

Doctoral Qualifying Seminar

Psychology 9002-01
Tuesday 5:30-7:10pm
Melson 213

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Course Description & Objectives

The doctoral qualifying course serves two purposes. Firstly, it prepares a student for comprehensives, which will be presented within the context of the class as a Research Proposal. Secondly, it allows the student a working space to discuss and develop a frame for the actual Dissertation Proposal.

Course objectives are to:

Demonstrate an understanding of research methods appropriate to psychology, with particular emphasis on Human Science approaches;

Demonstrate skill in presenting research progress in a group setting and to utilize feedback to improve work in progress;

Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critique research design;

Demonstrate responsible reflection on the ethical dimensions of research;

Create a supportive atmosphere, helping other students to explore research interests and assumptions brought to the research process; and

Develop a Research Proposal that will inform a future Dissertation Proposal.

Recommended Texts

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

Kendal, G. & Wickham, G. (1999). *Using Foucault's methods*. London: Sage.

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

Roberts, C. (2010). *The dissertation journey*. London: Sage.

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

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

Course Format

The class is structured as a tutorial. The early portion of the course involves the draft of select portions of the Research Proposal and workshop-type discussions around these elements. The later portion of the course is open for you to schedule your Research Proposal Oral Presentation & Oral Defense. 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.

Course Requirements & Expectations

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings. If a student must miss any meetings, he/she is expected to discuss in advance the reasons for such absence with the instructor.

Participation: Students are also expected to participate by offering commentary on others' work and ideas and by presenting their own on a regular basis.

Preparation of Select Parts of the Research Proposal: The course will assist students in identifying and/or refining a potential future dissertation topic, forming a future dissertation committee, and drafting select parts of a Research Proposal that may be used as the core for a future Dissertation Proposal. Unless otherwise specified these draft elements of the Research Proposal needed to be circulated to the class well in advance (i.e., 24 hours), to allow everyone a chance to read and thoughtfully consider the work of our community.

The course will loosely follow several texts to address the process of proposal/dissertation writing. A draft of select components of the Research Proposal will be required for a successful completion of the course:

- 1) Problem statement/Research statement
- 2) Literature review summary/outline with annotations
- 3A) Methods section outline for an empirical dissertation (including participants, procedural methodology, analytic methodology)
- 3B) Theoretical/Conceptual justification for a theoretical dissertation (addressing originality, significance, audience, practical application)
- 4) Work plan (specified plan, with dates, for when you hope to accomplish certain sections of the dissertation, defend the proposal, present parts at conferences, publish sections, etc.).

Research Proposal, Oral Presentation, & Defense: Students will cultivate and refine a plan of inquiry, which they will articulate in a written *Research Proposal*. Although the nature of the plan of inquiry will vary in accordance with each student's

envisioned project (e.g., an empirical study, an archival analysis, a theoretically-focused examination of scholarly literature), it will demonstrate that the student is capable of envisioning a systematic research exploration, anticipating and navigating potential pitfalls, and articulating the scholarly importance and utility of their potential findings. After continuous development and refinement of the plan, students will submit their Research Proposal as their final course assessment. Ideally, cultivation and refinement of this research proposal will prepare students for their Dissertation Proposal.

In the *Oral Presentation* students will present a scholarly talk that discusses the work they have done in their Research Proposals and the work that will be done on their dissertations. The nature of the presentation will vary in accordance with each student's academic interests (e.g., empirical research, archival analysis, theory development) but will demonstrate that the student can communicate their ideas to an academic audience in a way that concisely articulates the importance and utility of their dissertation.

Following the students' Oral Presentation, for their *Oral Defense* they will field questions from the audience. The audience will, at a minimum, consist of the members of the doctoral committee tasked with evaluating the qualifying examination. The examiners will ask specific questions related to the Research Proposal, and/or the oral presentation.

Procedure for the Qualifying Examination and Advancement to Candidacy – When a student is ready to present and defend their qualifying examination (Research Proposal), they will inform the chair of the doctoral program committee of their intent and will provide a window of time suitable to schedule the presentation/defense. The chair of the doctoral program committee, in consultation with the members of the program committee, will determine a grouping of three faculty members who will be tasked with assessing the examination. The student, the faculty examiners, and the chair of the doctoral program committee will then collectively determine a date and time when the defense will occur. The student will then submit their Research Proposal to the faculty examiners and the chair of the doctoral program committee not later than four weeks prior the scheduled examination date. No later than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense, the faculty examiners will inform the student and the chair of the doctoral program committee if there are objections and/or concerns with the work. At that point, the student, examiners, and chair of the doctoral program committee would consult as to whether the student would be able to rectify problematic dimensions with the objectionable work before the date of the defense or to reschedule the defense for a later date. If the student is permitted to defend their qualifying examination (Research Proposal), and the faculty examiners agree that the student successfully passed their examination, the student will be eligible for candidacy.

Outcome: At the end of the course, students will have: 1) prepared the select sections of a dissertation proposal draft to the class and instructor; 2) submitted a

Research Proposal to faculty examiners in a timely manner, with Oral Presentation, and Oral Defense.

Academic Honesty: Students are responsible for upholding the University's honor code.

Other Student Rights & Responsibilities: Students should carefully review information [here:
http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf)

Evaluation

Regular, high quality participation, substantial completion of course assignments (draft components of Research Proposal), and successful completion of a Research Proposal, Oral Presentation, and Oral Defense will result in an "A" grade for the course (see attached Criteria for Evaluating the Research Proposal).

The completion of all other requirements for the course (participation and draft components of the Research Proposal) but without a successful completion of the Research Proposal, Oral Presentation, and Oral Defense, will result in a "B" grade for the course.

Course Schedule [further reading in brackets]

- 1/7 Introduction & Orientation
- 1/14 Intellectual Autobiography Talks
- 1/21 Intellectual Autobiography Talks, continued;
Nature & Function of a Dissertation Proposal – Krathwohl & Smith, Chapters 1-3; [Roberts, Chapter 3-5].
- 1/28 Problem Statement – Krathwohl & Smith, Chapter 4; Booth, Colomb, & Williams, Chapters 3-4; [Single, Chapter 5; Roberts, Chapter 11]; *Research Proposal Topic Due.*
- 2/4 Problem/Research Statement Workshop-Discussion; *Problem/research statement Due.*
- 2/11 Literature Review/Bibliography – Booth, Colomb, & Williams, Chapters 5-6; Roberts, Chapter 9; [Single, Chapters 3, 4, & 7].
- 2/18 Literature Review/Bibliography Workshop-Discussion; *Succinct Summary of Literature & Research Questions Due.*
- 2/25 Methods/Work Plan – Krathwohl & Smith, Chapters 5-6; Roberts, Chapter 12; [Single, Chapters 8-10].

- 3/3 Method Section and Work Plan Workshop-Discussion; *Outline of Method & Justification Due; Tentative Work Plan Due.*
- 3/10 Special Considerations: Qualitative and Theoretical Dissertations and Ethical Issues in Research – Readings from Wertz et al. and/or Kendal & Wickham; Roberts, Chapter 3.
- 3/17 Spring Break: No Class
- 3/24 Research Proposal Presentation and Defense/Individual Meetings
- 3/31 Research Proposal Presentation and Defense/Individual Meetings
- 4/7 Research Proposal Presentation and Defense/Individual Meetings
- 4/14 Research Proposal Presentation and Defense/Individual Meetings
- 4/21 Integrative Discussion

Syllabus is subject to change at any time, like people.