

## **DISSERTATION CRITIQUE SEMINAR**

### **EDPA 895**

TERM: Spring 1998  
TIME: Tuesday, 7:00 to 9:45 p.m.  
LOCATION: Room 2101, Benjamin Building  
INSTRUCTOR: Frank A. Schmidtlein  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course provides information and exercises to help students develop a dissertation proposal. The seminar includes: (1) a brief review of research approaches and methodologies; (2) descriptions of the major components of proposals and completed dissertations; (3) discussions of strategies for completing proposals and dissertations; and (4) preparation and critiques of student proposal drafts.

### **COURSE RATIONALE**

Students should take this course after defining a research topic and are expected to make as much progress as possible toward developing it into a completed dissertation proposal during the semester. Since students will begin the course with their dissertation topics defined and elaborated to varying degrees, not all are expected to have a fully completed proposal by the end of the course. Everyone, however, is expected to make sufficient progress to be able to complete a proposal within the following semester.

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

### **PREREQUISITES**

Students taking the 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.

## CONDUCT OF THE COURSE

Students are responsible for selecting their research topic in consultation with their advisor. This course is not intended to help students select a research topic, and will be of little benefit to students who cannot focus on a fairly well defined dissertation topic within the first three weeks of the semester. This course is not a substitute for frequent consultations with dissertation advisors/directors and dissertation committee members. The dissertation advisor plays the major role in helping students with their proposals and dissertations, not the course instructor. Therefore, during the semester, students should regularly (e.g. bi-weekly) discuss their proposals with their dissertation advisors and committee members.

All students are expected to complete required readings and assignments as scheduled and to contribute fully during class discussions. Since critical reviews of student proposals are major components of the course, it is essential that all assignments be submitted on time.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Sufficient copies of all written assignments should be submitted to provide one for each class member and the instructor. Students should be prepared to discuss each proposal draft in class on the dates assigned. **Double space all drafts.**

Paper #1 (February 3) - Research topic overview. Two to three page paper describing proposed research topic or problem, why it was selected, and its importance. The paper also should briefly indicate how the topic/problem will be studied (if a more complete version of this paper has been completed prior to this seminar that version should be submitted). Always submit the most complete version of your proposal.

Paper #2 (February 24) - Research design and methodology chapter. Draft indicating how the study will be conducted, including specific research questions and hypotheses, assumptions and/or theories underlying the study, rationale for study design, study population and research and data analysis methodologies (3-5 page minimum).

Paper #3 (March 17) - Drafts of Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (Literature Review). Chapter 1 should discuss the nature of the problem and its significance, and the expected contributions of the proposed study. Chapter 2 should describe the purposes and organization of the literature review and identify the major bodies of literature to be reviewed (5-8 page minimum).

Paper #4 (April 14) - Preliminary draft of proposal. (Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Literature Review, Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology). The preliminary draft will consist of revised and expanded drafts of papers #1, #2 and #3.

Paper #5 (May 5) - Draft proposal. Revised and expanded draft of Paper #4; should include drafts of Chapters 1 and 3 and, at a minimum, a detailed framework for completing Chapter 2 (description of purposes and organization of literature review and outline of bodies of literature to be reviewed). It is expected that paper #5 will be at least 25 double spaced pages. Students should seek to produce a draft proposal that can be completed and defended before the end of the next semester.

Class presentation (to be scheduled) - Brief oral presentation and analysis of an EDPA dissertation (see seminar outline).

## GRADING

Grades for the seminar will be based on the following:

Quality of Proposal Draft (Paper #5):	<u>70%</u>
Chapter 1 - Introduction	20%
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	20%
Chapter 3 - Research Design and Methodology	30%
Progress towards completing proposal	20%
Participation in class critiques and presentations	<u>10%</u>
Total Grade	100%

## READINGS

Required reading assignments are in the books and monographs listed below. A bibliography of additional books and articles is attached that will be helpful in preparing proposals and writing dissertations.

Becker, H. S. (1988) *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Booth, W. C.; Colomb, G. G.; and Williams, J. M. (1995) *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rudestam, K.E. and Newton, R.R. (1992) *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Gell, S.K. (1995) "Review of Literature", *Factors Associated With Completion of Non-Completion of Doctoral Dissertations: Self Direction and Advisor/Advisee Congruity*. (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Maryland, College Park. pp. 20-75. (Copy can be obtained at cost from Bel Jean Printing, Inc. at the Maryland Book Exchange, 4500

Baltimore Avenue [Route #1] College Park, 301-927-2510).

EDPA Dissertations (to be selected by student from library).

Dissertation Manual. Select the style manual you will use in preparing your dissertation and papers for the course (e.g. APA, Chicago, Turabian, MLA). See attached bibliography for specific references.

Recommended reading:

Delamont, S.; Atkinson, P.; and Parry, O. (1997) *Supervising the PhD: A Guide To Success*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

## **SEMINAR OUTLINE**

### **Week 1 - January 27**

#### **Introduction**

- Review of course content and requirements
- The dissertation process
- Developing the description of a research topic

### **Week 2 - February 3**

#### **HAND IN PAPER # 1: RESEARCH TOPIC DESCRIPTION**

#### **Selecting a research topic**

##### Required readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. ix-xi, pp. 3-19
- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. ix-xii, 1-47

##### Suggested reading

- Castetter and Heisler, pp. 1-15
- Delamont, et.al, pp. 35-50.

#### **Choosing a style manual**

### **Week 3 - February 10**

#### **IDENTIFY EDPA DISSERTATION FOR REVIEW**

##### Class Discussion

- Student research topic descriptions

##### **Methods of inquiry**

##### Reading

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 20-41

##### **Designing a research study**

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 60-78
- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 48-63

##### Suggested reading

- Castetter and Heisler, pp. 16-37, 46-47

##### **Role of theory and assumptions in a research study**

#### **HAND IN: NAME OF STYLE MANUAL YOU PLAN TO USE**

### **Week 4 - February 17**

#### **Designing a research study (cont.)**

##### Reading

- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 85-110

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EDPA DISSERTATIONS** (specific attention given to design and methodology chapters)

### **Week 5 - February 24**

#### **Developing literature review chapter**

Resources for completing a literature review

Readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 45-59
- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 64-84,
- Becker, pp. 135-149

Recommended reading

- Castetter and Heisler, pp. 38-45

**HAND IN PAPER #2: DRAFT OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND  
METHODOLOGY CHAPTER**

**Week 6 - March 3**

**Critiques of Research Design and Methodology drafts**

**Week 7 - March 10**

**Introductory Chapter: purpose and content**

Readings

- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 234-254

Recommended reading

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- Castetter and Heisler, pp. 7-15

**STUDENT PRESENTATION OF EDPA DISSERTATIONS** (specific attention given to literature review and introductory chapters)

**Week 8 - March 17**

**Developing Findings, Analyses, Conclusions and  
Recommendations chapters**

Readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 79-128
- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 111-148, 175-200

Class Discussion

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EDPA DISSERTATIONS** (with focus on "findings, analysis, and recommendations chapters)

**HAND IN PAPER # 3 - DRAFTS OF CHAPTER 1, INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 2, LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Week 9 - March 24**

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 - March 31**

**Critiques of Introductory and Literature Review drafts**

**Informed consent and ethical concerns**

Readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 196-205
- Booth Colomb, & Williams, pp. 255-258

**Week 11 - April 7**

**Writing Tips**

**Using the style manual**

Readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 145-167
- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, pp. 149-174, 201-233
- Becker, pp. 1-134, 150-167

**Week 12 - April 14**

**Student panel.** Students who recently have completed dissertations will discuss their experiences and provide suggestions

Readings

- Rudestam and Newton, pp. 134-144, 168-195
- Becker, pp. 150-163

Recommended reading

- Castetter and Heisler, pp. 48-73

**HAND IN PAPER #4 - REVISED DRAFTS OF CHAPTERS 1, 2, & 3**

**Week 13 - April 21**

**Critiques of revised drafts of Chapters 1, 2 & 3**

Class Discussion

**Week 14 - April 28**

**Expectations for faculty advising**

**Factors affecting degree completion**

**Week 15 - May 5**

**HAND IN PAPER # 5: PROPOSAL CHAPTERS 1, 2 & 3**

**Discussion of proposals and their further development**

**Week 16 - May 12**

- Preparing for proposal defense.
- Course evaluation
- Social event