

Syllabus: Conf. 798 ~ Masters Thesis Research Proposal

Spring 2008: Tuesdays, 7:20 pm¹
Arlington 253
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Introduction

This course is designed to help you develop a research proposal for the masters' thesis. It includes framing a question, developing a literature review and designing an appropriate methodology for your study. You will form a masters' thesis committee and review the Human Subjects Review Board's guidelines and procedures.

Assignments and Required Readings

The weekly schedule (below) includes assignments. You will be required to complete all assigned readings. The course will be conducted as a learning community seminar. Each week we will explore the implications of the readings for your research proposals. Please note that some weeks we will combine the masters and doctoral students' sections; **all meet 7:20-9:30 pm**. When it is indicated that there are "separate sections", **masters students will meet 7:20-8:30 pm**; doctoral students will meet 8:30-9:30 pm. Some weeks there will be individual appointments (in March). We will conclude the semester with presentations of your proposals.

The following book is required and available in the Arlington campus bookstore.

- Cone and Foster, *Dissertations and Theses*, American Psychological Association, 1995.

GMU faculty and students who plan to conduct research using interviews must have their research reviewed and approved by the GMU Human Subjects Research prior to beginning the interviews. More information is available at <http://www.gmu.edu/pubs/osp/humansubjects.htm>

Your final product for the course is the progress you have made on your proposal. You will present your progress to class (with power-point slides to prepare you for the defense) and submit final paper by May 3, 2007.

Schedule Week-by-Week

Week 1: Combined sections, 7:20-9:30 pm

Introduction to the course and review of the syllabus
Components of a thesis and dissertation: from start to finish

¹ Varies week-by-week; please see schedule

Assignment²:

Chapter 1: *What are dissertations and theses and why write a book about them?* pp. 1-10

Week 2: Combined sections, 7:20-9:30 pm

Planning your dissertation or thesis

Assignment:

Chapters 2: *Starting out: assessing your preparation for the task ahead*, pp. 11-26

Complete Research Readiness Checklist, p 12

Week 3: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Finding a topic and developing your hypotheses

Time management

Assignment:

Chapter 3: Topics: how to find and refine them; and
Chapter 4: Time and trouble management, pp. 27-60

Complete Hypothesis Checklist, p. 41

Week 4: Combined sections, 7:20-9:30 pm

Selecting a chair and committee

An overview of the proposal

Assignment:

Chapter 5: *Selecting a chairperson and a committee*, pp. 45-61

Chapter 6: *Formulating and communicating your plans: an overview of the proposal*, pp 81-92

Week 5: Combined sections, 7:20-9:30 pm

Literature review

Assignment:

Chapter 7: *Reviewing the literature*, pp. 93-118

Week 6: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Considering your methodology and appropriate data collection strategies

Assignment:

Chapter 8: *Methodology (or, How you're gonna do what you're gonna do!)*, pp. 119-146

Chapter 9: *Measurement*, pp. 147-172

Chapter 10: *Selecting the appropriate statistics*, pp. 173-200

Week 7: Combined sections, 7:20-9:30 pm

Human Subjects requirements (guest)

Assignment:

Complete the Human Subjects on-line examination

Chapter 11: *Collecting, managing and analyzing the data*, pp. 201-218

Week 8:

Spring Break, no class

² Please complete ALL assignments and readings PRIOR to coming to class. We will be discussing this information in class.

Week 9:

Independent study: no class.

Assignment:

Work on proposal.

Week 10: Independent study: no class

Assignment:

Work on proposal

Week 10: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Student presentations of proposals; class feedback³

Week 11: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Student presentations of proposals; class feedback

Week 12: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Student presentations of proposals, class feedback

Week 13: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Next steps: details of proposal defense; logistics, committee management

Guest panel (TBA)

Assignment:

Chapter 12: *Presenting the results*, pp. 219-235

Chapter 13: *Discussing the results*, pp 237-254

Week 14: Separate sections, 7:20-8:30 pm

Semester wrap-up; feedback; update on proposals and evaluation

³ Distribute proposal to all students PRIOR to class; students READ proposal and be prepared to provide feedback