

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
Ph.D. in Education and Human Development

EDUC 998 (001) - Doctoral Dissertation Proposal  
3 Credits, Fall 2016  
Monday/4:30-7:10 p.m. West 1008, Fairfax Campus

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

Admission to candidacy in PhD program; successful completion of doctoral qualifying exam; and EDRS 810, 811, and 812 or their equivalents.

**University Catalog Course Description**

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.

**Course Overview**

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.

**Course Delivery Method**

Presentations, guest speakers, group discussions, individual meetings with the instructor, formal student presentations.

**Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

With support from this class in addition to students' dissertation advisors and committees, students will complete and successfully defend their doctoral dissertation proposals, as approved by their dissertation committees.

## Professional Standards

This course is intended to help students meet a portion of Standard 6 of the Ph.D. in Education program:

Students will demonstrate ability to conduct, report, and defend original research in their individual specialization area. This standard is evaluated in Assessment 6, Independent Research Skills, and is administered at the Final Comprehensive Portfolio, Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Doctoral Dissertation Defense.

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards:  
Not Applicable

## Required Texts

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual* (6th ed). Washington, DC: Author.

**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.

## CEHD's Online Dissertation Guide:

The College of Education and Human Development has an approved template that incorporates many APA features. It will be posted on blackboard for you to retrieve.

## Recommended Reading (Style):

Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

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

## Recommend Readings (on proposal writing):

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.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day*. Boston, MA: Owl Press.

Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2007). *Proposals that work: A guide for dissertations and grant proposals* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krathwohl, D. R., & Smith, N. L. (2005). *How to prepare a dissertation proposal: Suggestions for students in education & the social and behavioral sciences*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Machi, L. A. & McEvoy, B. T. (2008). *The literature Review: Six steps to success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Mauch, J., & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Dekker.

Ogden, E. H. (2006). *Complete your dissertation or thesis in two semesters or less*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2007). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Single, P. B. (2010). *Demystifying dissertation writing: A streamlined process from choice of topic to final text*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation*. Available at: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

### **Recommended Reading (Research Methods):**

Bickel, R. (2007). *Multilevel analysis for applied research: It's just regression!* New York, NY: Guilford.

Buckingham, A., & Saunders, P. (2004). *The survey methods workbook*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2006). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2008). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Dimitrov, D. M. (2008). *Quantitative research in education: Intermediate and advanced methods*. Oceanside, NY: Whittier Publications.

Green, S. B., & Salkind, N. J. (2014). *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and understanding data* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Fowler, F. (2008). *Survey research methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2006). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hinkle, D., & Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. (2003). *Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kreuger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4<sup>th</sup>ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2014). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2015). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2011). *A realist approach for qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2001). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Salkind, N. J. (2007). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Sue, V. M., & Ritter, L. A. (2011). *Conducting online surveys* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Todman, J. B., & Dugard, P. (2011). *Single-case and small-n experimental designs: A practical guide to randomization tests* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (2005). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Wingraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

Please note that the formal assessment for completion of this course is the Doctoral Proposal Defense, as approved by the student's dissertation committee. Idea paper presentations and final proposal presentations must be uploaded to Blackboard.

### **• Assignments and Examinations**

#### **Idea Paper Presentation**

Each student will lead a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation describing the intended dissertation. This presentation, 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
  - Anticipated Research questions
- Relevant literature (Chapter 2)
  - General summary of relevant literature
  - Specific research most relevant to topic
- Methodology (Chapter 3)
  - Thoughts on Design
  - Intended data collection procedures
  - Intended data analysis procedures

## Individual Meetings

Each student is invited to meet individually or communicate electronically with me throughout 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.

## Dissertation Proposal Presentation

Following presentation of the idea paper, students should consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the suggestions and recommendations of the class -- along with any individual meetings with the professor, and interactions with the dissertation committee -- into their 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.

- **Other Requirements**

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

- **Course Performance Evaluation Weighting**

N/A

- **Grading Policies**

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 subsequent class meetings. 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 in attendance or lack of professional cooperation.

## **General Outline of Dissertation Proposals**

The following suggested outline describes the basic ingredients of a dissertation proposal and their sequence in a proposal (alternatives are possible -- talk with your dissertation committee chair about how best to present your argument).

### 1. Introduction

General statement of  
problem Background of  
the problem  
Significance of the  
problem

Specific Statement of the Problem  
Hypotheses/research questions

### 2. Theory, literature review

### 3. Method

Participants/Subjects 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,

Appendices, if appropriate, (e.g. a scale, instrument, etc.)

Proposed Timeline\

## **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

## **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

## **GMU Policies and Resources for Students**

### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.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/>).
- 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 Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.**



## Class Schedule

### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Work Due
8/29	Introductions/Class Organization/Writing the Dissertation Proposal	
9/5	Labor Day – <u>University Closed</u>	
9/12	Writing with APA Format University Dissertation Format Library Research: Anne Driscoll	Research Questions
9/19	Variations on Dissertation Proposals	Outline of Methods
9/26	Human Subjects Protections Office of Research Integrity & Assurance Guest Speaker Idea Paper Presentations	Dissertation Committee Form TBA
10/3	Idea Paper Presentations	TBA
10/10	Columbus Day – <u>Class meets on 10/11</u>	
10/11	Idea Paper Presentations	TBA
10/17	Individual meetings	
10/24	Individual meetings	
10/31	Dissertation Formatting: Sally Evans (Please watch prior to class) <a href="http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx">http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx</a>	
11/7	Individual meetings	
11/14	Individual meetings	
11/21	Individual meetings	
11/28	Proposal presentations	TBA
12/5	Proposal presentations	TBA

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

#### Assessment Rubric(s)

N/A