

**EDUC 998: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal (3 credits)**

**Spring 2019 Monday 4:30- 7:10 PM**  
**Peterson Hall, Room 2408**



**Instructor: Margret Hjalmarsen Ph.D.**  
**Office: West Building Room 2202**  
**Office Hours: by appointment (please email).**  
**Email address: mhjalmar@gmu.edu**

**Prerequisites:** Admission to candidacy in PhD program; successful completion of doctoral qualifying exam; and EDRS 810, 811, and 812 or their equivalents.

**University Catalog Course 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.

**Course Overview**

In the seminar, students:

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

**Course Delivery Method**

Group discussions, guest speakers, individual and small group meetings with the instructor, student presentations.

**Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

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.

**Recommended Text-style manual**

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

Iverson C, Christiansen S, Flanagan A, et al. (2007). *AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors*. (10th ed.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press

*Professional writing style 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 or AMA format, you will not have to go back and correct errors later.*

### **Recommend Readings (writing):**

These readings are very general and may or may not be particularly helpful for your own dissertation process. However, you may find some useful suggestions or encouragement in some of these books.

- Becker, H. S. (2007). *Writing for Social Scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: Chicago Press.
- Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day*. Boston, MA: Owl Press.
- Goodson, P. (2017). *Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive and powerful writing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2013). *Proposals that work: A guide for dissertations and grant proposals* (6th 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. (2016). *The literature review: Six steps to success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- 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* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Silvia, P. J. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. Washington DC: APA
- Single, P. B. (2010). *Demystifying dissertation writing: A streamlined process from choice of topic to final text*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Terrell, S. R. (2015). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: Guidelines and examples*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation*. Available at: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

### **Recommended Review (Basic Research Methods):**

- 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. (2006). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2017). *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, & Mixed Approaches* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- See also reference lists on Blackboard for specific methodology listings.*

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor

(e.g., Blackboard, hard copy). Please note that the formal assessment for completion of this course is the Doctoral Proposal Defense, as approved by the student's dissertation committee.

### **Assignments**

Throughout the semester, exercises and assignments are geared towards helping you, the students, to: (1) identify your own area of research; (2) critically evaluate relevant empirical research; (3) develop a workable research question and/or set of hypotheses; and (4) to select and explain appropriate methodological approaches relevant to the questions generated.

### **Idea Paper**

Each student will draft a short (5-7 page) overview describing the intended dissertation. This paper is designed to elicit constructive feedback from the instructor, class members, and the student's advisor and committee members. The paper will be peer reviewed.

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

### **Individual Meetings with Dissertation Chair and the Instructor**

Each student is expected to be in communication with their dissertation chair either electronically or in person throughout 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. The instructor is also available to meet with students and discuss ideas generally and help with input on research design ideas and progress toward goals; however the instructor is not likely a subject area specialist and cannot substitute for the dissertation chair.

### **Dissertation Proposal Presentation**

The recommended format will be the Three-Minute Dissertation format in which they will have three minutes to describe the core ideas of the dissertation. The goal of the Three-Minute Dissertation is to help students focus their ideas and think about how to communicate about their research concisely, clearly and succinctly. Other formats may be permitted at the discretion of the instructor (e.g. if the student would like to practice their proposal presentation prior to a scheduled defense).

### **Grading Policies**

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. If this seminar concludes before the proposal is approved by the student's committee, the **grade of IP** is given and students need to maintain continued enrollment in EDUC 998 credits. The grade will be changed to S once the proposal is

successfully defended. EDUC 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) credits cannot be taken unless EDUC 998 is completed with a grade of S. The **grade of F** may be given where there is a lack of participation or completion of courses requirements, poor attendance, or absence of professional cooperation.

### **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.

**Professional Dispositions:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

### **GMU Policies and Resources for Students**

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.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/>).

- 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 Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>**

## Tentative Schedule

	<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings / Due</b>
1/28	1	Intros / Dissertation Ideas Needs Assessment Making a Timeline Writing /Time management Freewrite : Research purpose/why it's important/ related literature/thoughts on approach	<b>Bb : Concerns</b>  <b>Bb: Writing habits (or not)</b>  Draft of Timeline / talk with chair
2/4	2	Dissertation and Thesis Office – Sally Evans	<b>Bb: Draft of Timeline due</b>
2/11	3	What goes in chapter 1, 2 and 3 Do all dissertations look the same? Dissertation Committees / Chairs Navigating the process What to expect student panel	<b>Bb: concept map (key article and/or dissertation thoughts)</b>
2/18	4	Dissertation Committees / Chairs Navigating the process What to expect student panel	
2/25	5	Planning and Writing Methods Participants Measures/Data Collection	<b>Bb: Idea Paper Due</b>
3/4	6	Writing Style Models Evaluating Chapter 1	
3/11		SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	
3/18	7	<i>Writing Day – no class meeting</i>	<b>Idea Paper: Peer Review Due</b>
3/25	8	<i>TBD</i>	
4/1	9	<i>TBD</i>	
4/8	10	<i>Writing Day-- no class meeting</i>	
4/15	11	<i>TBD</i>	
4/22	12	<i>Writing Day—no class meeting</i>	
4/29	13	Revising timeline 3 minute thesis summaries Practice defense(s)	<b>Dissertation Proposal Defense Practice</b>
5/6	14	Revising timeline 3 minute thesis summaries Practice defense(s)	<b>Dissertation Proposal Defense Practice</b>