

## **PPOL 8191.10 Dissertation Workshop**

Semester: Fall 2018

Meeting time: Tuesdays 6:10-8:00 PM

Location: MPA 601Z

Instructor: Donna Infeld, Ph.D.

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Office: MPA 601B

Phone: 202/994-3960

Hours: Mondays 1-3, Tuesdays 5-6, and by appointment

### **Course Description**

Use of models and theoretical frameworks in designing dissertation research; formulation of research questions, hypotheses, operational definitions, research designs, sampling and data analysis approaches. For doctoral candidates who have completed all courses and examinations, and are preparing for their dissertation.

**Prerequisites:** This workshop is intended and restricted to doctoral students at the end of their academic program and preparing for the development of their dissertation research. Students must have completed all other coursework in their Ph.D. programs. Comprehensive examinations must also be complete before taking this workshop.

### **Goal and Objectives of the Workshop**

**Goal** - Prepare students to develop a technically accurate and complete dissertation research proposal that describes a study that will make a contribution to the field.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Students are expected to be able to:

- (1) Apply theories, principles, concepts, and language of research methods in class discussion and written assignments.
- (2) Comprehend a range of research approaches and techniques, strategies, models, methods, analysis tools, processes, complexities, paradoxes and conventions of methodological practice used in individual doctoral dissertation research in written dissertation proposal.
- (3) Demonstrate skill in the formulation of research concepts, operational definitions, research questions, and testable hypotheses, as appropriate in written dissertation proposal.
- (4) Be able to successfully present an oral presentation of a research proposal.
- (5) Evaluate research methodology used in a published dissertation.
- (6) Be prepared to present their own dissertation idea as evidence by attendance at,

and preparing an analytical report about, a dissertation presentation and by completing a mock dissertation presentation.

### **Method of Instruction**

A range of adult advanced educational techniques, predominantly in-class experiential learning methods, will be used. They involve addressing course objectives in discussions involving everyone and mock proposal defenses. The Socratic method will be used for practice in preparation for the dissertation proposal mock defense. In this method, the faculty member's role is as facilitator of a process to aid in collective learning by asking questions.

Handouts and on-line readings will be available to aid preparation and clarify processes for assignments. Throughout the course, participants will be required to join the professor in critical thinking and analysis, including identifying and challenging assumptions, describing how context affects analyses and outcomes, exploring a range of research alternatives, and using critical evaluative analysis.

### **Average minimum amount of out-of-class or independent learning expected per week:**

- Students expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours per week on a combination of preparation for class (readings and exercises), working on course deliverables, and working on their own dissertation proposals.

### **Required Readings**

- Creswell, J. *Research Design - Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Third Edition. Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4129-6

Roberts, Carol M. 2010. *The Dissertation Journey*. 2nd Edition, Corwin.

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### **Course Assignments**

**Brief Description of Research Question:** A 1-3 page (double spaced, normal font) statement of the research question to be pursued in the course. Bring copies to class for each participant.

**Analysis of Attending a Proposal Review:** Each student is required to attend at least one doctoral proposal presentation or defense. These events are announced via email. Submit a brief report (maximum 5 pages) that highlights the lessons you want to remember when presenting your own proposal review presentation. (see sample linked above.)

**Analysis of a Published Dissertation in your field:** Each student will prepare a brief report (maximum 5 pages) based on reading a complete dissertation. Selection can be made either from recommendations made by your Dissertation Research Committee or Chairperson or from a search of dissertations via Gelman Library's online system. Again, focus on what you want to remember to do (or not to do) in your own dissertation.

**CITI Training - Social Science:** You are required to complete CITI Social Science training (if you have not previously done so). CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) is part of the federally-mandated Human Subjects review process. Training is an online process that takes a few hours. Completion is documented by passing an online test. We will discuss this in class. The requirement can be completed at any point during the semester. Link to the site is: <https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/collaborative-irb-training-initiative-citi>

**Mock Proposal Presentation:** Each participant will present an overview of his/her research proposal. The Examining Committee in the Mock Review will be the other students in the class. Each student is encouraged to invite the Chairperson or other member of his/her Dissertation Advisory Committee to attend the presentation. A one-page abstract of the proposal should be prepared and distributed to each class member one week prior to presentation. Class participants should come prepared with questions, concerns, and issues as though they were outside examiners members of a Dissertation Advisory Committee. The Dissertation Proposal Presentation Evaluation Form will be used to give feedback from those who are in the audience to the presenter.  [Presentation Evaluation Form.doc](#)

**Consultation with Library Subject Specialist:** If you are not already using a reference manager, then you are **required** to learn to use one. You can sign up for an individual RefWorks training session at: [gwlib-Refworks@groups.gwu.edu](mailto:gwlib-Refworks@groups.gwu.edu) If you already are comfortable using either RefWorks or some other reference manager, then instead you should meet with a subject specialist at Gelman Library to get advise about effectively using search engines available. Our subject specialists are: Shmuel Ben-Gad ([shmuelb@gwu.edu](mailto:shmuelb@gwu.edu)) or David Ettinger ([dettingr@gwu.edu](mailto:dettingr@gwu.edu))

**Grading:** This is a credit/non-credit course. All assignments must be completed to earn CREDIT for the course.

Awarding of credit for this course will be based adequate completion of all assignments. Each assignment is assigned credit when completed. When all required assignments are

completed then credit will be assigned for the course. Note that many students do not complete all assignments during the semester during which they are registered for the course. It is not unusual to receive the grade of In Progress Grade (IPG) until all assignments have been completed.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Class attendance is required unless students contact the professor in advance. Active participation is critical to benefit from the course and move toward proposal development.

## **University Policies**

### **University Policy on Religious Holidays**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

### **Support for Students Outside the Classroom**

#### **Disability Support Services (DSS)**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

#### **Mental Health Services 202-994-5300**

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. [counselingcenter.gwu.edu/](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/)

### **Academic Integrity Code**

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without

appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity)

### **Policies in Public Administration and Public Policy Courses**

- Incompletes: It is not unusual for students to receive a grade of IPG (In progress) for the Dissertation Workshop. IPG, unlike a regular grade of I (Incomplete) does not automatically turn into an F. However, students are expected to make every effort to complete course requirements in a timely manner.
- Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
- Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
- Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.
- The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, revise content and requirements during the semester.
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### **Course Calendar**

#### **Weekly Schedule**

8/28	Session 1	Introduction to the course
9/4	Session 2	Discuss student research questions  <i>Bring copies of a brief statement of your Research Question</i>
9/11	Session 3	Discuss student research questions (continued)
9/18	Session 4	Dissertation Committees/Academic Politics
9/25	Session 5	Theoretical/Conceptual Grounding/funding dissertation research
10/2	Session 6	Literature Search
10/9		FALL BREAK
10/16	Session 7	Writing the Literature Review/Intro to academic publishing

*Exercise: Literature Search Strategy*

10/23	Session 8	Methodological Issues and writing the methods section
10/30	Session 9	Research Methods and Dissertation Titles
11/6	Session 10	Academic Job Search
		Guest - Denise Riebman, TS Career Services (tentative)
11/113	Session 11	Open Session
11/20	Session 12	Oral Presentations

*Exercise: Dissertation Titles*

11/27	Session 13	Writing Styles and Issues
12/4	Session 14	Conclusion and Keeping Up the Momentum

*Discuss critiques of dissertations*

**Detailed Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**[Session 1](#)**

**Introduction**

Administrative comments, course assignments and expectations, individual needs assessment, course overview. Discuss use of reference managers.

**[Sessions 2 - 3](#)**

Discuss Student Research Questions - (bring 1-2 page copy for each member of the class)

**Readings:**

[The All But Dissertation Survival Guide](#) - Free newsletter and materials to help you along. <http://www.adbsurvivalguide.com>

## Session 4

### **Dissertation Committees and Issues of Academic Politics**

1. Dissertation committees and academic politics
2. Begin discussion of analysis of a dissertation assignment

#### **Required Readings:**

Columbian College Graduate Student Handbook - section on PhD Requirements  
Trachtenberg School Doctoral Student Handbook

## Session 5

### **Development of Conceptual and Research Approaches**

1. What goes into Introduction (or Chapter 1) of a proposal?

*Introduction/Purpose of the Research* - An overview of your research topic with explanation of why it is an issue and why it is important, including historical and other contextual background and justification.

*Theories/Models/Concepts* - Brief introduction of relevant theories, models, and concepts to be detailed in literature review. Research questions/researchable problem statements, and/or hypotheses. List, explain, justify.

*Summary of the Research and Rationale* - Draw it together, what you are going to do and why.

2. Continue discussion of critical analysis assignment
3. Begin discussing individual research questions.

#### **Required Readings:**

Creswell - Chapters 1, 3

Theory in Dissertations <http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Standards-for-Evaluating-a-Theory.pdf>

#### **Recommended Readings:**

Search using terms such as dissertation funding, dissertation grants, dissertation support combined with your field and/or research topic. Examples of organizations with

known dissertation support include The NonProfit Sector Research Fund, Resources for the Future, Post-Secondary Institutional Research (airweb.org).

[Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation](http://learnerassociates.net/dissthes/) - learnerassociates.net/dissthes/

## **Session 6**

### **Literature Search and Synthesis**

1. Literature search and use of reference managers (RefWorks)
2. Literature review vs. synthesis
3. What goes into Literature Review (Chapter 2) of a proposal?

Theoretical/conceptual basis - a review and discussion of key theories and/or existing approaches used to develop and justify the conceptual framework of the research

Previous research - a discussion of the relationship between previous research approaches and findings and the proposed study

Key definitions - to help a reader understand what you are trying to study

How the literature informs and directs the research - how your work will build on the current state of knowledge in the field.

**Required Readings: Creswell** - Chapter 2, 4-5

**Recommended Reading:** [How to Write a Dissertation](#) - Bedtime Reading For People Who Do Not Have Time To Sleep. Brief guide with some useful writing style tidbits.

<http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>

**Assignments due:** Share an outline of literature search terms and sources for your topic

## **Session 7**

### **Writing the Literature Review**

1. Discussion of each student's literature search, review, and synthesis plan and progress
2. Discuss assignment of critical review of a dissertation



**Required Readings:** Creswell - Chapter 6

Academic Phrasebook - skim. <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

The Art and Science of Scholarly Publishing, 2014 [Pirog on Publishing.pdf](#) 

Purdue University OWL - APA Style  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/>

**Session 8**

**Methodological Issues**

1. Purpose (descriptive research; theory testing, etc.)
2. Design (survey, case study, quasi-experimental or experimental design, and specific description)
3. Subjects (sites and sampling)

Discuss Mechanical Turk

4. Measurement and instrumentation
5. Procedures (including IRB process)
6. Data analysis plan

**Required Readings:** Creswell - Chapters 7-8

[GWU Non-Medical Institutional Review Board](http://gwumc.edu/research/human/index.html) (IRB)  
[gwumc.edu/research/human/index.html](http://gwumc.edu/research/human/index.html)

**Recommended Readings:**

American Association for Public Opinion Research ... see sample forms and guidelines on "Standards & Ethics" tab: [AAPOR Guidelines and Sample forms for IRB](#)

**Exercise due:** As students are ready they should share an expanded summary of their dissertation questions, adding literature highlights and methodology. We will discuss several of these over each of the subsequent sessions.

**Session 9**

## **Writing the Research Methods**

1. Continued discussion of methodological options
2. Discuss each student's methodological plan
3. What goes into Research Methods (Chapter 3) of a proposal?

**Design** - Describe the proposed research design, strategies involved, and design selection criteria. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of this research design including expected threats to validity. Compare your design to other research projects that may have used a similar approach, if possible.

**Sites/Subjects/Sampling** - Similar justification as for design

**Data Collection** - Provide a complete description of the key constructs you plan to examine and the methods for measurement. Include data sources, instruments, and any constraints, limitations or defined parameters to your research. Classify the variables (ordinal, interval, etc.) and describe the quantitative or qualitative techniques and software you plan to use. Explicate your reasoning in these sections.

**Ethical Issues** - Describe protection of human subjects and other ethical issues or concerns.

**Research Procedures** - Provide an implementation schedule including a research plan with identified milestones, resource requirements, and expected outcomes. Include IRB approval procedures if appropriate.

**Data analysis plan** - Describe and justify analytical tools and procedures

**Limitations** - describe overall limitations (given all aspects of methods used)

**Significance** - Justify contribution of the research to the field, despite its limitations

### **Required Readings:**

Harnessing Discovery: Writing a Strong Mixed-Methods Proposal, Lieber 2016.  
[caseselection.pdf](#)

### **Session 10**

#### **Titles, Assumptions, Limitations, Analysis**

1. Assumptions made in designing and conducting research

2. Limitations of the research and how to write them into the proposal
3. Discussion of plans for data analysis including statistical packages/software selection

**Required Readings: Creswell Chapters 9-10**

**Exercise: Dissertation Titles**

**[Session 11](#)**

Open Topic

**[Session 12](#)**

**Preparation for Oral Presentation**

1. Preparing for a proposal review and dissertation defense
2. Presentation styles and process

**Required Readings:**

**[Session 13](#)**

**Writing Style and Electronic Dissertation Publication**

1. Writing style and format issues
2. Sample Tables of Contents
3. Continue discussion of critical analysis assignment and of attendance at proposal or dissertation defense
4. Mock tables as preparation for data analysis
5. Discussion of options for data presentation

**Required Readings:**

[Electronic Dissertation Publication](#) - Review of the process of electronic dissertation publication

<http://library.gwu.edu/etd> [Open Access and Copyright](#)

**[Session 14](#)**

Conclusion and Keeping up the Momentum

The Professor is In - Guide to Academic Careers <http://theprofessorisin.com/>