GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

SYLLABUS

EDUC 998: Seminar: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

Professor
C. Stephen White Ph.D.

Office Hours
Mondays, 3:00 - 4:00;
Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00  or by appointment

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Robinson A 451A
(703) 993-2031

Time, Date & Room
Mondays, 4:30 – 7:10p
Robinson A251

Purposes

The purpose of this seminar is for students to develop dissertation proposals for the Ph.D. in Education program.

In the seminar, students:
1. Develop and refine ideas for their doctoral dissertation,
2. Write a draft of their proposal (including, e.g., introduction, clearly defined statement of the problem, review of the literature, and methods to be used)
3. Establish a doctoral dissertation committee.

Throughout the seminar, students should share their writing with their committee chair and incorporate his or her feedback into the subsequent draft.

GSE Syllabus Statements of Expectations

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See http://mail.gmu.edu and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Required reading:

*Online Dissertation Guide:*

http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/phd/dissertation-guide.htm#downdoc

Other readings, web links, and bulletin board on Blackboard.

**Recommended readings (style):**


**Recommended readings (methodology):**


For other methodological references, check the website of Sage Publications, at [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)

"Recommended" readings (proposal).


Section I deals with writing proposals; Section II contains several proposals with the authors’ comments about them. Section I includes a decision tree for proposal writing and a chapter on qualitative research.


Deals with choosing a topic, developing research questions and doing pilot studies. Also deals with the personal and psychological issues of this phase of one’s graduate career.


Presents a broad overview. Includes selecting chair of committee, selecting a topic, writing the proposal, defending it, and converting a dissertation to a book.


Addresses issues of proposals for qualitative research; reader friendly.


Focuses on preparing a research dissertation (i.e., final product), though some of what it says about the dissertation is also relevant to the proposal. Deals with identifying a topic and formulating questions, individual chapters in a dissertation, selecting a committee, and defense of the dissertation. Has a useful chapter on nuts and bolts of presenting quantitative results.

Requirements

This seminar is designed to assist students in developing a dissertation proposal. In attempting to meet this specific purpose, several classes will be devoted to GMU, GSE, and Human Subjects Review requirements. Each student will be required to develop a 2-5 page idea paper describing a potential dissertation. The idea paper is designed to elicit constructive feedback from the instructor, class members, the student’s advisor and committee members (20-30 minutes, informal).
Following presentation of the idea paper, students should incorporate the suggestions and recommendations of the class, individual meetings with the professor, and interactions with the dissertation committee into a dissertation proposal. This proposal will also be presented in class. The presentation should be 20 - 30 minutes, followed by questions/group discussion. PowerPoint or equivalent presentation format is recommended.

Professionalism, collegiality, and courtesy are expected of all students. Students are expected not only to develop their own proposal, but also to provide positive and professional support for other students. All students are expected to attend and contribute to all idea paper presentations and proposal presentations.

**Evaluation**

Students receive a final grade of S (Satisfactory) or IP (In Progress). A grade of S is given when the student successfully defends the dissertation proposal. If this seminar concludes before a proposal is approved a grade of IP is given. The grade will be changed once the proposal is successfully defended.

**Course Schedule**

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Guidelines for Review of Idea Papers

☑ Are the components of the paper clear and concise?
☑ Does the project address an important educational need?
☑ Does the project have implications beyond a local setting?
☑ Is the project intended to make a new and unique contribution to knowledge?
☑ Is the project based on a firm scholarly foundation?
☑ Does the project have a conceptual, analytical component?
☑ Does the proposed strategy or approach fit the goal?
☑ Is the proposed project methodologically sound?
☑ Does the student seem to have the necessary qualifications to carry out the project? If not, what seems to be needed?
☑ Does the project seem feasible?

Format of Dissertation Proposals

The following suggested outline describes the basic ingredients of a dissertation proposal and their sequence in a proposal (other alternatives are possible).

1. Introduction
   - General statement of problem
   - Background of the problem
   - Significance of the problem
   - Problem (specific)
   - Hypotheses/research questions

2. Literature review

3. Method
   - Participants and setting
   - Research design
   - Data sources; dependent variables; instrumentation (where relevant)
   - Procedures (data collection and analysis)
   - Anticipated results (where relevant)
   - Limitations
   - Importance

Reference list
Timeline