



**College of Education and Human Development  
PhD in Education**

**Spring 2021  
EDUC 998: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal  
CRN: 23862—3 Credits**

**Meeting Day:** Monday

**Meeting Dates:** 1/25/21 to 5/3/21

**Meeting Time:** 4:30- 7:10 PM (*please log on to Zoom 10 minutes early so the online system is not overloaded*)

**Meeting Location:** Online

**Instructor:** Sheri Berkeley, Ph.D.

**Office Location:** online

**Office Hours:** by appointment (please email).

**Phone:** email best contact

**Email address:** sberkele@gmu.edu

❖ **Note:** This syllabus may change according to class needs.

**Prerequisites**

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**

Work on research proposal that forms basis for doctoral dissertation, under guidance of dissertation chair and doctoral committee. Notes: May be repeated, but no more than 6 credits of [EDUC 998](#) may satisfy doctoral degree requirements. Offered by [School of Education](#). May be repeated within the degree for a maximum 12 credits.

**Course Overview**

In the seminar, students:

1. Develop and refine ideas for their doctoral dissertation;
2. Establish a doctoral dissertation committee;
3. Write drafts of their proposal, leading to the final document.

**Course Delivery Method**

Group discussions, guest speakers, individual and small group meetings with the instructor, student presentations. Some sessions will be online.

### **Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

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.

### **Technical Requirements**

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: [Browser support](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers) ([https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#supported-browsers](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers))

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: [Tested devices and operating systems](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems)

([https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems))

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- It is strongly recommended that students use a headset microphone for use with the web conferencing tool.

### **Expectations**

- *Technical Competence*: Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from University technical services.
- *Technical Issues*: Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly.
- *Netiquette*: Because discussions are a critical aspect of this course, it is important that you plan to log on in a space free from distractions and are able to turn on audio as required during conversations. The expectation is that cameras will be on for the duration of the class.

### **Required Text**

*Professional writing style is a very important component of the dissertation. Since the format is complex, master it early and do not wait until the dissertation completion.*

American Psychological Association (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed). American Psychological Association.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000> ISBN-13:9781433832154

*Kinesiology Student Option*

American Medical Association (2020). *AMA manual of style: A guide for authors and editors* (11th ed). Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/jama/9780195176339.003.0003> ISBN-13: 978-0190246556

**Recommended Readings (Writing)**

*These readings are very general and may (or may not) helpful for your own dissertation process. However, you may find some useful suggestions or encouragement in some of these books.*

Becker, H. S. (2007). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. (2nd ed.). Chicago Press.

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

Goodson, P. (2017). *Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive and powerful writing*. Sage.

Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2013). *Proposals that work: A guide for dissertations and grant proposals* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). 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 University Press.

Machi, L. A. & McEvoy, B. T. (2016). *The literature review: Six steps to success*. Corwin Press.

Ogden, E. H. (2006). *Complete your dissertation or thesis in two semesters or less*. 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.). Sage.

Silvia, P. J. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. American Psychological Association.

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

Terrell, S. R. (2015). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: Guidelines and examples*. Guilford Press.

Consider also Joseph Levine, *Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation*. Available at:

<http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

**Recommended Review (Basic Research Methods)**

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Prentice Hall.

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

Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2017). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, & mixed approaches* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Sage.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor. Please note that the formal assessment for completion of this course is the Doctoral Proposal Defense, as approved by the student's dissertation committee. All assignments are pass/fail.

### **Assignments**

Throughout the semester, exercises and assignments are geared towards helping you, the students, to: (1) identify your own area of research; (2) critically evaluate relevant empirical research; (3) develop a workable research question and/or set of hypotheses; and (4) to select and explain appropriate methodological approaches relevant to the questions generated.

### ***Structured Abstract, Proposal Outline, and Proposal Draft***

Each student will draft a structured abstract, an outline, and a first draft of the dissertation proposal chapters. These assignments are designed to help students move forward with writing their final dissertation proposals. Completion of the assignments will enable feedback to be provided from the instructor, class members, and the student's advisor and committee members.

### ***Writing Reflections***

Developing consistent writing habits is an important part of being a productive scholar in academia. At the beginning of the course, you will set writing goals and develop a plan for attaining those goals. Throughout the course you will reflect on those goals, and your progress toward them, and revise your plan as needed.

### ***Committee Selection & Status Update***

Each student is expected to be in communication with their dissertation chair either electronically or in person 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. The student will be expected to provide an update on these discussions during the class as evidence of progress toward dissertation proposal completion.

### ***Dissertation Proposal Presentation (Research Methods)- project based assessment***

Students will give a formal 10-15 minute oral presentation of their research methods (with PowerPoint slides and relevant handouts) and receive feedback from the instructor and classmates to assist the student with refining their ideas. As the student nears completion of the dissertation proposal, students should consider and incorporate the suggestions and recommendations of the dissertation chair along with any relevant information from individual meetings with the instructor and interactions with the dissertation committee into their dissertation proposal.

### **Assignment Weighting**

Structured Abstract	10
Proposal Outline	10
Proposal Draft	25
Writing Reflections (2)	20
Committee Selection & Status Update	10
Dissertation Proposal Presentation	25
Total	100

### **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.

If this seminar concludes before the proposal is approved by the student's committee, the **grade of IP** is given and students need to maintain continued enrollment in EDUC 998 credits. EDUC 999 (Doctoral Dissertation) credits cannot be taken unless EDUC 998 is completed with a grade of S. The grade will be changed to S once the proposal is successfully defended.

The **grade of F** may be given where there is a lack of participation or completion of courses requirements, poor attendance, or absence 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.

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

### **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education & 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 <https://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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).

- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

#### **Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

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

#### **Course Schedule**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>EDUC 998 (Mondays)</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Homework</b>
1	1/25	Course Overview & Syllabus	
2	2/1	Navigating the Dissertation Process: GMU Requirements & Procedures <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Required dissertation committee members</li> <li>2. Overview of the dissertation processes</li> <li>3. Professional etiquette</li> <li>4. Importance of submitting complete/accurate paperwork and meeting deadlines</li> </ol> Writing a Dissertation: Content of the Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch 1: Purpose of your research study, concept map, research questions</li> <li>• Ch2: The literature review process, organizing the literature</li> <li>• Ch3: Research methods (design, independent &amp; dependent variables)</li> </ul> Goal Setting & Time Management  <b>HW Activity:</b> Reflect & set a goal!	<b>DUE:</b> Structured abstract

3	2/8	<b>Group A:</b> <i>Individual Conferences</i> —Goal setting & initial dissertation planning <b>Group B:</b> Writing Day	<b>Group A:</b> Initial outline of chapters 1, 2, & 3
4	2/15	<b>Group B:</b> <i>Individual Conferences</i> —Goal setting & initial dissertation planning <b>Group A:</b> Writing Day	<b>Group B:</b> Initial outline of chapters 1, 2, & 3
5	2/22	<b>GUEST PRESENTER:</b> Writing Center - Negotiating Resistance to Writing (Dr. Courtney Massie)  <b>HW Activity:</b> Reflect on your progress (& adjust your plan if needed)!	<b>DUE:</b> Writing reflection
6	3/1	<i>WRITING DAY</i>	<b>DUE:</b> Writing Reflection <b>DUE:</b> Chair Update
7	3/8	<b>Group A:</b> <i>Methods Presentations</i> <b>Group B:</b> <i>WRITING DAY</i>	<b>Group A:</b> Draft of Chapters 1, 2, & 3
8	3/15	<b>Group A:</b> <i>Methods Presentations</i> <b>Group B:</b> <i>WRITING DAY</i>	
9	3/22	<b>Group B:</b> <i>Methods Presentations</i> <b>Group A:</b> <i>WRITING DAY</i>	<b>Group B:</b> Draft of Chapters 1, 2, & 3
10	3/29	<b>Group B:</b> <i>Methods Presentations</i> <b>Group A:</b> <i>WRITING DAY</i>	
11	4/5	Revising & Polishing your Proposal & Dissertation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APA Basics</li> </ul>	
12	4/12	Developing a Project Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research study timeline (including IRB approval)</li> <li>• Funding (competitions &amp; deadlines)</li> <li>• Graduation (adhering to university deadlines)</li> <li>• Dissemination (professional conferences, 3-minute thesis competition)</li> <li>• Job Interviews</li> </ul>	
13	4/19	<i>WRITING DAY</i>	
14	4/26	<i>WRITING DAY</i>	<b>DUE:</b> Status Update

15	5/3	<b>GUEST PRESENTER:</b> University Thesis and Dissertation Office (Sally Evans)	
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