

Online Course Information (Spring 2010)
Geog 359 / 655 - Introduction to Geographic Information Systems

Course Instructor: Philip Young

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Objective: This course introduces the basic theory and concepts of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and provides hands-on experience of working with a particular GIS software package (i.e. GeoMedia Professional by Intergraph Corporation) through various exercises. The theory and concepts provide context for understanding the functions of a GIS and the exercises reinforce the theory and concepts covered in the lessons. After successful completion of this course a student should be able to:

1. describe what a GIS is; name the major GIS softwares available; know where to find more information.
2. explain the components and functionality of a GIS and the differences between GIS and other information systems.
3. explain how spatial information is stored in the computer (including map projections) and the different types of GIS data structures.
4. conduct simple spatial analysis using GeoMedia Professional software; design and complete various GIS exercises (data capture, data storage and management, analysis, and presentation).

Prerequisite Geog 256 class or consent of Instructor

Text Book: *Getting Started with Geographic Information Systems*, by Keith C. Clarke: Prentice Hill, 2003, 4th edition.

Software: GeoMedia Professional 6.0, MS Office (Word, Excel, Access), Adobe Acrobat Reader and Flash 9.0; antivirus software, Internet browser (**DSL or broadband connection; NO modems**).

Hardware: Pentium 4 processor (or equivalent), 512+ RAM, video graphics card (32 Megs + preferred), Windows 2000 or XP, 1 gig of available hard drive space (for software and assignments), USB micro drive (or some type of backup device). Apple computers may be used if the system can run "Virtual PC" and has a G4 or higher processor (or if you are running a MAC computer with a dual core Intel processor, "boot camp" and Windows XP software) - You will need to talk to the Instructor if you would like to use an Apple Computer for the exercise parts of this course.

Operating System Note: Microsoft's VISTA is not certified to run on the current version of the GIS software that is used for this course. You must have a computer (or have access to a system) that runs either Windows 2000 or XP!

Interactive Assignments: There will be a series of lab exercises using GeoMedia Professional, data and material available from the internet. Students will submit their lab data and written lab reports via the Blackboard Digital Drop Box. Written reports should only be submitted in Microsoft Word format; other exercise data may be submitted as Access, Excel, or GeoMedia files as required. Lab exercises will be worth approximately 40% of the course grade. **All exercises should be completed and submitted to the Digital Drop Box prior to taking scheduled exams. All exercises must be turned in by the due dates. Anything turned in after the specified day and time will receive zero points!**

Exams: There will be several exams worth a combined total of approximately 60% of the grade. Exams will consist of multiple choice and True/False questions and will be administered through Blackboard. You need to complete all exams and all exercises on time to potentially get the best possible score. **A course calendar listing all exam dates and exercise due dates will be posted on Blackboard. Each exam will be available across a 1 - 2 day window and must be completed once started.** There will be no retakes or extensions (unless deemed warranted by the Instructor).

All assignments will be completed and submitted to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard. All Assignments are expected to be turned in by the due date and time specified or they will be considered late. Calling or emailing on the day of a due date is not an excuse to extend or postpone the due date of an assignment, nor should you bother the Instructor on the due date since any questions relating to an assignment should have been asked "earlier" in the week that the assignment was due. Once the assignment due date has expired, the student will receive ZERO points for the assignment.

Final Grading: The final course grade will be determined based upon total possible points (500). Grading is as follows (with no curves or rounding up of fractional points):

500 - 450 points = **A**
449 - 400 points = **B**
399 - 350 points = **C**
349 - 300 points = **D**
299 points or less = **F**

Notes: This course is designed to be completed in 7 weeks (the course officially starts with the orientation meeting). There will be no incompletes or extensions beyond the end of the semester in which you are enrolled. You should pay careful attention to the Blackboard Course Calendar and complete all assignments by the due date. Late enrollment is not encouraged and if you enroll late you will have no extensions or makeup opportunities for missed assignments. At the instructor's discretion, any student that exhibits behavior that is deemed threatening to the instructor or any other student enrolled in the course will be reported to the University Judicial Office. Emails that threaten or challenge the instructor's ability to teach this class, cheating, course disruption, are all examples of the types of behavior that may result in the student being referred to the University Judicial Group on campus. This in turn may lead to expulsion from this class or the university.

The student's primary way to communicate with the teacher is through email. Emails that are not addressed with proper salutations and the proper courtesy that is expected in typical conversations with an instructor will receive no return reply (remember that emails are in essence a replacement for face to face conversations, so what you say in an email is something you should think twice about before clicking on the send button).

The contents of this course will be made available through Blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to monitor Blackboard often for announcements, updates and/or changes to the course. This also includes following through if you have problems with the system. It is not the instructor's responsibility to track down students for any aspect of this course, at any time! The student needs to contact the instructor with any problems and follow through to make sure that the communication has been received. Sending out an email and just waiting for a reply does NOT constitute a reason to stop doing the required work for this course nor does it give a student the right to extend a deadline while they are "waiting" for a reply.

Do not attempt to call the instructor, email the instructor or call the department secretary (with a message for the instructor) about a problem with a homework assignment on the day that it is due. If you cannot get it done in the days preceding the due date, do not expect the instructor to come to your rescue at the very end! If you are having problems with your computer it is your responsibility to fix, it not the instructor's. A nonfunctioning computer is not a valid excuse for turning in a late assignment. It is assumed when you take an online course that you have a stable running computer and that you have enough knowledge about your computer to a) take an online course b) load GIS software and c) connect up to the Internet and Blackboard. If you are having problems connecting up to Blackboard you need to contact NIU's ITS (753-8100) not the instructor.

CAAR: Any student that has special needs or assistance for this class should contact the Instructor and the Center for Access-Ability Resource (CAAR) <http://www.niu.edu/caar/index.asp> prior to beginning this course.