assignments	35%
Writing (W) course speaking assignments	5%
Group project	45%

Class Participation Types and Weights

Class participation components of grades will be calculated as follows:

Style	Participation Type	Points	% Final Grade
Individual	Class Attendance	500	5%
Individual	Engagement in Class Activities, Surveys, and Discussions	1000	10%
Total		1500	15%

W-Course Writing-Specific Assignment Types and Weights

W-Course writing assignments will be calculated as follows:

Style	Assignment Type	Words	Points	% Final Grade
Individual	Writing	3500 words	3500	35%
Total			3500	35%

W-Course Speaking-Specific Assignment Types and Weights

W-Course speaking assignments will be calculated as follows:

Style	Assignment Type	Mins	Points	% Final Grade
Individual	Presentation	5 mins	500	5%
Total			500	5%

Late Work Policy

Each assignment is due at the end of a due day. However, do not wait until the last minute to get started. Please start early to allow enough time for you to work on the assignments.

To accommodate your working schedule, we offer a two-day grace period for each assignment. You will not get any point deduction for late submission **within 2 days after each due date**. After the two-day grace period, late assignment submissions receive a **10% deduction for each day they are late** unless covered by a University excused absence. The maximum deduction will be 50% if you submit it before the end of this course. Late submissions (penalty or not) are not accepted after the course (2/25/2025).

In past years, failure to complete assignments in a timely manner has been the primary cause of poor performance in this class. It is your responsibility to keep up with assignments. You should talk to your instructor BEFORE late assignments become a problem.

Course Schedule

The schedule of topics for the semester is as follows:

Week/ Starting	Lecture	Project (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/project/README.md) Due (Mon)	Writing Speaking Due (W/S)
01 1/13	Intro to the Class (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-01)		
02 1/20	Research Projects (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-02)		
03 1/27	Professional/Technical Writing (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-03)	Pitch (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457837) 500 words	
04 2/3	Project Management & Budgeting (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-04)		
05 2/10	Proposal Reviews (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-05)	Proposal I (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457838) 1,000 words	
06 2/17	Professional Certifications (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/pages/week-06-professional-certifications)		
07 2/24	Ethics (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/project/README.md)	Proposal II (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457839)	HW1 (1,000 words) Certification

	Practicum/blob/master/lectures/07.md	1,500 words	https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457827
08 3/3	Professional Skills (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/lectures/08.md)		HW2 (1,000 words) Ethics I (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457828)
NA 3/10	Spring Break No Class		
09 3/17	Resumes (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/lectures/09.md)	Draft I (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457827) 1,000 words	
10 3/24	Portfolios (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/lectures/10.md)		HW3 (500 words) Resumes (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457829)
11 3/31	Professional Presentations (https://github.tamu.edu/tamu-geog-476-gist-practicum/GEOG-476-GIST-Practicum/blob/master/lectures/11.md)	Draft II (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457828) 1,500 words	HW4 (500 words) Portfolios (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457830)
12 4/7		Portfolio Presentations & Project Work (In-Class, Mon/Weds)	
13 4/14		Practice Project Presentations & Project Work (In-Class, Mon/Weds)	
14 4/21		Project Presentations (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457830)	
15 4/28		https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457829 Project Presentations (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457829) (https://canvas.tamu.edu/courses/345875/assignments/2457829) 2,000 words	

Note: This schedule is tentative and topics, dates, assignments, and deadlines may be updated/added/removed at any time without warning depending on course speed, pandemics, and many many other reasons. Any changes to deadlines for graded materials will be announced a week in advance.

University Policies

This section outlines the university level policies. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#) (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#) (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. ([See Student Rule 24](#) (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule24/>)).

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#) (<https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/Rules-and-Procedures/Rules/Honor-System-Rules>)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu (<https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>)..

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu (<https://disability.tamu.edu>).

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#) (<https://rules-saps.tamu.edu/PDFs/08.01.01.M1.pdf>)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns related to mental and/or physical health in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [University Health Services](#) (<https://uhs.tamu.edu/appointments>) or download the [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) (<https://uhs.tamu.edu/mental-health/student-support.html>) for 24/7 access to professional counseling in multiple languages. Walk-in services for urgent, non-emergency needs are available during normal business hours at University Health Services locations; call 979.458.4584 for details.

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#) (<https://titleix.tamu.edu>).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing.

Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#) (<https://uhs.tamu.edu>). Students needing a listening ear can call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends for mental health peer support while classes are in session. The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) (<https://uhs.tamu.edu/mental-health/student-support.html>) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or 988lifeline.org (<http://988lifeline.org/>).

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services (979.458.4584) or call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends while classes are in session. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at 988lifeline.org (<http://988lifeline.org/>).