

HPM 954
Dissertation Planning and Preparation
Summer 2010

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Class Meetings: May in Chapel Hill (course intro)
August in Chapel Hill (class presentations)
(2 online meetings scheduled – July 6 and 13)

Office Hours: By appointment

Course URL: <http://blackboard.unc.edu>

Required Text: Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, Third Edition by John Creswell (Sage, 2003).

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is to guide students through the steps necessary to produce the outline – and to the extent possible, a first draft – of a dissertation proposal. In collaboration with faculty, learners will assess the current state of their research questions and literature reviews and generate work plans for revisions and additional refinements culminating in brief presentations of dissertation proposal outlines in class in August. (Students will primarily work independently this semester; there will be only two online class sessions.)

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Apply knowledge gained in previous and concurrent courses to write and refine introductions to their projects, including research questions or problem

- statements, literature reviews, and conceptual models or frameworks, if applicable.
2. Describe preliminary ideas about approaches to methodology.
 3. Review key steps in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation, including strategies for overcoming challenges or obstacles and resources for additional writing assistance.
 4. Orally and in writing communicate clearly and succinctly a brief overview of their project plans.

Grading and Assignments:

Grades will be assigned commensurate with progress on summer work plan and quality of end-of-semester presentation.

Assignment	% of Grade
Production of semester work plan and timely progress and completion of each component	33
Reaction papers 1-4 (due no later than June 30th)	33
Quality of oral and written proposal outline	34
Total	100%

Grades of 90% and above earn an H grade and demonstrate superior performance

Grades of 70-89% earn a P grade and demonstrate satisfactory performance

Grades below 70% earn an L and signify insufficient progress in the course

Work Plan: By May 31st, each learner will have crafted a plan for a series of detailed steps that will culminate in an outline of a complete dissertation proposal. These steps include:

- ◇ Identify the topic
- ◇ Revise and refine the topic and develop a specific, main research question or problem statement
- ◇ Identify a dissertation chair, if possible
- ◇ Identify/Develop the conceptual framework, if applicable
- ◇ Complete the literature review
- ◇ Write the introduction
- ◇ Identify and describe the data sources
- ◇ Define terms

- ◇ Describe preliminary ideas about approach to methodology
- ◇ Provide initial ideas for display of data (charts, tables, matrices, etc.), if possible.
- ◇ Provide initial ideas about a plan for change based upon outcome of project

(Note that this process is iterative, rather than linear)

Learners will each take the lead in drafting the plan with input from faculty and dissertation committee chairs, if chairs have been identified. Each plan should take into consideration necessary refinement of the research question or problem statement, revisions of the literature review, and the endpoint of a dissertation proposal outline that comprises an initial draft of those components of the proposal that coursework has prepared students to present. It is expected that this will include the refined research question or problem statement, revised literature review, and initial ideas about an approach to research design and methodology.

Fall coursework will prepare students for further planning regarding data analysis. However, all components of a complete dissertation proposal will be listed in the final document, regardless of level of detail at the close of the semester. The work plan for the semester will include internal deadlines for completion. Learners will be permitted one adjustment of the deadline as necessary until June 15th, after which point inadequate progress may affect the final grade in the course.

Reaction Papers: Prior to June 18th, read the first four chapters in the Creswell text. Write a brief (half of one single-spaced page is sufficient) reaction to the information contained in each chapter. Consider whether the information has relevance to your dissertation project and, if so, how you might use the information to shape your approach to your project. This exercise is meant to help you retain the information contained in these chapters as well as to help guide the development of your proposal. Maintain your reaction log or paper as one Word document, separated by chapter. Label it with your name and deposit it in the digital drop box on the course web site when it is completed.

Oral and Written Proposal Outline: During the week of August 16th, while learners are in Chapel Hill, learners will make individual half hour oral presentations of dissertation proposal outlines to cohort, faculty and dissertation chairs. Logistics of scheduling presentations will be addressed during summer semester. A written copy of the dissertation proposal outline and any other material prepared for presentation in August will also be submitted to course faculty and dissertation chairs.

Course Schedule:

May in Chapel Hill (course intro)

May 17-May 31: Development of work plan in conjunction with faculty and dissertation chair; review of UNC Writing Center resources, UNC Guide to Theses and Dissertations: Electronic Submissions, and, as desired, other support materials listed in course syllabus.

Final work plan must be approved by instructor by Friday, June 4th. Phone discussions can be scheduled as needed.

Begin work on components of dissertation proposal outline. Adjustments can be made to work plan until June 18th.

Continue work on proposal outline for the remainder of the semester. Periodic check-in with faculty as each work plan milestone is met or to discuss issues as needed.

July 6: Panel Discussion: Advice from Graduates
Panel of graduates will share their insights and advice on getting through Successful defense of the dissertation proposal.

Panelists: Priscilla Flynn, DrPH
Mayo Clinic Office of Women's Health

Mike Stobbe, DrPH
Associated Press

Corinne Graffunder, DrPH
CDC

Paul Erwin, MD, DrPH

(Others TBA)

July 13th: Check in and progress roundtable
Let's go around the table and have each of you talk about your individual topics – your specific research question and where you are in the process of constructing your proposal.

August in Chapel Hill (class presentations): We will schedule these to include dissertation committee chairs, if available.

Recommended Reading:

From Proposal to Publication: An Informal Guide to Writing About Nursing Research, by Elizabeth M. Tornquist (Prentice Hall, 1999). 215 page paperback, \$39.95.

The following book is also recommended by a former DrPH student:

Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process, 3rd Edition, by Rudestam and Newton (Sage, 2007). 328 page paperback, \$41.95.

These books may be ordered online via Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, or other online outlets.

Other Resources:

UNC Writing Center

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/>

Review handouts on Writing the Paper, Grammar & Mechanics, Specific Writing Assignments (Literature Reviews, Dissertations), and Writing for Specific Fields (Political Science, Sciences)

Other resources (selected from UNC Writing Center site):

Advice on Research and Writing:

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/mleone/web/how-to.html>

Writing, public speaking, dissertation management, burnout, and more.

Advice for the Ph.D.-Lorn:

<http://www.cc.gatech.edu/student.services/phd/phd-advice/>

Focused on math and computer science, this web page from Georgia Tech includes helpful links for all graduate students, including general links on success in graduate school, links pertaining to women's success in computer science (and for women graduate students, generally), "The Unwritten Milestones for the Ph.D." and other useful links.

How to be a Good Graduate Student DesJardins, Marie:

<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html>

This essay talks about several phases of the graduate experience, including the dissertation. She discusses some helpful hints for staying motivated and doing consistent work.

Survival in the Academy:

<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/docproject/handbook/part1.9.html>

A project of the University of Indiana Computer Science Department, this page offers some general advice for graduate students. The ABD section of the website includes research findings about ABD students, and helpful advice for avoiding the "ABD blues." It also includes a very helpful section on women's graduate experiences.

Back to Dissertation Basics:

<http://www.asgs.org/DissBscs.html>

A reprint from ASGS (the Association for the Support of Graduate Students), this article talks about the skills required for the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The homepage

for [ASGS](http://www.asgs.org/index.htm) <http://www.asgs.org/index.htm> offers other links and an archive of articles and advice.

[Dissertation Tips:](#)

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030203011257/www.citationonline.net/survdiss.htm>

Kjell Erik Rudestam, Ph.D. and Rae Newton, Ph.D., authors of [Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process](#). See

http://www.amazon.com/Surviving-Your-Dissertation-Comprehensive-Content/dp/1412916798/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/102-5511588-8558512?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1173983992&sr=8-1

[The ABD Survival Guide Newsletter:](#)

<http://www.abdsurvivalguide.com/>

Information about the ABD Survival Guide newsletter (which is free) and other services from E-Coach (many of which are not free).

UNC Dissertation Forms

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/forms.html>

Guide to Theses and Dissertations: Electronic Submissions

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/etdguide/submission.html>

DrPH Dissertation

Health Policy and Administration

The DrPH dissertation is the ultimate academic test of a student's competency. It requires the student to apply key aspects of the curriculum to improving the understanding of an important public health-related administrative or policy issue or to resolve a relevant health-policy or organizational problem.

The dissertation should demonstrate the candidate's mastery of the skills and knowledge required to lead an important health-related program, to create a substantial change in policy or practice for the public's health, or to develop new approaches that accomplish either of these two goals. The dissertation should be of publishable quality in either the scholarly literature or applied literature in health care delivery or public health.

<p>Overview of purpose: Combines original research with understanding of leadership to guide implementation of organizational or policy change to improve the public's health.</p>

<p>Evaluation* focuses on the quality of the research and the student's ability to synthesize knowledge gained from research and from the leadership and public health tracks of the curriculum to create a realistic, comprehensive plan for change. The question is: If implemented would the plan be likely to be successful?</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">CONTENT</p>

<p>An introduction describing the issue that the student proposes to study, including the theoretical or conceptual framework and literature review.</p>

<p>A description of the research methods. Methods involve applying rigorous analytical techniques appropriate to the research question.</p>
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<p>A report of the findings of the research, including the study's limitations.</p>
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<p>A detailed description of the plan for change, which synthesizes information from the literature review, original research, and the student's knowledge of effective leadership, to make organizational or policy change. An explanation of how the plan would improve the public's health if implemented. Includes limitations of the plan.</p>
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* The evaluation aims at assessing the potential of the student's plan to effect appropriate change, not on its actual implementation.

UNC HONOR CODE

The principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship govern the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University as they have during the long life of this institution. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in the Code of Student Conduct and a respect for this most significant Carolina tradition. Your reward is in the practice of these principles.

Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University's life and work.

If you have any questions about your responsibility or the responsibility of faculty members under the Honor Code, please consult with someone in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (6-4042).