George Mason University

College of Education and Human Development
Ph.D. in Education and Human Development

EDUC 998 (003) - Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
3 Credits, Spring, 2018
Monday 4:30-7:10 p.m. Innovation 323, Fairfax Campus

Faculty
Name: Anastasia Kitsantas
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.

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.

Recommended 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)
  o Thoughts on Design
  o Intended data collection procedures
  o Intended data analysis procedure

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.

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

4. Reference list

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

6. Proposed Timeline (for presentation only)

- **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.

**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.

**Professional Dispositions**

See [https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/](https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/)

**Class Schedule**
### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Work Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>Introductions/Class Organization/Writing the Dissertation Proposal</td>
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<td>1/29</td>
<td>University Dissertation Format</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
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<td>Library Research: Anne Driscoll</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing with APA Format</td>
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<td>2/5</td>
<td>Variations on Dissertation Proposals</td>
<td>Outline of Methods</td>
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<td>Human Subjects Protections</td>
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<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
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<td>2/19</td>
<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Idea Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>Spring Break-No Class</td>
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<td>3/19</td>
<td>Individual meetings</td>
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<td>Individual meetings</td>
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<td>Dissertation Formatting: Sally Evans</td>
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<td>Dissertation Formatting, Timeline, and Planning</td>
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<td>4/16</td>
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<td>4/30</td>
<td>Proposal presentations</td>
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Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.
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 https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/).

• 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/.

• For information on student support resources on campus, see https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus

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

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