GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

SYLLABUS

EDUC 998: Seminar: *Doctoral Dissertation Proposal*

**Instructor**
Tom Scruggs, PhD
University Professor

**Office Hours**
Mondays, 2:00 - 4:00
or by appointment

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Finley Building 201A
MS 1F2
703-993-4138

**Time, Date & Room**
4:30 – 7:10p
Monday
Robinson A243

Purposes

The purpose of this seminar is to provide information and support for students as they 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 drafts of their proposal, leading to the final document.
3. Establish a doctoral dissertation committee.

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

**Required Reading**

**Online Dissertation Guide:**

Use downloads for models of university format for, e.g., front matter or chapter titles:

http://thesis.gmu.edu

**Other Readings, Web Links, and Bulletin Board on Blackboard**

http://courses.gmu.edu
Recommended Readings (Style)


*APA format is a very important component of the dissertation.* Since the format is complex, master it early and do not wait until the dissertation process. If you begin writing using APA format, you will not have to go back and correct errors later.


A standard manual on style, with emphasis on clear, concise writing.

Recommended Readings (Methodology)


For other methodological references, check the website of Sage Publications, at www.sagepub.com

**Optional Readings (Proposal)**

These readings may be too general to be particularly helpful for your own dissertation process; nevertheless, you may find some useful suggestions or encouragement in some of these books.


Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and Presenting your Thesis or Dissertation*. Available at: http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/
Campus Resources

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].

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, CEHD, and Human Subjects Review requirements.

Idea Paper

Each student will be required to develop a 5-10 page idea paper describing a potential dissertation. The idea paper, which can be based upon the idea paper developed for the Comprehensive Final Portfolio review, is designed to elicit constructive feedback from the instructor, class members, the student’s advisor and committee members. The paper will be presented to the class informally, and should address:

- Background, significance of problem (Chapter 1)
  - Describe background and importance of topic
  - Statement of problem
  - Research questions
- Relevant literature (Chapter 2)
  - General summary of relevant literature
  - Specific research most relevant to topic.
- Methodology (Chapter 3)
  - Design
  - Data collection procedures
  - Data analysis procedures

APA format is required of the idea paper.

Individual Meetings
Each student will meet individually with the instructor twice during the semester. During these meetings, students should present drafts, report on progress to date, and be prepared to raise any questions or issues the student considers relevant. Meetings will be approximately 30 minutes in length.

**Dissertation Proposal**

Following presentation of the idea paper, students should incorporate the suggestions and recommendations of the class -- along with 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 about 20 minutes in length, followed by questions/group discussion. PowerPoint or equivalent presentation format is recommended.

**Professional Courtesy**

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, in the spirit of a community of scholars. Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings, provide thoughtful and constructive input for other students, and communicate regularly with student colleagues on the class Blackboard site. 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), IP (In Progress), or F (Failure). A grade of S is given when the student completes course requirements and successfully defends the dissertation proposal to the student's dissertation committee. Students who have successfully defended their proposal during the semester are still required to attend and lend support to other students presenting their proposals in class. If this seminar concludes before the proposal is approved by the student’s committee, the grade of IP is given. The grade will be changed to S once the proposal is successfully defended. EDUC 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) credits can not be taken unless EDUC 998 is completed with a grade of S. The grade of F may be given in cases of significant inattendance or lack of professional cooperation.

**Course Schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,  8/27</td>
<td>Introductions/ Class Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the Dissertation Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,  9/3</td>
<td>Labor Day/no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>3,  9/10</td>
<td>Writing with APA Format</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University Dissertation Format</td>
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</table>
Institutional Review Board: Dr. Aurali Dade

Library Research: Anne Driscoll, meet in Fenwick Library
Sally Evans, Dissertation Coordinator

4, 9/17 Idea Paper Presentations
5, 9/24 Idea Paper Presentations
6, 10/1 Idea Paper Presentations
7, 10/9 (T) Individual conferences
8, 10/15 Individual conferences
9, 10/22 Individual conferences
10, 10/29 Individual conferences
11, 11/5 Individual conferences
12, 11/12 Individual conferences
13, 11/19 Individual conferences
14, 11/26 Individual conferences
15, 12/3 Proposal presentations (Papers due)
Exam Period, 12/10 Proposal presentations (Papers due)

General Outline 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 -- check with your advisor).

1. Introduction
   - General statement of problem
   - Background of the problem
   - Significance of the problem
   - Problem (specific)
   - Hypotheses/research questions
2. Theory, literature review
3. Method
   - Participants and setting
   - Research design
   - Data sources; dependent variables/measures; instrumentation (where relevant)
   - Procedures (data collection)
   - Data analysis
   - Anticipated results (where relevant)
   - Limitations
   - Importance

Reference list
Timeline