

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

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



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**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: Select depending on discipline**

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual* (6th ed). Washington, DC: Author. *Note: A new APA manual is being released in October 2019.*

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 and help students move forward with writing the dissertation proposal. 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 and should summarize the following.

### **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 a substitute for the dissertation chair and committee members.

### **Dissertation Proposal Presentation**

As the student nears completion of the dissertation proposal, students should consider and incorporate the suggestions and recommendations of the dissertation chair along with any relevant information from individual meetings with the instructor and interactions with the dissertation committee into their dissertation proposal. This proposal will also be presented at the formal defense scheduled with the dissertation committee. Students who are ready for this step at the end of the semester are invited and encouraged to make a practice presentation to the class.

**The presentation should be about 20 minutes in length and will be followed by questions/group discussion. Students who are not ready to defend their proposal at the end of the semester will give a 3-minute Thesis Presentation.** PowerPoint or equivalent presentation format is recommended.

### **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. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

### **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 <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).
- 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

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

**Fall 2019 Schedule**  
*Subject to Change at the Discretion of the Instructor*

	<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings / Due</b>
8/26	1	Intros/ Dissertation Ideas Why am I doing a dissertation? Needs Assessment Making a Timeline Writing /Time management	<b>Bb: Concerns</b>  <b>Bb: Writing habits (or not)</b>
9/2		NO CLASS – Labor Day	<b>Think about your dissertation</b>
9/9	2	Making writing a habit Reviewing the Literature Organizing the Literature (Zotero, etc.) Concept mapping Freewrite: Research purpose/why it's important/ related literature/thoughts on approach	<b>Bb: Concept map (key article and/or dissertation thoughts)</b> Draft of Timeline / talk with chair
9/16	3	Zotero Workshop - <i>Fenwick 1014B</i> NOTE ROOM CHANGE	<b>Bb: Timeline due</b>
9/23	4	<i>Online Class Session</i> Dissertation Committees / Chairs Navigating the process Freewrite: Research purpose/why it's important/ related literature/thoughts on approach	
9/30	5	What goes in Chapter 1, 2, 3... Do all dissertations look the same?	
10/6	6	Writing Style Evaluating Chapter 1	<b>Bb: Idea Paper Due</b>
10/14	7	<i>Online Class – No in person meeting</i>	<b>Idea Paper: Peer Review Due</b>
10/21	8	Formatting the Dissertation (Sally Evans, University Dissertation & Thesis Services)	
10/28	9	<i>Writing Day - no class meeting</i>	
11/4	10	Planning your proposal defense Limitations and implications	
11/11	11	<i>Online Class – No in person meeting</i>	<b>Bb: Progress Report Due</b>
11/18	12	<i>Writing Day—no class meeting</i>	
11/25	13	<i>Writing Day—no class meeting</i>	
12/2	14	3-minute thesis summaries & Practice defense(s)	<b>Dissertation Proposal Defense Practice</b>
12/9	15	3-minutes thesis summaries Practice defense(s) ( <i>if needed</i> )	<b>Dissertation Proposal Defense Practice</b>