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

EDUC 998 (001) - Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
3 Credits, Spring, 2017
Monday/4:30-7:10 p.m. Research 201, Fairfax Campus

Faculty
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Office hours: Monday 2:30-4:00 p.m. (and always by appt.)
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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


**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):


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.


Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation*. Available at: [http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/](http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/)

**Recommended Reading (Research Methods):**


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 cannot 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 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Work Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Introductions/Class Organization/Writing the Dissertation Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Writing with APA Format</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
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<td>University Dissertation Format</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Library Research: Anne Driscoll</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Variations on Dissertation Proposals</td>
<td>Outline of Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Human Subjects Protections</td>
<td>Submit Dissertation</td>
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<td>Office of Research Integrity &amp; Assurance</td>
<td>Committee Form</td>
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<td>Guest Speaker</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
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<td>2/20</td>
<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
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<td>3/13</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>Dissertation Formatting: Sally Evans</td>
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<td>(Please watch prior to class)</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
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<td>4/17</td>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
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<td>4/24</td>
<td>Proposal Presentations</td>
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<td>5/1</td>
<td>Proposal Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

**Assessment Rubric(s)**

N/A