Undergraduate Minor in Transportation and Logistics

TRANS 310: SEMINAR IN TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

Instructor

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Enrollment

Students will obtain one credit based on enrollment in the Spring Quarter of their senior year. However, class activities occur during the entire year.

Students who are graduating in a quarter other than June or August, should discuss with the instructor modifying the due dates for the assignments. We have plenty of experience customizing the course based on any graduation date. In general, TRANS 310 will occur during the student’s final three quarters at Northwestern.

Course Summary

This capstone course is the culmination of the Minor. It will bring together the knowledge gained from other courses. Unlike the technical courses, this course is designed to emphasize the relationship of theory to the real world, and to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of the degree.

The important thing to remember is that while the course comprises class meetings, seminars and paper writing, the overall workload expected is similar to that of a regular one-credit course.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on two extended papers and on class participation.
Curriculum

There are three components to TRANS 310:
1. Class / Seminar attendance (spread throughout year)
   1a. Class Meetings
   1b. Other Seminars, Conferences and Events
2. Case Study Paper (due end of first week of Winter Quarter)
3. Research Paper (due end of week 8 of Spring Quarter)

Course Component #1: Class / Seminar Attendance

During your senior year (final three quarters on campus) you must attend at least 27 hours of class meetings and approved lectures, seminars or other related activities. Students should keep a “diary” or listing of the events they go to, along with brief notes (about a paragraph in length) on the speaker and subject matter of the event. This will be submitted along with the second paper at the end of Spring Quarter.

Class Meetings

The primary component of the 27 hours will be class meetings. There will be about five meetings each quarter for an hour each time. Some of these sessions will be a discussion of a contemporary issue. Students will read materials beforehand and be prepared to lead the discussion. Other sessions will comprise presentations of students’ work on their two required papers. Each quarter a mutually convenient time will be arranged. A spreadsheet will be circulated at the start of each quarter for students to indicate their time availability.

Other Seminars, Conferences and Events

The balance of the 27 hours can be drawn from any of the following:
- seminars in the Transportation Center seminar series (most of which are accessible to undergraduates, if in doubt ask the instructor). These typically are held every other Thursday from 4pm to 5pm in the lower level classroom at the Transportation Center (600 Foster Street),
- similar seminars organized by other NU departments on a transportation or logistics theme,
- the Transportation Center "Sandhouse Gang" lecture series that focuses on railroad issues, or the "Icarus Society" lecture series that deals with aviation,
- other Transportation Center special lectures such as the Patterson Lecture, Moses Lecture, Lipinski Symposium, and mini workshops organized prior to the biannual Business Advisory Council meeting,
- orientation session of the Transportation Library,
- speakers invited by the Transportation Club,
- field visits organized by the Transportation Club, and
- other professional lectures or conferences outside of NU. If you have any doubt as to whether an event is appropriate talk to the instructor.
The Transportation Center mailing listserv will keep you informed about seminar and event announcements. You can also check the Transportation Center's web page: http://transportation.northwestern.edu/

Note

Students in previous years have indicated that they should have started building up their seminar hours earlier. You need to attend an hour of class and/or other events per week on average. The Fall and Spring quarters tend to be quite active, with a lesser number of events in the Winter. So don't fall behind in the Fall Quarter.

Course Component #2: Case Study Paper (due end of first week of Winter Quarter)

A descriptive case study of a particular transportation or logistics firm or industry, or of a public policy debate. The objective is for students to read and investigate the existing literature on a subject, and to organize and report on what they have learned in the form of a six-page paper. For this paper, there is no need for any original data analysis, but students will need to use analytical skills in interpreting and organizing the existing literature. Students are expected to look at multiple sources. The subject matter can be anything in the field of transportation and logistics.

The deadline for submission is the end of the first week of Winter Quarter. Students should start thinking about a topic immediately at the start of Fall Quarter. A proposal is due by the end of week 4 of the Fall Quarter. It is a good idea to discuss it informally with the instructor before you submit. The instructor is a good resource for suggesting which of the Transportation Center faculty might be the most appropriate to act as an advisor on the paper.

You can see a listing of topics chosen by previous students at: http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~ipsavage/minor/TLMinor-papers.pdf

Course Component #3: Research Paper (due end of week 8 of Spring Quarter)

An extended analytical paper that evaluates a specific public policy initiative or a business issue. TRANS 310 is not an honors course, so the extent of the paper will be less than an that associated with a honors thesis. While purely theoretical work is welcomed, it is likely that most papers will be empirical. The paper usually involves some data collection and statistical or econometric analysis (fortunately, transportation and logistics does have many easily accessible databases for the student to use). It is possible that this paper may be an analytical extension of the literature-review paper submitted earlier in the year, but this need not be the case. The paper will typically be about ten pages, exclusive of any tables and/or data appendices.

This is a multi-disciplinary minor, so the methodology used and the style of this paper will vary according to the norms of your major.
Students should start thinking about a topic early in Winter Quarter. A proposal is due January 31. As with the first paper, it is a good idea to discuss your proposed topic informally with the instructor prior to the deadline. The instructor can then make suggestions as to which of the Transportation Center faculty might be most appropriate to act as an advisor on the paper.

Students work on their papers during Winter and Spring Quarters. The deadline for submission is the end of eighth week of Spring Quarter. In addition to the written paper, students will make a presentation of their work to the faculty and other students. Typically, this occurs during WCAS Reading Period at the end of Spring Quarter.

You can see a listing of topics chosen by previous students at: [http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~ipsavage/minor/TLMinor-papers.pdf](http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~ipsavage/minor/TLMinor-papers.pdf)

**Timeline for Those Graduating in June**

**Fall Quarter**
- Attend approximately 9 hours of class, seminars and events
- End of week 4 – Paper 1 proposal

**Winter Quarter**
- Attend approximately 9 hours of class, seminars and events
- End of week 1 – Paper 1 submitted
- January 31 – Paper 2 proposal

**Spring Quarter**
- Attend approximately 9 hours of class, seminars and events
- End of week 8 – Paper 2 submitted, diary of class/seminars/events submitted
- Reading Period – Presentation of Paper 2

**Concluding Remarks**

We think that you will find this an intellectually interesting and, almost as importantly, fun experience, and one that will round out your transportation and logistics education at Northwestern.

A huge advantage of this minor is that you are encouraged to interact with the interdisciplinary faculty of the Transportation Center. We are all very proud of you as minors, so don’t be shy in taking advantage of our knowledge. While Professor Savage will be your principal contact for the administration of TRANS 310 and your senior year, the Transportation Center has a large group of affiliated faculty, some of whom may be more appropriate advisors on the specific topics you choose for your papers.

As with the faculty, the seniors in the minor are drawn from many disciplines and have varied experiences. Much of the value of an interdisciplinary program is learning from your fellow students.