

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

SYLLABUS

EDUC 998: Seminar: *Doctoral Dissertation Proposal*

Instructor

Tom Scruggs, PhD
University Professor

Office Hours

Mondays, 2:00 - 4:00
or by appointment

Time, Date & Room

4:30 – 7:10p
Monday
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Purposes

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 the subsequent draft.

Required Reading

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

<http://courses.gmu.edu>

Recommended Readings (Style)

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual* (6th 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.

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

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

Recommended Readings (Methodology)

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

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L., (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dillman, D.A., Smyth, J.D., & Christian, L.M. (2008). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd 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* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2006). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference, 14.0 update* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hinkle, D. & Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. (2003). *Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences* (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Kreuger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied Research* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Raudenbush, S.W., & Bryk, A.S. (2001). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Salkind, N.J. (2007). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics* (3rd 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* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

For other methodological references, check the website of Sage Publications, at www.sagepub.com

Optional Readings (Proposal)

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.

- Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2007). *Proposals that work: A guide for dissertations and grant proposals* (5th 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.
- Mauch, J., & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty* (5th ed.). New York: Dekker.
- Rudestam, K.E., & Newton, R.R. (2007). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

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/>].

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.

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
 - Data collection procedures
 - Data analysis procedures

APA format is required of the idea paper.

Individual Meetings

Each student will meet individually 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 incorporate the suggestions and recommendations of the class -- along with individual meetings with the professor, and interactions with the dissertation committee -- into a 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.

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 class. 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.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic
1, 8/27	Introductions/ Class Organization Writing the Dissertation Proposal
2, 9/3	Labor Day/no class
3, 9/10	Writing with APA Format University Dissertation Format

	Institutional Review Board: Dr. Aurali Dade
4, 9/17	Library Research: Anne Driscoll, meet in Fenwick Library Sally Evans, Dissertation Coordinator
5, 9/24	Idea Paper Presentations
6, 10/1	Idea Paper Presentations
7, 10/9 (T)	Individual conferences
8, 10/15	Individual conferences
9, 10/22	Individual conferences
10, 10/29	Individual conferences
11, 11/5	Individual conferences
12, 11/12	Individual conferences
13, 11/19	Individual conferences
14, 11/26	Individual conferences
15, 12/3	Proposal presentations (Papers due)
Exam Period, 12/10	Proposal presentations (Papers due)

General Outline of Dissertation Proposals

The following suggested outline describes the basic ingredients of a dissertation proposal and their sequence in a proposal (other alternatives are possible -- check with your advisor).

1. Introduction
 - General statement of problem
 - Background of the problem
 - Significance of the problem
 - Problem (specific)
 - Hypotheses/research questions
 2. Theory, literature review
 3. Method
 - Participants 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
Timeline