EDUC 998
The Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
Summer 2004

Instructor: Joe Maxwell
Office: Robinson A-353D.
Office hours: by appointment
Phone: 993-2119
Email: jmaxwell@gmu.edu
Class meeting: Mon/Wed 4:30-7:10 (not every week), Robinson A251

Course Goals

1. Be able to design a research study that is appropriate for a doctoral dissertation. This design will include the following components:
   a. formulating the purposes of the study,
   b. developing a conceptual framework for the study,
   c. generating appropriate research questions,
   d. planning relevant and feasible methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis,
   e. anticipating plausible validity threats, and developing ways to deal with these,
   f. assessing and addressing ethical issues in the research.

2. Be able to communicate your design clearly and coherently in a research proposal.

READINGS

Required texts:

Recommended books on research design

Recommended books on dissertations and writing
COURSE STRUCTURE

There are three components of the course:

1. **A class meeting twice a week.** Normally, each class will be divided into two parts. The first part will be devoted to mini-lectures on key topics and discussions of the course readings. The second half (after the first class) will consist of student consultations with me and the rest of the class (similar to those in EDRS 812) on your dissertation design. You will have consultations with the entire class every 2-3 weeks until the end of the course. These consultations are opportunities for you to get feedback on your plans from me and the other students, and to incorporate this feedback in your thinking. This part of the class is designed as a semester-long support group for your design and proposal work.

2. **Assigned readings.** These readings are not extensive, but they are an essential part of the course; they are necessary preparation for the assignments and for your proposal.

3. **Short assignments and proposal draft.** The two short assignments are structured to help you develop parts of your research design and proposal. See below for more details on these. Guidelines for these assignments will be handed out in class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The final paper for this course is a first draft of your dissertation proposal. Since you may be just be starting to plan your research, the draft can be considerably more tentative and hypothetical than one that you would actually submit to your committee. However, you will need to write up, in proposal form, a tentative plan for your dissertation research by the end of the course.

To help you accomplish this, there are several short written assignments during the course that deal with different aspects of your planned dissertation study. These are “memos” similar to those I used in EDRS 812. These have been designed as stepping stones toward your research proposal, even though not everything in them will be directly usable as parts of the proposal. Each of these assignments is a "come as you are party"--there is no single "right" way to do them, and the most important thing is to use them to develop your own thinking. I will give you detailed feedback on these assignments; the guidelines for each assignment will be given out and discussed during the course.

For these reasons, you will need to have at the beginning of the course (or to quickly develop) an idea for a thesis-size project that you will be working on a proposal for. An “idea memo” for this project (a preliminary statement of what you want to do and why) is due the second class meeting.

You should share these two memos (revised if necessary) and your proposal draft with your committee, since they need to be aware of, and have input on, what you plan to do.

Attendance and participation in class meetings are required. By "class participation" I don't mean speaking brilliantly or often, but giving feedback to others in section, bringing your
own work for feedback, and hearing and taking account of feedback on your work. Sharing your work with peers is an integral part of this course.

The only grading options for the course are S (satisfactory) or IP (in progress). A grade of S will be given when you successfully defend your dissertation proposal. If the course ends before your proposal is approved, you will receive a grade of IP; this will be changed to S once you have successfully defended your proposal.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becker, <em>Writing for Social Scientists</em>, Preface and Chapters 1, 2, and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudestam &amp; Newton, <em>Surviving Your Dissertation</em>, Chapters 2, 8 and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Topics, Goals, and Personal Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Initial “idea memo” due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maxwell, <em>Qualitative Research Design</em>, Chapters 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locke et al., <em>Proposals that Work</em>, Chapters 1 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudestam and Newton, <em>Surviving Your Dissertation</em>, Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mills, &quot;On Intellectual Craftsmanship,&quot; in <em>The Sociological Imagination</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miles &amp; Huberman, <em>Qualitative Data Analysis</em>, Chapter 1; Chapter 2, pp. 16-18; Chapter 4, pp. 72-75 (memoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Using the Library—Sarah Sheehan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maxwell, <em>Qualitative Research Design</em>, Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locke et al., <em>Proposals that Work</em>, Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becker, <em>Writing for Social Scientists</em>, Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudestam and Newton, <em>Surviving Your Dissertation</em>, Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
June 14  **Research Questions**

Assigned:
Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, Chapter 4.

June 16  **Conceptual Integration**

*Problem statement/conceptual framework memo due*

Assigned:

Recommended:
Rudestam and Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation*, Chapter 5

June 21  **Making Decisions about Methods**

Assigned:
Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, Chapter 5 (relationships, selection, data collection)

Recommended:
Miles & Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Chapter 2
Weiss, *Learning From Strangers*, Chapter 2

July 12  **Choosing Data Analysis Strategies and Software**

Assigned:
Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, Chapter 5 (data analysis)

Recommended:
Maxwell and Miller, “Categorizing and Connecting as Components of Qualitative Data Analysis” (Blackboard)
Miles & Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Chapter 2, Parts C- E (pp. 25-39)
Weitzman & Miles, *Computer Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis*.

July 14  **Communicating a Qualitative Research Design in a Proposal**

*Questions and methods memo due*

Assigned:
Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, Chapter 7 and Appendix
Locke et al., *Proposals that Work*, Chapter 6
Recommended:
Marshall & Rossman, Designing Qualitative Research, Chapter 4, pp. 139-142 (Vignette 22), and Chapter 5
the rest of Becker, Writing for Social Scientists
Strauss, Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists, Chapters 10 & 12
Strauss & Corbin, Basics of Qualitative Research, Chapter 13

July 28  Validity

Assigned:
Maxwell, Qualitative Research Design, Chapter 6
Locke et al., Proposals that Work, Chapter 4, pp. 92-95

Recommended:
Miles & Huberman, Qualitative Data Analysis, Chapter 10, Parts B & C (pp. 262-280)
Joseph Maxwell, "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research" (on reserve)
Kirk & Miller, Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research
Fielding & Fielding, Linking Data
Whyte, Learning From the Field, Chapters 8-9
Strauss & Corbin, Basics of Qualitative Research, Chapter 14
Becker, Sociological Work, Chapters 2 and 3

Aug 2-Aug 9  Individual meetings

Aug 16  Draft proposals due