

Florida International University
Department of Leadership and Professional Studies
EDH 7981: Seminar in Writing the Dissertation
Fall 2014: Thursdays, 5-7:40pm, GC 273B
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm; Thursdays 2-5pm

Purpose:

This course is part of an overall College of Education conceptual framework which emphasizes particular forms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. More specifically, the college seeks to create graduates who are stewards of their discipline, reflective inquirers, and mindful educators. Please review the College's conceptual framework at: <http://education.fiu.edu/cf.htm>.

Within this overall conceptual framework, the higher education program promotes particular definitions of stewardship of the field of higher education, reflective inquiry in postsecondary settings, and mindful education in and outside the field of higher education. Please review the program's objectives at http://education.fiu.edu/graduate_programs/ms_highered.htm.

Per University catalog, this course is a "review of research and emphasis on the research process necessary for writing the dissertation." Additionally students will "acquire skill in conducting the major activities of a dissertation." Essentially I see the course focused on three functions: (1) style; (2) mechanics (i.e. APA citation and style); and (3) process (e.g., selecting a topic, identifying literature, writing a literature review, and becoming familiar with the components of a dissertation).

This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Please review the important policies listed below. These are university policies that will apply in this course.

The Policy on Academic Misconduct can be found at <http://www.fiu.edu/provost/polman/sec2web.html#2.44%20ACADEMC%20MISCONDUCT>.

The Policy relating to Students with Special Needs can be found at <http://drc.fiu.edu/Policies.php>.

The policy relating to Sexual Harassment can be found at <http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/diversity/publications/EOPSexH.pdf>.

Course Goals:

1. To improve style and clarity of writing.
2. To master the requirements of APA citation and style guidelines.
3. To learn and understand the components of a dissertation.
4. To be able to identify and critically analyze sources of literature.
5. To write a literature review.

Course Expectations:

As a member of a learning community, each student must meet the following responsibilities:

- Attend, be prepared for, and actively participate in **all** class sessions, for the entirety of the class time.

- Check your FIU e-mail and FIU Blackboard accounts regularly. Announcements, supplemental readings, and assignments will be distributed electronically. Students will be responsible for this information.
- Read, study, and reflect on all assigned readings before the specific class period noting questions or issues you would like to raise in class. Be prepared to contribute to class discussions.
- Students should be willing and able to genuinely listen to each other, build on each other's ideas, and disagree when it is helpful and productive to do so.
- As professionals, professional behavior is expected at all times. Refrain from use of cell phones/text messaging during class. Students may use laptop computers during class **only** for formal presentations. PLEASE obtain instructor permission if you would like to use it for note taking.
- Standards of academic honesty and integrity will be upheld in all aspects of this course. Students are expected to become familiar with the University's policy on academic honesty, as this policy applies to this class as well as all others. One aspect of this expectation is that all work will be referenced and documented appropriately. **It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the concepts of appropriate attribution of others' words and ideas, proper citation, and paraphrasing are clearly understood so that plagiarism, even if unintentional, does not occur. In addition, use of work from other classes for this course is prohibited unless approved by the instructors of both courses.**

Course Requirements:

- The objectives of this course will be pursued through assigned readings, class discussion, class activities, and written assignments. Final evaluation of your work will be based on the quality of all of your written work and participation in class discussions.
- **Deadlines are as stated on the syllabus and assignments will be submitted on the due date. Any late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 1/3 grade per day (beginning at the start of the class period in which it is due). No late assignments will be accepted after the second day. NO LATE literature reviews can be accepted, as instructor needs this time to turn in grades by University deadline.**
- All written work should reflect graduate level work. Spelling and grammatical errors are not acceptable. Please follow the reference style guidelines contained in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.)-- aka "APA Manual."

Grading:

Students are eligible to earn a total of 100 points for this course. Final grades will be distributed as follows:

A	94-100	A-	90-93
B+	87-89	B	83-86
B-	80-82	C+	77-79
C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	67-69	D	63-66
D-	60-62	F	59 - Below

Assignment	Points
1. Writing journal	15
2. Evaluation of literature review	10

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|---------------------------------------|----|
| 3. Evaluative review of dissertations | 15 |
| 4. APA mastery test | 30 |
| 5. Literature review | 30 |

Attendance Policy

As previously stated, attendance is essential to fostering a community of scholars, discussing the course materials and supplemental instruction from the professor, and participating in groups to solve hypothetical case problems. Points will be deducted from a student's final course grade based on the following:

- 1 absence= 2 points
- 2 absences= 5 points
- 3 absences= 8 points
- 4 absences= 12 points

*One excused absence is allowed per semester in which no points will be deducted from the final grade. Student must present documentation of the excused absence. Acceptable reasons include illness or health emergency for self or dependent, automobile accident, death in the family, or attendance at a professional conference. Conflicting work obligations do not qualify.

Course Readings:

See course schedule for weekly reading assignments. Supplemental materials may be assigned as appropriate. The following text will be used as the major text for this course.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition)

Williams, J. M. & Bizup, J. (2015). *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace* (5th ed.). Longman: Boston.

Course Assignments:

1. Writing journal: Each week the instructor will send the class via email a "prompt" to answer. This will serve as a check regarding course progress, reflection on the writing process, and other miscellaneous questions. **Please answer these by NOON ON THURSDAY each week.** Students who thoughtfully and thoroughly reflect will get full credit.
2. Evaluation of literature review: Using the course readings "*Evaluating Introductions and Literature Reviews*" and "*A Closer Look at Evaluating Literature Reviews*" as a guide, select a literature review published in a scholarly journal and evaluate it. Also include a brief section about your thoughts on the piece, including style and flow. (*Review of Educational Research* is one resource you may wish to use.) Approximately 5 pages
3. Evaluative review of dissertations: Based on the resources above, as well as what you learn during the course about content and style, evaluate TWO higher education dissertations of your choosing. Do they have a clear theoretical base? Do they address an important issue in the field? How is the literature review—is it exhaustive and evaluative or merely a summary of what is already published? Based on what you know, do they have a strong methodology? Do they make strong conclusions and effectively argue the impact of the study? What do you like and dislike about each? Is one clearly better? Approximately 6-8 pages
4. APA mastery test: Students will complete a timed, in class exam on APA style guidelines.
5. Literature review: Students will complete a "mini literature review" (i.e. not of the length one would expect in a dissertation) on a topic of their choosing related to higher education. Each literature review should include **at least 15 scholarly sources (i.e. journals or books)**. Students may choose to use websites or trade sources, if applicable, but those will not count

toward the 15 source minimum. Approximately 20-30 pages. Papers will be judged based on (1) APA citation and style, (2) editing and quality of prose and (3) sophistication of analysis. Ten points per category.

Class Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
August 28	Introductions/Course Overview
September 4	Selecting a Topic and Formulating a Research Question
September 11	<i>Style</i> Chapters 1-6 <i>APA</i> Chapters 1-4
September 18	Evaluating a Literature Review (also read Townsend lit review, available on Blackboard)
September 25	RESEARCH DAY (during that week complete readings in “Ethics” section and complete IRB training. Turn in certificate at next class meeting)
October 2	<i>Style</i> Chapters 7-11 <i>APA</i> Chapters 5, 6, & 8
October 9	Answering research questions using qualitative methods (guest speaker: Ben Baez) Readings: TBD
October 16	Visit with librarian Adis Beesting (meet in GL 280) Evaluation of a literature review due in hard copy
October 23	Writing a Literature Review
October 30	Answering research questions using quantitative methods (guest speaker: Leonard Bliss) Readings: TBD
November 6	Answering research questions using legal methods (guest speaker: Joy Blanchard) Readings: TBD In-class APA exam
November 13	RESEARCH DAY (instructor at Education Law Association conference)
November 20	Drafts Evaluation of dissertations due in hard copy
November 27	Thanksgiving
December 4	The Dissertation Proposal

December 11 Informal presentation of literature reviews/summation of
experience/course evaluations
**Final literature review due in hard copy & via Turnitin (code to be
given)**

Reading list by topic (available on Blackboard):

Selecting a topic and Formulating a Research Question

Glesne, C. & Peskin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. New York: Longman. Chapter 2, "Prestudy Task: Doing What is Good for You."

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving Your Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 2, "Selecting a Suitable Topic."

Thomas, R. M. (1998). *Conducting Educational Research: A Comparative View*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey. Chapter 3 "Specifying the Research Problem."

Light, R. J., Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (1990). *By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2, "What are Your Questions."

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 3 "Contextual Context: What Do You Think is Going on."

Evaluating a Literature Review

Randolph, J. J. (2009). A guide to writing the dissertation literature review. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 14(13)*, 1-13.

"Evaluating Introductions and Literature Reviews" and "A Closer Look at Evaluating Literature Reviews." Retrieved from
http://www.indiana.edu/~educy520/sec5982/week_2/pyrczak99.pdf

Ethics

Locke, L. F., Spirdusco, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*. Chapter 2: "Doing the Right Thing: The Habit of Truth"

Ethical Standards of AERA

Glesne, C. & Peskin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. New York: Longman. Chapter 6, "But Is It Ethical? Learning to Do Right."

Writing a Literature Review

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving Your Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 4, "Review of the Literature and Statement of the Problem."

Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 8, "Terrorized by the Literature."

Drafts

Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Random House. Chapter "Sh*tty First Drafts."

Krieger, M. H. (1988). The inner game of writing. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 7, 408-416.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. New York: Holt & Company. Chapter 4, "From Zero to First Draft."

The Dissertation Proposal

Locke, L. F., Spirdusco, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*. Chapter 1, "The Function of the Proposal." Chapter 3, "Developing the Proposal." Chapter 4, "Content of the Proposal."

*please pardon formatting errors/computer issues