

EDPL 895: RESEARCH CRITIQUE SEMINAR
Fall 2004

Instructor: Laura W. Perna
Time: Monday, 4:15 pm to 7:00 pm
Place: 0202 Benjamin Building
Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm & by appointment
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Course description:

This course is designed to provide students with the skills, information, and resources that are necessary to develop a research/dissertation proposal. This course will also examine strategies for completing proposals and dissertations. A variety of research designs and approaches to educational research will be explored. Through this course, students will become both informed consumers of research and effective designers of research.

Students should develop a research topic EARLY in the course, as the writing assignments are based on students' individual research topics. Students are expected to use this course to make as much progress as possible toward developing their research topics into completed research/dissertation proposals.

Writing assignments are based on students' individual research topics and are designed to help those beginning at different stages in the process to make substantial progress towards completing an acceptable proposal. Successive drafts of proposals will be discussed with each student's dissertation/thesis advisor, critiqued by classmates, and reviewed by the instructor.

Course prerequisites:

Students taking this course should have:

1. Completed their course work in research methods and statistics;
2. Taken their comprehensive examination (or plan to take it this semester);
3. Substantially completed their course requirements; and
4. Agreed on a research topic with their advisor.

Role of the dissertation/thesis advisor:

Students are responsible for consulting with their dissertation/thesis advisor regarding the selection of their research topic. This course is not designed to help students select a research topic and will be of little benefit to students who cannot focus on a fairly well

defined research topic within the first three weeks of the semester. This course is not a substitute for frequent consultation with the dissertation/thesis advisor and committee members. The dissertation/thesis advisor – not the course instructor – plays the primary role in helping students with their dissertations. Students are expected to meet regularly (e.g., bi-weekly) with their dissertation/thesis advisor throughout the semester. Meetings with committee members may also be helpful.

Course objectives:

1. Identify research problems, develop corresponding research questions, and critically evaluate such research questions;
2. Conceptualize research;
3. Understand the uses of both quantitative and qualitative research designs and approaches to research;
4. Identify, review, interpret, and critique qualitative and quantitative research studies;
5. Understand the strengths and limitations of various methodologies for research studies reported in the literature;
6. Identify and consider ethical issues and dilemmas in educational research;
7. Develop the elements of a sound research proposal, including an appropriate research design;
8. Serve as a support group for classmates in the development of a research proposal and form the foundation for support for the implementation of such research; and
9. Identify potential sources of financial support for your research.

Suggested pattern of learning each unit of EDPL 895:

1. Read and understand the assigned readings. Note questions about what you do not understand for discussion in class. Focus on broad research design issues rather than details of statistics or other research tools.
2. Learn to recognize examples of research discussed in the text.
3. Write your own research problem statement, research design description, results, etc.
4. As needed, reinforce your understanding and increase your knowledge of foundation material (e.g., statistics) by referring to other resources.

Expectations:

1. Attendance and participation

Each student is expected to come to class prepared, having read and contemplated the readings, and ready to share his or her perspectives, questions, and insights. This course is conducted primarily as a seminar, with some lecturing on topics that are not addressed in the assigned readings. Students are expected to discuss and debate the issues posed in lectures and readings and participate in class exercises.

2. APA style

All formal work should utilize APA style as described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition. Please refer to the following website for information on the citation of electronic resources:
www.apastyle.org/electref.html.

3. Ethical practices

All students are expected to abide by the code of academic integrity throughout this course and all other courses offered at the University of Maryland. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Student Honor Council. Students who have questions about the code, or their obligations under the code, should contact the instructor or the Office of Judicial Programs and Student Ethical Development (4-8204). The full text of the University's honor code is available on the web at:
www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/jpo/code_acinteg.html.

4. Timeliness of work

Because most assignments are sequential, keeping up with assigned deadlines is critical. Students are expected to complete all required readings and assignments as scheduled. Incompletes will be granted only for exceptional circumstances.

5. Special needs

A student with a documented disability or any other special needs who wishes to discuss academic accommodations should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

6. Religious holidays

Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, students will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor as soon as possible of any intended absences for religious observances.

7. Instructor responsibilities

Students should expect that the instructor for this course will:

- Be prepared for class, read and return students' work in a timely manner, and be interested and engaged in students' projects;

- Remember that each student brings a different research background, experience, and perspective to this course;
- Learn from the students;
- Help students identify sources of additional substantive and methodological expertise, as needed;
- Meet with students individually or in groups upon request and be available in person, by telephone, and by e-mail; and
- Work hard, have fun, and empower students to plan and engage in high quality research.

Course evaluation and key assignments:

1. Dissertation critique - 10%
Identify and critique a dissertation on a related research topic. Provide a 4-5 page written report to the instructor that summarizes the central components of the dissertation design (usually chapters 1 -3), including the significance of the topic, theoretical framework, research questions, and research methods, as well as describes the strengths and weaknesses of the design.
2. Individual presentation on research methodology – 10%
Describe a problem, research question, and research design that illustrate how a particular research technique is used. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the research technique with regard to the research problem. Provide a copy of an article using the technique and a short bibliography for each member of the class. Give a 10-15 minute presentation and provide a 6-8 page written report to the instructor.
3. Funding for research – 5%
Prepare a brief paper (1-2 pages) identifying three potential sources of funding for your proposed research. Describe how these sources were located and why these sources may be likely to fund the proposed research.
4. Proposal critiques – 5%
Complete a written critique of two peers' research proposals.
5. Research proposal – 60%
The instructor and class members will review proposal drafts as specified on the class schedule. Students should be prepared to discuss each proposal draft in class on the date due. Always submit the most complete version of the proposal. All papers should be double-spaced with 12-point font.

Proposal papers:

#1 – Statement of the problem and research questions

Description of the proposed research topic or problem, why the topic was selected, and the significance/importance of the topic or problem for theory and practice. The paper should also briefly indicate the conceptual

frameworks under consideration. The paper should demonstrate both the originality and manageability of the research. (2-3 pages double-spaced)

2 – Literature review (Chapter 2)

The literature review should describe the purposes and organization of the literature reviewed, identify the major bodies of literature to be reviewed, and include between 10 and 20 citations. (5-8 page minimum for Chapter 2)

3 – Research design and methodology (Chapter 3)

Description of how the study will be conducted, including specific research questions (and if appropriate, hypotheses), assumptions underlying the study, the theory or conceptual framework to be used, a rationale for study design (i.e., the fit between research questions and methods employed), the study population, research and data analysis methodologies, and definition of variables. (3-5 page minimum, double-spaced)

4 – “First” complete draft of research proposal: Chapter 1 (Introduction); Chapter 2 (Literature review); Chapter 3 (Research design and methodology)

Revised and expanded draft of papers #1, #2, and #3.

5 – “Second” complete draft of research proposal

Revised and expanded draft. Minimum of 25 pages, double-spaced. Students should strive to produce a draft proposal that can be completed and defended before the end of the next semester.

Evaluation of "second" complete draft of proposal:

Chapter 1 – 20%

Chapter 2 – 20%

Chapter 3 – 20%

6. Research proposal presentation – 10%

Mock oral “defense” of research proposal. Students will provide a brief (10-12 minute) overview of their proposal and then respond to questions from the class “committee.”

Required readings:

1. Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. ISBN 0-7619-2442-6
2. Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. ISBN 0-7619-1962-7

3. *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN 1-557-98791-2
4. Coursepack of readings. A compilation of additional readings has been duplicated and is available from Bel Jean Printing, Inc. at the Maryland Book Exchange, 5 Baltimore Avenue (Route 1), College Park, 927-2510.

Coursepack readings:

Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2003). Validity and reliability. In *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, pp. 157-175. (ISBN 0-07-248560-4)

Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2003). Internal validity. In *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, pp 176-195.

Girden, E. R. Introduction. In *Evaluating research articles*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 1-21.

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). The oral presentation. In *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp. 131-146).

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). Money for research: How to ask for help. In *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp. 147-172).

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). Funding student research. In *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp. 173-180).

Madsen, D. (1992). Working with the research adviser and advisory committee. In *Successful dissertations and theses: A guide to graduate student research from proposal to completion*, 2nd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, pp. 24 - 31.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). Review of related literature. In *Designing qualitative research*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 43-54. (ISBN 0-7619-1340-8)

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). Selecting a sample of people, actions, events, and/or processes. In *Designing qualitative research*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 72-78.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). Defending the value and logic of qualitative research. In *Designing qualitative research, 3rd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 191-203.

McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (1997). Guidelines for research proposals. In *Research in education: A conceptual introduction, 4th Edition*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., p. 582.

Suggested readings:

1. Skim and selectively read research from the top peer-reviewed journals in your field. For higher education and college student personnel these journals include: *Journal of Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Research in Higher Education, Journal of College Student Development, Higher Education Abstracts, NASPA Journal*.
2. Skim and selectively read sections of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to learn about the types of research that are funded by grants, foundations, and federal agencies.
3. Download and review the Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide and the Dissertation and Thesis Templates. Both are available at: <http://www.vprgs.umd.edu/publications>.
4. Visit the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation site: <http://dissertations.umi.com/umd>. This site provides an overview of the process, features a Word to PDF converter, and answers many of the Frequently Asked Questions regarding the submission process.

Other resources:

Becker, H.S. (1988). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Birley, G., & Moreland, N. (1998). *A practical guide to academic research*. Herndon, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., & Williams, J.M. (1995). *The craft of research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0-226-06583-9

Delamont, S., Atkinson, P., & Parry, O. (1997). *Supervising the Ph.D.: A Guide to success*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P. (1996). *Educational research: Introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing.

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertation and grant proposals*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Madsen, D. (1992). *Successful dissertations and theses: A guide to graduate student research from proposal to completion*, 2nd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*, 4th Edition. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.

Rankin, E. (2001). *The work of writing: Insights and strategies for academics and Professionals*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.