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Geography 598E: Professionalism in Geographic Information Science and Technology

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Geography 598E: Professionalism in Geographic Information Science and Technology

Course Overview

GEOG 598E: PROFESSIONALISM IN GIS&T. Prepares current and aspiring professionals to recognize, analyze and address legal and ethical issues in the GIS&T (geospatial) field. 
Prerequisites: Consent of instructor.

“Being professional” in the Geographic Information Science and Technology field (GIS&T, a.k.a. geospatial) means being both competent in one’s work and reflective about its legal and ethical implications. Licensed and certified GIS&T professionals are required to affirm their commitment to legal and ethical practice. Fulfilling such commitments requires the ability to recognize and analyze legal and ethical problems and to act with integrity. In this course students investigate the nature of professions generally and the characteristics of the professions that occupy the GIS&T field in particular. Students gain awareness of pertinent legal and ethical issues and hone their moral reasoning skills through methodical analyses of case studies in relation to the GIS Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct. Assignments include readings, case analyses, practitioner interviews and preparation of original case studies.

Like other courses in our online programs, GEOG 598E is a "paced" course. "Paced" means that the course has a start date, an end date, and a weekly schedule of activities and assignments. However, students are free to study at times most convenient to them; you never have to log in at a particular time or place. The course lasts ten weeks, plus an additional week for course orientation (week 0). Assignment due dates are posted in a course calendar which registered students access in the University's online course management system, ANGEL (angel.psu.edu). See the "Assignments" section below for more information.

Although the class never meets face to face, you'll find that there are plenty of opportunities to interact with instructors and fellow students in ANGEL discussion forums, team assignments, and occasional teleconferences. One of the most interesting aspects of the class is that students have a lot of professional experience to share. See the Communications section below to review the ways in which you can get, and stay, in touch. Whether you have a question or a comment, you can expect to receive a reply from instructors or fellow students within 24 hours -- often sooner.

What is expected of you?

According to Penn State's Faculty Senate, "for the average student, a total of at least forty (40) hours of work planned and arranged by the University faculty is required to gain 1 credit" (http://senate.psu.edu/policies/). This three-credit course is designed to engage you in approximately 120 hours of purposeful activity leading to fulfillment of the educational objectives outlined below. You should therefore expect to devote about 12 hours of effort per week to readings, writing assignments, and communications.
Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be prepared to:

1. Define the GIS&T field in relation to its constituent professions;
2. Explain the legal and ethical issues that pertain to the GIS&T field;
3. Demonstrate moral reasoning skills through methodical analyses of ethical case studies;
4. Conduct and report upon practitioner interviews in compliance with IRB regulations;
5. Work effectively in teams;
6. Demonstrate understanding of academic integrity policies and guidelines.

Required Course Materials

To participate in GEOG 598E as a registered student you need access to the Internet and to Penn State's course management system, ANGEL. Access to ANGEL requires a Penn State computing account, which registered students acquire by paying an annual technology fee along with their tuition. No additional materials or proprietary software or data are required for GEOG 598E.

For more information about how to register for GEOG 598E, contact the World Campus' Adult Learner Enrollment Services at wdregistration@outreach.psu.edu, or by telephone at 1-800-252-3592 in the US (or internationally at 814-865-5403, country code 1).

Communications

ANGEL Discussion forums

Discussion forums are the primary mode of communications among students and instructor in GEOG 598E. Forums are a kind of public email also known as "threaded discussion." Everyone enrolled in the class can post messages of their own and can read and respond to any other message. A series of messages that make up a conversation is called a "thread." You'll find a discussion forum within each of the six lesson folders under the Lessons tab in ANGEL.

ANGEL Course mail

"Course mail" is ANGEL's internal email tool. Links to "Send Course Mail" and "Read Course Mail" are available under ANGEL's Communications tab. Messages sent via Course Mail are private; only the recipients you designate can read your messages. Course mail should be used instead of Discussion forums only for confidential messages between students and instructors. Please do not contact the instructor by personal email (i.e., external to ANGEL) except in case of emergency.

Teleconferences

The instructor may offer to host occasional toll-free teleconferences for synchronous discussion of class topics. Students' participation in synchronous teleconferences is voluntary. The instructor may also offer individual telephone appointments on request.

Using the Library
Many of Penn State’s library resources can be utilized from a distance. Registered students can...

- access electronic databases, and even full text articles, from the LIAS Fast Track,
- borrow materials and have them delivered to your doorstep...or even your desktop,
- access materials that your instructor has put on Electronic Reserve,
- talk to reference librarians in real time using the "Virtual Reference Service"

Access to these services is available to registered students under the Resources tab in ANGEL.

Technical Requirements and Help

Minimum technical requirements for this course are outlined at https://gis.education.psu.edu/gis/techspecs

Registered students can request technical support from the Penn State Outreach Help Desk at http://tech.worldcampus.psu.edu

Assignments

Registered students earn academic credit at Penn State by completing seven assignments (outlined below), including three individual assignments and five team assignments. **Individual and team assignments each account for 50 percent of your course grade.** Assignment instructions and evaluation criteria are published under the Lessons tab in ANGEL course management system (http://angel.psu.edu).

1. 250-word personal introduction and definition of “professionalism” (individual assignment)
2. 100% score on academic integrity quiz (individual assignment)
3. 1000-word definition of assigned GIS&T profession with reference to assigned readings (team assignment)
4. Two 500-word commentaries on assigned case studies with reference to assigned readings (team assignment)
5. 500-word original hypothetical case study that illustrates an assigned rule in the GIS Rules of Conduct (team assignment)
6. 500-word word ethical analysis of an assigned case study (team assignment)
7. 1000-word interview report, case study, and case analysis (individual assignment)

Course Policies

Assignment Due Dates

The Certificate Program in GIS and MGIS degree program were designed specifically for adult professionals who need to study part-time while they work full-time. We expect that students will occasionally encounter scheduling conflicts (Instructors do too!). When conflicts arise, students should notify instructors and request deadline extensions. Reasonable requests are granted without penalty.

Grading
Course grades are awarded on the basis of weighted percentages of assignment points earned. At the conclusion of the course your instructor calculates the percentages of possible points you earned in each of the two categories of assignments (individual and team). Each category accounts for one half of your total course score. Finally, letter grades are awarded on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course grade</th>
<th>Percent points earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>87.5-89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85-87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-84.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>77.5-79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75-77.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-74.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Withdrew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Students need to earn at least a “C” grade in all four required courses to be eligible for the Postbaccalaureate Certificate of Achievement in GIS. Only credits associated with a grade of "B" or higher may be counted toward the Master of GIS (MGIS) degree.

Deferred Grades

Penn State policy allows instructors to defer grades temporarily for students who were unable to complete course assignments on schedule due to circumstances beyond their control. Registered students request deferred grades by email to their instructor, describing the reason(s) for the request. If the instructor approves the request, he or she will reply with a date by which course assignments must be completed. This is typically the end of the sixth week of the following term. At that time, the temporary grade of “DF” must be changed, either to an appropriate grade if assignments were completed, or to an "F".

Withdrawals and Refunds

Students who officially withdraw from the class may be entitled to a pro-rated refund of tuition. For more information, see "Refund Policy" under World Campus Student Policies (http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/StudentServices_StudentPolicies.shtml)

Academic Integrity

Penn State awards academic credit, certificates, and degrees to individuals who successfully complete a course and program requirements. It almost goes without saying that “successful completion” involves doing one’s own work. Unfortunately, some students attempt to pass off the work of other students or authors as their own. Academic integrity violations are avoided by scrupulously following the citation and reference guidelines published in the Academic Integrity Guide that appears in the Resources menu at http://www.e-education.psu.edu/geog482.
**Accommodating Disabilities**

Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the World Campus in advance of your participation or visit.

**Use of Trade Names**

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the World Campus, Outreach and Cooperative Extension, the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, or The Pennsylvania State University is implied.

**Netiquette**

The term "Netiquette" refers to the etiquette guidelines for electronic communications, such as e-mail and bulletin board postings. Netiquette covers not only rules to maintain civility in discussions, but also special guidelines unique to the electronic nature of forum messages. Please review "Netiquette 101" ([http://www.onlinenetiquette.com/netiquette_101.html](http://www.onlinenetiquette.com/netiquette_101.html)) for specific guidelines.

**World Campus Policies**

For information about additional policies regarding items such as Penn State Access Accounts, course tuition, fees, and refund schedules, and drops and withdrawals, please see the World Campus Student Policies Web site ([http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/StudentServices_StudentPolicies.shtml](http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/StudentServices_StudentPolicies.shtml)).

**Disclaimer:** Please note that this Course Syllabus is subject to change. Students are responsible for abiding by such changes.