

PSYCHOLOGY 9002: DOCTORAL QUALIFYING SEMINAR

Instructor Information:

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Course Overview and Objectives:

The course is designed to serve two important purposes as you transition from coursework to work on your dissertation proposal.

1) Comprehensive Oral Examination

First, you will demonstrate your accurate grasp and original reflection on

- a) ideas, concepts, and research findings to which you have been exposed in the required core and foundations courses for the doctoral program;
- b) any elective courses important to your scholarly development.

You will demonstrate grasp and reflection in the form of an oral presentation in which you describe how you are currently integrating course material into an original line of scholarship and thinking, and how you see your future research, scholarship, and practice developing from your current integrative effort.

You will be asked to choose between 5 and 7 key ideas from your core course offerings that you will provide a high quality scholarly and integrative presentation around. You are to show an in-depth understanding of these ideas and interrelationships between them, particularly as they are relevant for your intended dissertation work. Your presentation is expected to be approximately 45 minutes in length, followed by approximately 20-30 minutes of questions and discussion.

The presentation is open to faculty members of the PhD committee, and will hopefully (optional), upon your own invite/initiative, be attended by the faculty with whom you intend to pursue dissertation work. Attendant faculty must agree that the presentation and responses to questions demonstrate satisfactory learning and original thought at the level expected of a student progressing into the dissertation phase. Unsatisfactory performance will require a second presentation at a time determined by the instructor. After two unsatisfactory demonstrations, the student will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program.

2) Preparation of Select Parts of the Dissertation Prospectus

The course will assist students in identifying and/or refining a dissertation topic, forming a dissertation committee, and outlining select aspects of a proposal that may be distributed (at a later date following this class) to your dissertation committee (once you form one) in preparation for a proposal defense meeting.

We will loosely use a couple texts to cover basic issues in proposal writing that apply across topic and research method. You will be expected to bring in updated writings/reflections about different aspects of your proposal on a regular basis and share them with the class for feedback. Those components are:

1. Problem statement/Research question
2. Literature review outline (with working bibliography)
3. Method section outline
 - 3a. Participants
 - 3b. Procedural methodology (how will you collect the data?)
 - 3c. Analytic method (how will you analyze the data?)
 - 3d. Work plan (specified plan, with dates, for when you hope to accomplish certain sections of the dissertation, defend the proposal, present certain parts at conferences, etc)

Note: if you are doing a theoretical dissertation, you will substitute section 3 (Method section) above for the following section:

3. Theoretical/Conceptual Justification
 - 3a. What is **novel** about your theoretical argument/synthesis? How is this a novel integration of various threads of thinking? Is this timely work or could it have been done 20 or more years ago? Say how.
 - 3b. What audiences will care? Be specific. Where are these people? Who are these people? What fields are they in? Do you know any of them?
 - 3c. Do your ideas have **practical** application(s)? What socio-cultural issues are they applicable to? What audience?
 - 3d. How will you market this work? What doors (jobs, careers) are interested in this type of inquiry? If academe, what fields? List the top 5 people working on this sort of material and say where they are employed and in what fields? Do you know any of them? Connections?
 - 3e. Work plan (specified plan, with dates, for when you hope to accomplish certain sections of the dissertation, defend the proposal, present certain parts at conferences, etc)

The final version of the dissertation proposal will be worked out after the class is over with the cooperation of your dissertation Chair, as appropriate to your research question and method. The purpose of this class is to make headway into the process, but not to complete it.

At the end of the semester, you will have done the following:

1. Given a successful comprehensive oral exam
2. Prepared and presented the above sections of a dissertation outline to our class
3. Worked towards forming a dissertation committee (including a Chair)

NOTE: Successful completion of select components of your proposal outline for the purposes of

the course does not guarantee successful proposal defense with your committee. The course is intended as only a step toward work on your dissertation proposal.

Expectations and Grading:

The class will run in tutorial format. Some weeks we will meet as a full group, while other weeks I will meet individually with each of you (or with you in small groups, depending on class size), and some weeks you may be paired up with another classmate for dyadic work. You are expected to attend all meetings that you are signed up for. You are also expected to participate by offering commentary on others' work and ideas and by presenting your own on a regular basis. If you must miss any meetings, you are expected to discuss in advance the reasons for your absence with the instructor. Regular, high quality participation, a successful oral defense, and successful completion of a dissertation proposal draft will result in an A grade for the course.

Recommended Texts

Krathwohl, D. & Smith, N. (2005). *How to prepare a dissertation proposal*. Syracuse, NY. Syracuse University Press.

Single, P. (2010). *Demystifying dissertation writing*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (2003, 2008). *The craft of research* (2nd or 3rd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wertz, F., Charmaz, L., Josselson, R., Anderson, R., & McSpadden, E. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.

Schedule

January

- 8 Introductions and Orientation
- 22 Nature and Functions of a Dissertation Proposal (K&S, Chs 1-3)
(for next class: *what is your question/topic? why are you interested in it?*)
- 29 Problem Statement (K&S, Ch. 4; Booth, Colomb, Williams, chs 3 ,4, 14; Single Ch 6)
(for next class: *succinct summary of your research statement*)

February

- 5 Literature Review / Bibliography / Argument (K&S, Ch. 4; Booth, Colomb, & Williams, chs. 5-11; Single, chs. 3-5, 7)
(for next class: *1 pg discussion of what others have said...plus statement about what they have not said...or what is missing; why this merits more research*)
- 12 Methods / Work Plan (K&S, Chs. 5-6)
(*what is your Procedural Method? Analytic Method? Justify both; Time frame? If*

conceptual, what is the relevance? Who is this for? Why are you the one to write this? Reflexivity issues)

- 19 Special Considerations for Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods (K&S, Chs 7-9); or individual meetings
- 26 Trish Wells visit / Individual Meetings with select class members

March

- 5 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____
- 12 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____
- 26 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____

April

- 2 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____
- 9 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____
- 16 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____
- 23 Oral Comprehensive Exam _____

Common language link:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf