 Course Description

Use of models and theoretical frameworks in designing dissertation research; formulation of research questions, hypotheses, operational definitions, research designs, sampling and data analysis approaches. For doctoral candidates who have completed all courses and examinations, and are preparing for their dissertation.

Goal and Objectives of the Workshop

Goal - Prepare students to develop a technically accurate and complete dissertation research proposal that describes a study that will make a contribution to the field.

Student Learning Objectives: Students are expected to be able to:

(1) Apply theories, principles, concepts, and language of research methods in class discussion and written assignments.
(2) Comprehend a range of research approaches and techniques, strategies, models, methods, analysis tools, processes, complexities, paradoxes and conventions of methodological practice used in individual doctoral dissertation research in written dissertation proposal.
(3) Demonstrate skill in the formulation of research concepts, operational definitions, research questions, and testable hypotheses, as appropriate in written dissertation proposal.
(4) Be able to successfully present an oral presentation of a research proposal.
(5) Evaluate research methodology used in a published dissertation.
(6) Be prepared to present their own dissertation idea as evidence by attendance at, and preparing an analytical report about, a dissertation presentation and by completing a mock dissertation presentation.
This workshop is intended and restricted to doctoral students at the end of their academic program and preparing for the development of their dissertation research. Students must have completed all other coursework in their Ph.D. programs. Comprehensive examinations must also be complete before taking this workshop.

**Method of Instruction**

A range of adult advanced educational techniques, predominantly in-class experiential learning methods, will be used. They involve addressing course objectives in discussions involving everyone and mock proposal defenses. The Socratic method will be used for practice in preparation for the dissertation proposal mock defense. In this method, the faculty member's role is as facilitator of a process to aid in collective learning by asking questions.

Handouts and on-line readings will be available to aid preparation and clarify processes for assignments. Throughout the course, participants will be required to join the professor in critical thinking and analysis, including identifying and challenging assumptions, describing how context affects analyses and outcomes, exploring a range of research alternatives, and using critical evaluative analysis.

**Blackboard**

All students should gain access to the course website, which will be used to post announcements and course materials. You will automatically be enrolled in the course. [http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu](http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu)

**Method of Evaluation**

Awarding of credit for this course will be based adequate completion of the assignments listed as required on the Projects page of this syllabus. Each assignment is assigned credit when completed. When all required assignments are completed then credit will be assigned for the course. Note that many students do not complete all assignments during the semester during which they are registered for the course. It is not unusual to receive the grade of In Progress Grade (IPG) until all assignments have been completed.

**Required Readings**


Recommended:


Become familiar with and use either APA style format or other approved style. You can either purchase the APA Style Manual (APAStyle.org) or use various resources about the APA style requirements available on the web: http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm

In addition, each student should own at least one additional book on the following topics: 1) writing a doctoral dissertation; 2) general social science research methods; 3) each of the methodological tools you plan to use (e.g., survey research, qualitative research, quasi-experimental design, etc. Suggestions can be found in the following list. We will discuss and compare different books on each topic during class sessions.

- **Writing the Doctoral Dissertation:**


- **Social Science Research Methods and Research Tools**

• Campbell, D. & Stanley J. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research.* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. (This is a classic)

• Cook, T. and Campbell, D. 1979. *Quasi-Experimentation.* Rand-McNally, Chicago, IL. (This is a classic)


• Sales, B.D and S.Folkman. 2000. *Ethics in Research with Human Participants.*


• Yin, R. 1989. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* Sage Publications (recommended)

**Presentation Skills**


• Koegel, Timothy J. *The Exceptional Presenter.* 2007.

Policies in Public Administration and Public Policy Courses

1. **Incompletes:** It is not unusual for students to receive a grade of IPG (In progress) for the Dissertation Workshop. IPG, unlike a regular grade of I (Incomplete) does not automatically turn into an F. However, students are expected to make every effort to complete course requirements in a timely manner.

2. **Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom:** It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.

3. **Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date:** Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.

4. **Academic Honesty:** 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 [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html))

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.”

5. **Changing Grades After Completion of Course:** No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

6. **The Syllabus:** This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, revise content and requirements during the semester.

7. **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services in Rome Hall. Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office.

8. **University Counseling Center:** The University Counseling Center (UCC), 202-994-5300, 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
Course Documents

- Dissertation Timeline
  
  Attached Files:

  - [Dissertation Timeline.docx](Dissertation%20Timeline.docx) (97.071 KB)

- Proposal - Travis St. Clair (3-Essay Model)
  
  - [Travis_St.Clair_Dissertation_Proposal (1).doc](Travis_St.Clair_Dissertation_Proposal%20(1).doc) (148 KB)

- Proposal - Emily Jones - Short Version Example
  
  - [Proposal_Emily_Jones (1).doc](Proposal_Emily_Jones%20(1).doc) (534 KB)

- Dissertation Calculator

- Dissertation Timeline
  
  - [Dissertation Timeline.docx](Dissertation%20Timeline.docx) (97.071 KB)
Course Calendar

Attached Files:

- titles and motivation combined.ppt (308.5 KB)
- Week 1 Aims.ppt (7.099 MB)
- Week 3 Concepts and Content.ppt (206.5 KB)
- Week 5 combined lit slides.ppt (473.5 KB)
- Week 11 Presentation Style.ppt (432.5 KB)
- Week 6 Research Methods.ppt (548.5 KB)

Summary Calendar

1/11 Session 1 Introduction to course
1/18 MLK - No Class
1/25 Session 2 Discuss student research questions
   Mock: Rosa Lee
   Bring copies of a brief statement of your Research Question
2/1 Session 3 Discuss student research questions (continued)
   Mock: Yvonne Watson
2/8 Session 4 Dissertation Committees/Academic Politics
2/15 President's Day - no class
2/22 Session 5 Theoretical/Conceptual Grounding/funding dissertation research
2/29 Session 6 Literature Search
3/7 Session 7 Writing the Literature Review/Introduction to academic publishing
   Exercise: Literature Search Strategy
3/14 SPRING BREAK
3/21 Session 8 Methodological Issues and writing the methods section
3/28  Session 9        Research Methods and Dissertation Titles
4/4   Session 10      Open topic
4/11  Session 11      Oral Presentations

Exercise: Dissertation Titles

4/18  Session 12     Academic Jobs - searching and careers

Guest - Denise Riebman, TS Career Services and recent PhD alum

4/25  Session 13     Conclusion and Keeping Up the Momentum

Mock: Steve Mumford

Discuss critiques of dissertations

4/27 Session 14       Makeup class - but will be replaced by Library training so no class
                       session

Session 1

Introduction

Administrative comments, course assignments and expectations, individual needs assessment, course overview. Discuss use of reference managers.

Sessions 2 - 3

Discuss Student Research Questions - (bring 1-2 page copy for each member of the class)

Readings:
Session 4

Dissertation Committees and Issues of Academic Politics

1. Dissertation committees and academic politics

2. Begin discussion of analysis of a dissertation assignment

Required Readings:

Columbian College Graduate Student Handbook - section on PhD Requirements

Trachtenberg School Doctoral Student Handbook

Session 5

Development of Conceptual and Research Approaches

1. What goes into Introduction (or Chapter 1) of a proposal?

*Introduction/Purpose of the Research* - An overview of your research topic with explanation of why it is an issue and why it is important, including historical and other contextual background and justification.

*Theories/Models/Concepts* - Brief introduction of relevant theories, models, and concepts to be detailed in literature review. Research questions/researchable problem statements, and/or hypotheses. List, explain, justify.

*Summary of the Research and Rationale* - Draw it together, what you are going to do and why.

2. Continue discussion of critical analysis assignment

3. Begin discussing individual research questions.

Required Readings:
Creswell - Chapters 1, 3


Recommended Readings:

Search using terms such as dissertation funding, dissertation grants, dissertation support combined with your field and/or research topic. Examples of organizations with known dissertation support include The NonProfit Sector Research Fund, Resources for the Future, Post-Secondary Institutional Research (airweb.org).

Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation - learnerassociates.net/dissthes/

Session 6

Literature Search and Synthesis

1. Literature search and use of reference managers (RefWorks)
2. Literature review vs. synthesis
3. What goes into Literature Review (Chapter 2) of a proposal?

Theoretical/conceptual basis - a review and discussion of key theories and/or existing approaches used to develop and justify the conceptual framework of the research

Previous research - a discussion of the relationship between previous research approaches and findings and the proposed study

Key definitions - to help a reader understand what you are trying to study

How the literature informs and directs the research - how your work will build on the current state of knowledge in the field.

Required Readings: Creswell - Chapter 2, 4-5

Recommended Reading: How to Write a Dissertation - Bedtime Reading For People Who Do Not Have Time To Sleep. Brief guide with some useful writing style tidbits.

Assignments due: Share an outline of literature search terms and sources for your topic

Session 7

Writing the Literature Review

1. Discussion of each student's literature search, review, and synthesis plan and progress

2. Discuss assignment of critical review of a dissertation

Required Readings:  
Creswell - Chapter 6

Academic Phrasebook - skim.  http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/


Purdue University OWL - APA Style  
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/

Session 8

Methodological Issues

1. Purpose (descriptive research; theory testing, etc.)

2. Design (survey, case study, quasi-experimental or experimental design, and specific description)

3. Subjects (sites and sampling)

   Discuss Mechanical Turk

4. Measurement and instrumentation

5. Procedures (including IRB process)

6. Data analysis plan
**Required Readings:** Creswell - Chapters 7-8

**GWU Non-Medical Institutional Review Board** (IRB)
gwumc.edu/research/human/index.html

**Recommended Readings:**

American Association for Public Opinion Research ... see sample forms and guidelines on "Standards & Ethics" tab: AAPOR Guidelines and Sample forms for IRB

**Exercise due:** As students are ready they should share an expanded summary of their dissertation questions, adding literature highlights and methodology. We will discuss several of these over each of the subsequent sessions.

**Session 9**

**Writing the Research Methods**

1. Continued discussion of methodological options

2. Discuss each student's methodological plan

3. What goes into Research Methods (Chapter 3) of a proposal?

Design - Describe the proposed research design, strategies involved, and design selection criteria. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of this research design including expected threats to validity. Compare your design to other research projects that may have used a similar approach, if possible.

Sites/Subjects/Sampling - Similar justification as for design

Data Collection - Provide a complete description of the key constructs you plan to examine and the methods for measurement. Include data sources, instruments, and any constraints, limitations or defined parameters to your research. Classify the variables (ordinal, interval, etc.) and describe the quantitative or qualitative techniques and software you plan to use. Explicate your reasoning in these sections.

Ethical Issues - Describe protection of human subjects and other ethical issues or concerns.
Research Procedures - Provide an implementation schedule including a research plan with identified milestones, resource requirements, and expected outcomes. Include IRB approval procedures if appropriate.

Data analysis plan - Describe and justify analytical tools and procedures

Limitations - describe overall limitations (given all aspects of methods used)

Significance - Justify contribution of the research to the field, despite its limitations

Required Readings:

caseselection.pdf

Session 10

Titles, Assumptions, Limitations, Analysis

1. Assumptions made in designing and conducting research

2. Limitations of the research and how to write them into the proposal

3. Discussion of plans for data analysis including statistical packages/software selection

Required Readings: Creswell Chapters 9-10

Exercise: Dissertation Titles

Session 11

Open Topic

Session 12

Preparation for Oral Presentation

1. Preparing for a proposal review and dissertation defense

2. Presentation styles and process
Required Readings:

**Session 13**

**Writing Style and Electronic Dissertation Publication**

1. Writing style and format issues
2. Sample Tables of Contents
3. Continue discussion of critical analysis assignment and of attendance at proposal or dissertation defense
4. Mock tables as preparation for data analysis
5. Discussion of options for data presentation

**Required Readings:**

[Electronic Dissertation Publication](http://library.gwu.edu/etd) - Review of the process of electronic dissertation publication

http://library.gwu.edu/etd

[Open Access and Copyright](http://theprofessorisin.com/)

**Session 14**

Conclusion and Keeping up the Momentum

The Professor is In - Guide to Academic Careers [http://theprofessorisin.com/](http://theprofessorisin.com/)