Syllabus

Course and Contact Information

PPOL 8191.10 Dissertation Workshop               Fall 2015
Tuesdays 6:10-8:00 PM                                  MPA 601Z
Instructor: Donna Infeld, Ph.D.                      dlind@gwu.edu
Office: MPA 601B                                          Phone: 202/994-3960
Hours: Mondays 3:00-5:00, Tuesdays 3:30-5:30, and by appointment

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.

Prerequisites

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.

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.


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)

   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

http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices
Course Calendar

Attached Files:

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

Summary Calendar

9/1  Session 1  Introduction to course
9/8  Session 2  Discuss student research questions
                      Bring copies of your Research Question
                      Mock: Kristal Vardaman
9/15 Session 3  Discuss student research questions (continued)
9/22 Session 4  Dissertation Committees/Academic Politics
9/29 Session 5  Theoretical/Conceptual Grounding
                      Funding dissertation research
10/6 Session 6  Literature Search
10/13 Session 7  Writing the Literature Review
                      Introduction to academic publishing
                      Exercise: Literature Search Strategy
10/20 Session 8  Methodological Issues
10/27 Session 9  Writing the Research Methods Section
11/3  Session 10 Research Methods and Dissertation Titles
11/10 Session 11 Oral Presentation
                      Exercise: Dissertation Titles
Schedule Details

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:
**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
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:

AAPOR Guidelines and Sample forms for IRB

On Being A Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research - National Academy of Sciences, National Academy Press, DC, 1995, 40 pages; may be read online. Go to National Academy web site and search for this title. http://www.nap.edu

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:

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:
Assignments

Assignments listed as "Required" must be completed to earn CREDIT for the course.

Required: Brief Description of Research Question

A 1-3 page (double spaced, normal font) statement of the research question to be pursued in the course. Bring copies to class for each participant.

Required: Analysis of Attending a Proposal Review

Attached Files:

- 1-proposal defense observation (1).docx (17 KB)

Each student is required to attend at least one doctoral proposal presentation or defense. These events are announced via email. Submit a brief report (maximum 5 pages) that highlights the lessons you want to remember when presenting your own proposal review presentation. (see sample linked above.)

Required: Analysis of a Published Dissertation in your field

Each student will prepare a brief report (maximum 5 pages) based on reading a complete dissertation. Selection can be made either from
recommendations made by your Dissertation Research Committee or Chairperson or from a search of dissertations via Gelman Library's online system. Again, focus on what you want to remember to do (or not to do) in your own dissertation.

**Required: CITI Training - Social Science**

You are required to complete CITI Social Science training (if you have not previously done so). CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) is part of the federally mandated Human Subjects review process. Training is an online process that takes a few hours. Completion is documented by passing an online test. We will discuss this in class. The requirement can be completed at any point during the semester. Link to the site is: [http://www.gwumc.edu/research/human/citi.html](http://www.gwumc.edu/research/human/citi.html)

**Required: Mock Proposal Presentation**

Attached Files:

- Presentation_Evaluation_Form.doc (24 KB)

Each participant will present an overview of his/her research proposal. The Examining Committee in the Mock Review will be the other students in the class. Each student is encouraged to invite the Chairperson or other member of his/her Dissertation Advisory Committee to attend the presentation. A one-page abstract of the proposal should be prepared and distributed to each class member one week prior to presentation. Class participants should come prepared with questions, concerns, and issues as though they were outside examiners members of a Dissertation Advisory Committee.

The Dissertation Proposal Presentation Evaluation Form will be used to give feedback from those who are in the audience to the presenter.

**Required (one or both): Reference Manager Training or Consultation with Library Subject Specialist**

If you are not already using a reference manager, then you are required to learn to use one. You can sign up for an individual RefWorks training session at: gwlib-Refworks@groups.gwu.edu

If you already are comfortable using either RefWorks or some other reference manager, then instead you should meet with a subject specialist at Gelman Library to get advice about effectively using search engines available. Our subject specialists are: Shmuel Ben-Gad (shmuelb@gwu.edu) or David Ettinger (dettingr@gwu.edu)
Exercise: Share Outline of Literature Search Topics

Share via e-mail or bring to class an inclusive outline of the topics you intend to search for and the search process you plan to use for your literature review. We will discuss these in class.

Exercise: Dissertation Titles

Develop dissertation titles: Come up with at least three titles for your work. Under each, write at least two things in favor of using the title and two things that make it less suitable. We will discuss these in class so bring enough copies for each student and faculty.
**Course Documents**

- Dissertation Timeline

  Attached Files:

  - Dissertation Timeline.docx (97.071 KB)

- Proposal - Travis St. Clair (3-Essay Model)

  Attached Files:

  - Travis_St.Clair_Dissertation_Proposal (1).doc (148 KB)

- Proposal - Emily Jones - Short Version Example

  Attached Files:

  - Proposal_Emily_Jones (1).doc (534 KB)

- Dissertation Calculator