

## Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration 8191 Dissertation Workshop

**Semester:** Fall 2020

**Class meeting time:** Thursdays 3:30 to 6:00 pm

**Class location:** Remote

**Instructor:** Prof. Mary Tschirhart

**Contact:** [marytschirhart@gwu.edu](mailto:marytschirhart@gwu.edu), 202-994-2006, appointments online

**Course Description:** This course is for doctoral candidates who have completed coursework and examinations and are preparing for the dissertation phase of their program. The workshop covers use of models and theoretical frameworks in designing dissertation research; formulation of research questions, hypotheses, operational definitions, sampling, and data analysis approaches.

**Prerequisites:** Completion of comprehensive examinations, all other doctoral program coursework finished and now developing dissertation research ideas.

**Goals:** (1) Prepare you to develop a successful dissertation research proposal that describes a project that will make a contribution to the field. (2) Support your progress in program.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will hone ability to:

- (1) Apply theories, principles, concepts and language of research methods in discussions and written documents.
- (2) Evaluate options for the dissertation and proposal, as well as completion of the dissertation process.
- (3) Demonstrate skill in the formulation of research questions and approaches.
- (4) Give an effective oral presentation of a research proposal.
- (5) Evaluate methodology and other elements in a published dissertation and academic articles.
- (6) Present their dissertation idea(s) in multiple formats.

**Method of Instruction:** Course uses in-class experiential learning methods including mock proposal defenses, and the Socratic Method in which the instructor asks questions and facilitates discussion. Readings aid preparation for class and clarify assignments but are mostly optional. However all students will read their choice of a dissertation and academic article. Throughout the course, students will join the professor in critical thinking and analysis, including identifying and challenging assumptions, describing how context affects analyses and outcomes, examining a variety of research alternatives, and evaluating options for dissertations. The course also allows for discussion of career choices and options related to the dissertation phase of the doctoral program.

**Average Minimum Out-of-Class Time per Week to Enhance Learning:** Students should expect to spend about 5.5 hours per week on a combination of preparation for class (e.g., assignments) and working on their dissertation proposal, in addition to the about 2.5 hours per week we are meeting on-line during the course time band.

**Readings:** No purchases required – the readings are available on the course website or on-line through the library. Choices include: journal article of your choice related to your dissertation

topic, finished dissertation, and research method texts. Some optional readings are on the course website from Roberts & Hyatt's *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation* (Updated) Third Edition (Revised Edition).

#### **Assignments and Suggested Due Dates:**

- (1) **One page max single-spaced, single-sided (12 pt font) statement of your initial research idea to pursue in the course.** The statement should include a purpose statement of no more than one paragraph (preferably one sentence). The remainder of the statement should explain your initial thoughts on link to the literature, research approach, ethical considerations and anticipated challenges. **DUE SEPTEMBER 10**
- (2) **Half-page single-spaced (12 pt font) reflection on library resources/library subject specialist consultation.** Take a training session at the library on using search engines or set up a meeting with a subject specialist. For appointment: <https://library.gwu.edu/help/reference/ask-us>. Your reflection should explain what you did to take advantage of available resources and what you learned that is relevant to your dissertation. **DUE BY END OF NOVEMBER AND STARTING SEPTEMBER 24**
- (3) **Outline for your dissertation proposal.** Note what you will cover in your proposal and in what order. **DUE OCTOBER 8**
- (4) **CITI Training – Social Science with successful passing of on-line test.** If you have not done so, complete CITI training as part of the mandated Human Subjects review process. Training and test are on-line and take a few hours. Link: <https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/collaborative-irb-training-initiative-citi> **DUE BY OCTOBER 22**
- (5) **Two page max single-spaced (12 point font) review of dissertation in your field. Get approval from me for your choice of a dissertation to review. Focus in review on what in the dissertation you can use as a model of what to do and not to do in your dissertation.** **DUE BY NOVEMBER 5**
- (6) **Mock proposal defense and one page single-spaced (12 pt font) summary.** You will deliver an overview of your research proposal to members of the class for questions and feedback. A one-page summary of proposal should be provided one week prior to presentation. **DUE NOVEMBER 12, 19 or DECEMBER 3**
- (7) **One page max single-spaced (12 pt font) critique of research article relevant to your dissertation.** This review should explain what you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the article and your recommendations for a revision of it using your choice of review guidelines. **DUE DECEMBER 10**
- (8) Instructor will read draft proposals if desired.

**Grading:** This is a credit/non-credit course. Completing all assignments, along with participation in class discussions and activities, justifies credit for the course. A grade of IPG (In progress) is possible for the dissertation workshop. IPG differs from a grade of I (incomplete).

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance at every session is expected. If you are unable to attend a class, contact the professor in advance for an excused absence.

#### **Relevant Policies in The Trachtenberg School:**

1. **Academic Honesty:** Please consult the "policies" section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute

any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. See the GW Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.gwu.edu/~integrity>).

2. **The Syllabus:** This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore at his/her discretion, change content and requirements during the semester. Excused absences will be given for absences due to religious holidays as per the university schedule, but please advise the instructor ahead of time.

### **University Policies and Statements**

**A. Religious Holidays:** (1) Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance; (2) Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations; (3) Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

**B. Support for Students Outside the Classroom and Disability Support Services (DSS):** Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/).

**C. Mental Health Services 202-994-5300:** The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. [counselingcenter.gwu.edu/](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/).

**D. Academic Integrity Code:** Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity).

## Course Calendar

DATE	TOPIC	PRE-CLASS PREPARATION
9/3	Intro to Course	Ensure access to and comfort with course website
9/10	Formulating and Sharing your Research Question and Approach to it	<p>Look for published work that relates to your research interests and see if they identify a gap you would like to fill</p> <p>Post one page statement of Initial Research Idea(s) to Blackboard. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research question with statements of hypotheses or propositions if you have them</li> <li>• Link to literature</li> <li>• Research approach (methods)</li> <li>• Ethical considerations</li> <li>• Status of your pursuit of the question</li> <li>• Existing and foreseen challenges</li> <li>• Any other information you believe is relevant to our discussion of your idea</li> </ul> <p>E-mail statement of initial dissertation idea(s) to prof and classmates and be prepared to give a 9-10 minute presentation on your idea(s).</p>
9/17	Audiences: Academic Publishing and Conferencing, Other Outlets	<p>Read a reviewing guide available on the course Blackboard site, internet or other mechanism</p> <p>Choose an academic journal and read its publishing mission and criteria (Info for Authors)</p> <p>Find at least one peer-review journal article central to your topic that you wish to critique for the class (ideally from the journal you looked at for the info for authors). You'll present the ideas from your review later in the course. Use the reviewing guide you chose to help with your critique.</p>
9/24	Who cares? Research Approach and Literature Reviews	<p>Bring to session your ideas of at least three peer-review journals or research conferences that fit your planned topic and approach. Also have ideas for non-academic audiences for your research products.</p> <p>Be prepared to answer the "So what/Who cares" question for your dissertation in class.</p> <p>FIND and READ ABOUT the Library Resource/Workshop or Consultant you wish to use for the course (read the provided description to use in defending your choice) and have it scheduled or finished</p>

		If you have finished your library resource exercise, be prepared to share what may be useful to others and post your reflection on blackboard. If not this date, share later.
10/1	Theoretical/ Conceptual Grounding and Analytical Models	Get approval for choice of dissertation to review  <u>Bring a visual model of dissertation idea to class and be prepared to explain it and guide discussion of it.</u> Be prepared to explain relationships, concepts, constructs, variables in your model. Consult your favorite research methods book for ideas on how to present, visually, your model for your dissertation. If you are using a grounded theory/exploratory approach present a model that you think is flawed and thus suggests the value of an exploratory approach.
10/8	Writing the Proposal	Consider options for dissertation proposal outline and dissertation outline. Post your draft dissertation proposal outline on Blackboard (refer to templates for ideas for your outline)
10/15	Committees and Others, Special Guest: Prof. Burt Barnow	REQUIRED Skimming: Columbian College Graduate Student Handbook – section on PhD requirements and Trachtenberg School Doctoral Student Handbook
10/22	Ethical Aspects, Proposal clarity and humility	Post your ethics training certification on Blackboard (Have completed the IRB training)
10/29	Research Options	Be prepared to discuss how others approach your topic in ways other than your own choice of approach. Also be prepared to discuss how you wish to pursue and present your literature review in your dissertation and why these approaches to it.
11/5	Process and Policies, Proposal Defense	Finish your reading of another’s dissertation and be prepared to share in class your thoughts with emphasis on what informs your dissertation.
11/12	Mock Defense Presentations	Prepare what you think would be good questions to ask your classmates and consider how you would answer them for your own mock proposal
11/19	Mock Defense Presentations	Prepare what you think would be good questions to ask your classmates and consider how you would answer them for your own mock proposal
12/3	Mock Defense Presentations	Prepare what you think would be good questions to ask your classmates and consider how you would answer them for your own mock proposal
12/10	Reflections and Next Steps	Finish your reading of academic article and be prepared to share your thoughts on it in the session. Also be prepared to share how you wish to share your dissertation research findings and insights beyond the approved dissertation document.

## Additional Notes

In this workshop, we can cover many topics related to your dissertation process and career. Feel free to share your questions, concerns and ideas in sessions. The workshop is to support your development and progress in the doctoral program. My goal is for our interactions and exercises to be supportive and respectful of each participant. Therefore, I ask that you honor any requests for confidentiality and share critiques and suggestions in a positive manner. Also, embrace that students in the course are at different stages of their dissertation thinking and preparation. You have much to offer others and I encourage your thoughtful and highly engaged participation.

There are many on-line resources for doctoral students. Following is a short list. Please bring ideas for additional on-line, university and other resources to any class session.

- The All But Dissertation Survival Guide <http://www.adbsurvival.com>
- Theory in Dissertations <http://dissertationrecipes.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/04/Standards-for-Evaluating-a-Theory.pdf>
- How to write a dissertation <http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>
- Academic Phrasebook <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- <http://library.gwu.edu/etd> Open Access and Copyright
- The Professor is In – Guide to Academic Careers <http://theprofessorisin.com/>
- “The Art and Science of Scholarly Publishing” at [http://liangma.weebly.com/uploads/9/6/9/8/9698426/p\\_irog\\_2014\\_the\\_art\\_and\\_science\\_of\\_scholarly\\_publishing.pdf](http://liangma.weebly.com/uploads/9/6/9/8/9698426/p_irog_2014_the_art_and_science_of_scholarly_publishing.pdf)
- Access to rules on the APA style – one source is [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_style\\_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html)