

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

EDUC 998  
Doctoral Dissertation Proposal  
Spring, 2012  
Mondays, 4:30-7:10, Thompson L019

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Prerequisites: Successful defense of Comprehensive Final Portfolio; advancement to candidacy.

Description: The purpose of this seminar is to provide information and support for students as they develop dissertation proposals for the Ph.D. in Education program.

In the seminar, students:

1. Develop and refine ideas for their doctoral dissertation,
2. Write drafts of their proposal, leading to the final document.
3. Establish a doctoral dissertation committee.

**Throughout the seminar, students should share their writing with their dissertation committee chair and incorporate his or her feedback into subsequent drafts.**

**CEHD Student Expectations**

The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) expects that all students abide by the following:

- **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.
- **Tardiness:** Prompt arrival for the beginning of class is expected.
- **Participation:** Each student is expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions. It is expected that each student will be attuned to group dynamics in order to ensure the active participation of all in the class.
- **Absence:** If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.

- **Assignments:** All assignments must be completed in MSWord and sent to me as an attachment via email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.
- **Honor Code:** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- **Exceptionalities:** Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- **Computing:** Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- **Email:** Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- **Distractions:** Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- **Dispositions:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **Campus Resources**

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY:**

Presentations, guest speakers, group discussions, individual meetings with the instructor, formal student presentations.

**LEARNER OUTCOMES:**

With support from this class in addition to students' dissertation advisors and committees, students will complete and successfully defend their doctoral dissertation proposals, as approved by their dissertation committees.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:**

This course is intended to help students meet a portion of Standard 6 of the Ph.D. in Education program:

Students will demonstrate ability to conduct, report, and defend original research in their individual specialization area.

This standard is evaluated in Assessment 6, Independent Research Skills, and is administered at the Final Comprehensive Portfolio, Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Doctoral Dissertation Defense.

**REQUIRED READING AND REFERENCE:**

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed). Washington, DC: Author.

**APA format is a very important component of the dissertation.** Since the format is complex, master it early and do not wait until the dissertation process. If you begin writing using APA format, you will not have to go back and correct errors later.

**Online Dissertation Guide:**

Use downloads for models of university format for, e.g., front matter or chapter titles:

<http://thesis.gmu.edu>

**Other Readings, Web Links, and Bulletin Board on Blackboard**

<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

**RECOMMENDED READING (STYLE):**

Strunk, W., & White, E.B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

A standard manual on style, with emphasis on clear, concise writing.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS (PROPOSAL WRITING)

These readings may be too general to be particularly helpful for your own dissertation process; nevertheless, you may find some useful suggestions or encouragement in some of these books.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day*. Boston: Owl Press.

Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2007). *Proposals that work: A guide for dissertations and grant proposals* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krathwohl, D.R., & Smith, N.L. (2005). *How to prepare a dissertation proposal: Suggestions for students in education & the social and behavioral sciences*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Machi, L.A. & McEvoy, B.T. (2008). *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Mauch, J., & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Dekker.

Ogden, E.H. (2006). *Complete Your Dissertation or Thesis in Two Semesters or Less*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Rudestam, K.E., & Newton, R.R. (2007). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Single, P.B. (2010). *Demystifying Dissertation Writing: A Streamlined Process from Choice of Topic to Final Text*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and Presenting your Thesis or Dissertation*. Available at: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

## RECOMMENDED READING (METHODOLOGY)

Bickel, R. (2007). *Multilevel analysis for applied research: It's just regression!* New York: Guilford.

Buckingham, A., & Saunders, P. (2004). *The survey methods workbook*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Creswell, J.W. (2004). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2006). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dillman, D.A., Smyth, J.D., & Christian, L.M. (2008). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Dimitrov, D. M. (2008) *Quantitative research in education: Intermediate and advanced methods*. Oceanside, NY: Whittier Publications.
- Fowler, F. (2008). *Survey research methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2006). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference, 14.0 update* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hinkle, D., & Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. (2003). *Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kreuger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (2008). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2010). *Designing qualitative research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Raudenbush, S.W., & Bryk, A.S. (2001). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Salkind, N.J. (2007). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sue, V.M., & Ritter, L.A. (2007). *Conducting online surveys*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Todman, J.B., & Dugard, P. (2001). *Single-case and small-n experimental designs: A practical guide to randomization tests*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J.S., & Sinagub, J. (2005). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weiss, R.S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press.

Wingraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R.K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

For other methodological references, check the website of Sage Publications, at [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This seminar is designed to assist students in developing a dissertation proposal. In attempting to meet this specific purpose, several classes will be devoted to GMU, CEHD, and Human Subjects Review requirements.

### **A. Requirements**

#### **Idea Paper**

Each student will be required to develop a 5-10 page idea paper describing a potential dissertation. The idea paper, which can be based upon the idea paper developed for the Comprehensive Final Portfolio review, is designed to elicit constructive feedback from the instructor, class members, the student's advisor and committee members. The paper will be presented to the class informally, and should address:

- Background, significance of problem (Chapter 1)
  - Describe background and importance of topic
  - Statement of problem
  - Research questions
- Relevant literature (Chapter 2)
  - General summary of relevant literature
  - Specific research most relevant to topic.
- Methodology (Chapter 3)
  - Design
  - Intended data collection procedures
  - Intended data analysis procedures

APA format is required of the idea paper.

#### **Individual Meetings**

Each student will meet individually or communicate electronically with the instructor twice during the semester. During these meetings, students should present drafts, report on progress to date, and be prepared to raise any questions or issues the student considers relevant. Meetings will be approximately 30 minutes in length.

## **Dissertation Proposal**

Following presentation of the idea paper, students should consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the suggestions and recommendations of the class -- along with individual meetings with the professor, and interactions with the dissertation committee -- into their dissertation proposal. This proposal will also be presented in class. The presentation should be about 20 minutes in length, followed by questions/group discussion. PowerPoint or equivalent presentation format is recommended.

## **Professional Courtesy**

Professionalism, collegiality, and courtesy are expected of all students. Students are expected not only to develop their own proposal, but also to provide positive and professional support for other students, in the spirit of a community of scholars. Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings, provide thoughtful and constructive input for other students, and communicate regularly with student colleagues on the class Blackboard site. All students are expected to attend and contribute to all idea paper presentations and proposal presentations.

## **B. Performance Based Assessments**

The formal assessment for completion of this course is the Doctoral Proposal Defense, as approved by the student's dissertation committee.

## **C. Criteria for Evaluation**

Students receive a final grade of S (Satisfactory), IP (In Progress), or F (Failure). A grade of S is given when the student completes course requirements and successfully defends the dissertation proposal to the student's dissertation committee. Students who have successfully defended their proposal during the semester are still required to attend and lend support to other students presenting their proposals in subsequent class meetings. If this seminar concludes before the proposal is approved by the student's committee, the grade of IP is given. The grade will be changed to S once the proposal is successfully defended. EDUC 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) credits can not be taken unless EDUC 998 is completed with a grade of S. The grade of F may be given in cases of significant inattendance or lack of professional cooperation.

## General Outline of Dissertation Proposals

The following suggested outline describes the basic ingredients of a dissertation proposal and their sequence in a proposal (alternatives are possible -- talk with your dissertation committee chair about how best to present your argument).

### 1. Introduction

- General statement of problem
- Background of the problem
- Significance of the problem
- Specific Statement of the Problem
- Hypotheses/research questions

### 2. Theory, literature review

### 3. Method

- Participants/Subjects and Setting
- Research design
- Data sources; dependent variables/measures; instrumentation (where relevant)
- Procedures (data collection)
- Data analysis
- Anticipated results (where relevant)
- Limitations
- Importance

Reference list

Appendices, if appropriate, e.g. a scale, instrument, etc.

Proposed Timeline



**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

| Date | Topic   |
|------|---|
| 1/23 | Introductions/Class Organization<br>Writing the Dissertation Proposal   |
| 1/30 | Library Research: Anne Driscoll<br>Johnson Center Library, 228<br>Writing with APA Format<br>University Dissertation Format   |
| 2/6  | Human Subjects Review Board   |
| 2/13 | Idea Paper Presentations  |
| 2/20 | Idea Paper Presentations  |
| 2/27 | Idea Paper Presentations or Individual Meetings   |
| 3/5  | Individual meetings (tentative)   |
| 3/12 | University Spring Break—No Class  |
| 3/19 | Dissertation Formatting: Sally Evans<br>Please watch prior to class:<br><a href="http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx">http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx</a> |
| 3/26 | Individual meetings (tentative)   |
| 4/2  | Individual meetings (tentative)   |
| 4/9  | Individual meetings (tentative)   |
| 4/16 | Individual meetings or Work on presentations  |
| 4/23 | Proposal presentations  |
| 4/29 | Proposal presentations  |
| 5/7  | Proposal presentations  |