



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

SPPA 863: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL WORKSHOP
FALL 2019

Instructor Information

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Fall 2019 Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:15-3:15pm or by appointment

Course Overview

This workshop is designed to prepare doctoral students to develop, submit and defend a viable doctoral dissertation proposal by the end of the second year of doctoral study. All doctoral students who have completed the qualifying exam and not yet been admitted to doctoral candidacy are expected to participate in the workshop.

Course Goals

The overall goal of the seminar is for students to begin cultivating some of the intellectual and practical skills they will need to successfully complete their dissertation. Toward these ends, the course is structured around the following learning activities and goals:

1. We will hold workshops designed to help students develop their dissertation prospectus, and learn how to give, receive, and respond to constructive criticism. Through these workshops, and in consultation with the instructor and their advisor, all students will complete a draft dissertation prospectus.
2. We will discuss readings at sessions designed to help students learn how to generate research ideas and translate them into researchable questions, conduct and write a motivating literature review and specify the stakes and contributions of their project, and the application of conceptual and theoretical

frameworks and explanatory logics in relation to alternatives, and critique various forms of evidence in relation to research questions and goals.

3. We will host individual faculty members at sessions designed help students develop a more concrete and realistic understanding of the challenges, decisions, research activities, and experiences that go into producing a single successful research publication.

In addition to the scheduled class sessions, students will also meet with the instructor individually twice during the semester. The course instructor also will facilitate student meetings with other faculty who may be helpful for the development of each student's dissertation proposal. Students are encouraged to share what they produce in the workshop with other faculty. If a prospective dissertation chair has been identified, students should consult regularly with the faculty member.

Course Format

The course is structured as a seminar and will emphasize open-ended discussion. I will pose questions and facilitate our conversations, but the goal is for us to think our way together toward insights worth having – not to hold a question and answer session with the instructor. For this format to work, you will need to read with a critical eye and think about how the issues under consideration relate to your own circumstances and field of inquiry.

Each of us knows a different substantive area of research, and each of us is at a different point in our intellectual development. The course requires that we all engage in respectful dialogue with one another during seminar discussions. Please do what you can to respond to one another in a constructive way that encourages future dialogue. On the other hand, please bear in mind that graduate seminars are places where you are expected to question one another's ideas, state reasons for agreement or disagreement, and help one another learn. Some of my nicest colleagues are my toughest critics, and I am grateful for the kindness and respect they show as they challenge me, disagree with me, and teach me new tricks. Please try to support one another, but please don't hesitate to disagree with one another.

Class meetings should complement our independent work with the readings by offering a forum for dialogue on issues that we find particularly important, challenging, and promising. Here, as in scholarly dialogue more generally, it is your responsibility to make sure that the conversation does not bypass the issues that you consider most important.

Course Material/Readings

All readings and course material will be available on the Canvas site for the course (www.udel.edu/canvas).

Course announcements will be posted on the Canvas site. If there are urgent messages regarding class, messages will be sent to your UD email accounts.

Assignments

1. REFLECTIVE ESSAY (15% course grade)

The reflective essay assignment has two parts: (1) a dissertation proposal “preface” and (2) a reflexivity or standpoint analysis.

Part 1 will be submitted via Canvas at the end of week 1 (due Friday, August 30th by 3pm) and discussed in class in week 2.

Part 2 will be completed at the end of the semester (due Friday, December 13th by 3pm).

For more information about both Parts 1 and 2, see the agenda for weeks 2 and 15 in the course schedule.

2. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL (70% course grade)

Dissertation proposals in Biden School PhD programs should follow the guidelines described in the [University of Delaware Thesis and Dissertation Manual](#). Proposals should also conform to the [University of Delaware Thesis Style for Graduate Theses and Dissertations](#).

Refer to the Biden School Dissertation Proposal Outline which should be used as a general template with any adjustments determined to be appropriate on a case-by-case basis and with joint agreement between students and their primary faculty advisors.

In weeks 6 and 7 students will engage in faculty and peer feedback on a draft of their Statement of Research Question and Significance of Research Question sections of their proposal (see Biden School Dissertation Proposal Outline Template for guiding questions). While students will sign up to receive feedback on either week 6 or 7, the assignment should be submitted via the Canvas site as a Word or PDF file by Friday, September 27th at 3pm. I will distribute the submissions to the class and the other faculty who will attend the week 6 and 7 sessions to provide feedback.

In weeks 14 and 15 students will conduct a 15-20 minute presentation of their proposal draft. The presentation should provide an overview of the dissertation project, and key points from each of the sections of the Proposal Outline that have been completed to date. The audience for the presentation will be our class and a select number of faculty who will also attend and provide feedback.

Students are required to complete and submit a draft of their dissertation proposal by the end of the winter break (Friday, February 7th, 2020). The proposal should be submitted to me via email as a Word or PDF file. Upon submission of the dissertation proposal draft, students will also set up a meeting with myself and Joe Trainor to receive feedback on the draft and construct a plan and timeline for completion of the proposal.

3. PARTICIPATION (15% course grade)

Active participation during class sessions is essential for learning the material. Active participation during class meetings includes asking questions, contributing your perspectives to class discussions, and responding to your classmates' ideas in ways that are attentive, respectful, responsive, and critical. Students will receive strong marks for participation if they are consistently engaged and make a good faith effort to advance our collective understanding.

Grading Scale

This course is graded on the P/F scale ("P" indicates Pass and "F" indicates Fail). At the end of the semester, students will receive a temporary grade of "S" (Satisfactory) or "NS" (Not Satisfactory). This temporary grade will be replaced with a "P" upon successful completion of a dissertation proposal defense.

Academic Integrity

Please familiarize yourself with UD policies regarding academic dishonesty. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance. Complete details of the university's academic integrity policies and procedures can be found at <http://www1.udel.edu/studentconduct/policyref.html> Office of Student Conduct, 218 Hullahen Hall, (302) 831-2117. E-mail: student-conduct@udel.edu

Harassment and Discrimination

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. As a member of the community, your rights, resource and responsibilities are reflected in the non-discrimination and sexual misconduct policies. Please familiarize yourself with these

policies at www.udel.edu/oei. You can report any concerns to the University's Office of Equity & Inclusion, at 305 Hullihen Hall, (302) 831-8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police (302) 831-2222 or the EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline at www1.udel.edu/compliance. You can also report any violation of UD policy on harassment, discrimination, or abuse of any person at this site: sites.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct/how-to-report/.

Faculty Statement on Disclosures of Instances of Sexual Misconduct

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that a student may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated to inform the university's Title IX Coordinator. The university needs to know information about such incidents in order to offer resources to victims and to ensure a safe campus environment for everyone. The Title IX Coordinator will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I promise to protect your privacy--I will not disclose the incident to anyone but the Title IX Coordinator. For more information on Sexual Misconduct policies, where to get help, and how to reporting information, please refer to www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct. At UD, we provide 24-hour crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. Contact 302-831-1001, UD Helpline 24/7/365, to get in touch with a sexual offense support advocate.

For information on various places you can turn for help, more information on Sexual Misconduct policies, where to get help, and reporting information please refer to www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct.

Inclusion of Diverse Learning Needs

Any student who thinks he/she may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) office as soon as possible. The DSS office is located at 240 Academy Street, Alison Hall Suite 130, Phone: 302-831-4643, fax: 302-831-3261, DSS website (www.udel.edu/DSS/). You may contact DSS at dssoffice@udel.edu.

Non-Discrimination

The University of Delaware does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, disability, religion, age, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in its employment, educational programs and activities, admissions policies, and scholarship and loan programs as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. The University of Delaware also prohibits unlawful harassment including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

For inquiries or complaints related to non-discrimination policies, please contact:
Director, Institutional Equity & Title IX Coordinator- Susan L. Groff, Ed.D. groff@udel.edu,
305 Hullihen Hall Newark, DE 19716 (302) 831-8063

For complaints related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the
Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact: Director, Office of Disability Support
Services, Anne L. Jannarone, M.Ed., Ed.S. - ajannaro@udel.edu, Alison Hall, Suite 130,
Newark, DE 19716 (302) 831-4643 OR contact the U.S. Department of Education - Office for
Civil Rights (wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm).

Syllabus Modifications

This syllabus describes a plan, which like any plan may be revised or updated if it is
reasonable and appropriate to do so based upon the experience of implementing it.

Accommodations

I am eager to hear from anyone who may require accommodations in this class for reasons
related to ability or life situation. Please let me know if I can help by modifying seating
arrangements, deadlines, or other features of the class so that appropriate arrangements
may be made. The earlier you can let me know about anything that is going on that could
cause problems for you, the better. If we know about it early on, we can work together to
make sure it doesn't create bigger problems for you. All deadlines for this class are firm,
and can be changed only at my discretion for individuals who contact me in advance to
discuss legitimate reasons for needing extensions. I can be reached most easily through
email, because I check it often.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (August 28): Transitions: Entering and Navigating the Dissertation Process

Agenda

We will begin class with introductions and a discussion of course structure, content, and goals. As part of your introduction, please include a description of your ideas for a dissertation project.

We will also go over the University of Delaware dissertation guidelines, and the Biden School Dissertation Proposal Outline.

We will coordinate the sign-ups for: the first of two individual meetings with me on Monday, Sept. 9th and the in-class feedback session in weeks 6 and 7.

Week 2 (September 4): Clarifying the Intellectual, Practical, and Personal Stakes of Your Project

Assignment: Reflective Essay Part 1, due Friday, August 30th by 3pm

Write a two-page, single-spaced essay in personal, informal prose that explains what you see at stake in your dissertation project. Why are you “called” to this project? What do you aim to accomplish? How might it have an impact on a particular scholarly community and arena of policy – and why do you value these potential outcomes?

Agenda

What’s at stake in your project? What draws you to this work at this particular time in your life, moment in the course of public affairs, and juncture in the intellectual development of your field? In class, we will focus on the essays you’ve written and the specific challenges you feel you are struggling with in this area. We will discuss (a) important considerations and pitfalls related to these questions and (b) strategies for engaging them and developing an effective response to the infamous “so what” question.

In the second half, we will discuss the role of ideas and intellectual frames in the research process and the assigned readings. As you work through the readings and prepare for class, try to think of specific challenges, concerns, strategies, and questions about generating ideas and formulating them into concrete research questions that you’d like to discuss as a group. This will be a topic that we consider for the first few weeks of the course, and this will be our first opportunity to begin our discussion.

Assigned Readings

Useem, Bert. 1997. "Choosing a Dissertation Topic." PS: Political Science & Politics. 30(2): 213-16.

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "Combat in the Dissertation Zone." The American Sociologist. 36(2): 43-56.

Rothman, Steven B. 2008. "Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects." PS: Political Science and Politics 41(2): 367-369.

Week 3 (September 11): Generating Ideas and Questions

Assignment

On the first day of class you signed up for an individual meeting with me on Sept 9th. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your ideas for a dissertation topic and your plan for how to approach the task of writing a dissertation proposal. Please come prepared with specific challenges, concerns, strategies, and questions about the dissertation process that you'd like to discuss with me.

Agenda

This session will focus on strategies and methods for generating research ideas and moving from research topics to researchable questions. In the first part of class, we will engage the readings and discuss this step in the dissertation proposal process. In the second part of class, we will have a panel of graduate students who have successfully defended their proposals in class to discuss their strategies and challenges in crafting their dissertation proposals. Please prepare questions that you would like to have answered.

Assigned Readings

Tseng, Vivian and Adam Gamoran. 2017. "Bringing Rigor to Relevant Questions: How Social Science Research Can Improve Youth Outcomes in the Real World." William T. Grant Foundation.

Alvesson, Mats and Jorgen Sandberg. 2011. "Generating Research Questions Through Problematization." Academy of Management Review 36(2): 247-271.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. The Craft of Research.

- Chapter 3: From Topics to Questions
 - Chapter 4: From Questions to Problems
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Week 4 (September 18): Reviewing Literature and Identifying Contributions

Assignment

Please meet with two faculty members (one of which should be your advisor if applicable) some time during this week to discuss the current status of your dissertation ideas. Please use the first part of your reflective essay assignment and the upcoming assignment on your statement of research question and significance of research question (due Sept 27) to frame at least part of your discussion. If you have an advisor, this would also be an opportune time to solicit advice about the best ways to move forward in the remaining weeks of the semester, and clarify any specific expectations your advisor may have regarding the content or format of your dissertation proposal.

Agenda

This session will focus on strategies and methods for reviewing research literature. The first half of the session, we will discuss various approaches to reviewing prior work in an area of research. In the second part of the session, a librarian will lead a session on strategies and sources for public policy-based research/literature reviews and the use of reference software (RefWorks and Zotero), providing an overview of how to use them and why they are useful tools to use when you undertake a large research project like a dissertation.

Assigned Readings

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp.135-49.

Educational Researcher back-and-forth on literature reviews

- Boote, David N. and Penny Baile. 2005. "Scholars Before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation." *Educational Researcher* 34(6): 3-15.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2006. "Literature Reviews of, and for, Educational Research: A Commentary on Boote and Beile's 'Scholars Before Researchers'." *Educational Researcher* 35(9): 28-31.
- Boote, David N. and Penny Baile. 2006. "On 'Literature Reviews of, and for, Educational Research': A Response to the Critique by Joseph Maxwell." *Educational Researcher* 35(9): 32-35.

Machi, Lawrence A. and Brenda T. McEvoy. 2016. *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

- Chapter 5: Step 5 - Critique the Literature
- Chapter 6: Step 6 - Write the Review

Week 5 (September 25): Reviewing Literature and Identifying Contributions

Agenda

In the first part of this session, we will discuss the purposes of a literature review for a dissertation proposal. The first half of the session, we will discuss how literature can be used to motivate your research question and identify the significance of your project. We will spend time discussing the assigned readings as well as answering specific questions you have related to your own literature searching and reviewing. In the second part of class, we will have a panel of faculty experienced on supervising dissertation proposal development who will provide advice on how to successfully craft and defend a dissertation proposal at the Biden School. Please prepare questions that you would like to have answered.

Assigned Readings

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management Point/Counterpoint: Has the “No Child Left Behind” Policy Positively Impacted Student Performance?

- Ladd, Helen F. 2017. “No Child Left Behind: A Deeply Flawed Federal Policy.” JPAM 36(2): 461-469.
- Jacob, Brian. 2017. “The Changing Federal Role in School Accountability.” JPAM 36(2): 469-477.
- Ladd, Helen F. 2017. “NCLB: Response to Jacob.” JPAM 36(2): 477-480.
- Jacob, Brian. 2017. “The Potential Limits of Federal Policy: A Response to Ladd.” JPAM 36(2): 480-483.

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management Point/Counterpoint: Do Wrap-Around Services Improve Prisoner Reentry?

- Wilson, Janeen Buck. 2019. “Making the Case for Wrap-Around Approaches: Considering the Evidence.” JPAM 38(2): 501-507.
- Doleac, Jennifer L. 2019. “Wrap-Around Services Don’t Improve Prisoner Reentry Outcomes.” JPAM 38(2): 508-514.
- Wilson, Janeen Buck. 2019. “Response to ‘Wrap-Around Services Don’t Improve Prisoner Reentry Outcomes.’” JPAM 38(2): 514-516.
- Doleac, Jennifer L. 2019. “‘Evidence-Based Policy’ Should Reflect a Hierarchy of Evidence.” JPAM 38(2): 517-519.

Assignment Due: Statement of Research Question and Significance of Research Question Friday, September 27th at 3pm

Week 6 (October 2): Student Feedback Session #1

Agenda

We will spend this session providing feedback on the drafts of Statement of Research Question and Significance of Research Question submitted by fellow students. In addition to our class, a few selected faculty will attend to also provide feedback on these drafts.

Assigned Readings

Student submissions

Week 7 (October 9): Student Feedback Session #2

Agenda

We will spend this session providing feedback on the drafts of Statement of Research Question and Significance of Research Question submitted by fellow students. In addition to our class, a few selected faculty will attend to also provide feedback on these drafts.

Assigned Readings

Student submissions

Week 8 (October 16): Understanding and Selecting Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Agenda

This session will focus on strategies and methods for understanding and selecting theoretical and conceptual frameworks for a dissertation project. We will spend time specifically discussing some of the biggest challenges in using and framing research with theoretical and conceptual frameworks. You will also sign up for an individual meeting with me on Nov 18th and the end-of-the-semester presentations, so bring your calendars.

Assigned Readings

Ravitch, Sharon M. and Matthew Riggan. 2017. Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research (2nd Ed.)

- Chapter 4: Excavating Questions: Conceptual Frameworks, Research Questions, and Research Design.
- Chapter 9: The Conceptual Framework as Guide and Ballast

Note on Class Sessions for Weeks 9-13

The first hour of each class in this section will provide an opportunity for group dialogue with a University of Delaware faculty member. The discussion will be anchored by a single publication by the faculty member, focusing on its “history” (e.g., origins as an idea, development, research, publication, and reception) and “biography” (e.g., connections to the individual’s values and goals, relations to life and career trajectories, and personal experiences of the research process). The second part of the session will be devoted to discussing the assigned reading which provide examples of applying conceptual and/or theoretical frameworks to research.

Week 9 (October 23): Understanding and Selecting Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks AND Faculty Guest

Assigned Readings

Faculty Guest piece of scholarship

Grant, Cynthia and Azadeh Osanloo. 2014. “Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical Framework in Dissertation Research: Creating the Blueprint for Your ‘House.’” *Administrative Issues Journal* 4(2): 12-26.

Casanave, Christine Pearson and Yongyan Li. 2015. “Novices’ Struggles with Conceptual and Theoretical Framing in Writing Dissertations and Papers for Publication.” *Publications* 3: 104-119.

Week 10 (October 30): Applying Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks AND Faculty Guest

Assigned Readings

Faculty Guest piece of scholarship

Berman, Jeanette. 2013. “Utility of a Conceptual Framework within Doctoral Study: A Researcher’s Reflections.” *Issues in Educational Research* 23(1): 1-18.

Yamauchi, Lois A., Eva Ponte, Katherine T. Ratliffe, and Kevin Traynor. 2017. “Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Used in Research on Family-School Partnerships.” *School Community Journal* 27(2): 9-34.

Week 11 (November 6): Selecting Research Methods and Faculty Guest

Assigned Readings

Faculty Guest piece of scholarship

Terrill, Steven R. 2015. Writing a Proposal for Your Dissertation: Guidelines and Examples.

- Chapter 4: The First Part of Your Dissertation Research Method

Bickman, Leonard and Debra J. Rog. 2009. "Applied Research Design: A Practical Approach." SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods pgs 3-43.

Week 12 (November 13): Selecting Research Methods and Faculty Guest

Assigned Readings

Faculty Guest piece of scholarship

Abutabenjeh, Sawsan and Raed Jaradat. 2018. "Clarification of Research Design, Research Methods, and Research Methodology: A Guide for Public Administration Researchers and Practitioners." Teaching Public Administration 36(3): 237-258.

Sovacool, Benjamin K., Jonn Axsen, and Steve Sorrell. 2018. "Promoting Novelty, Rigor, and Style in Energy Social Science: Towards Codes of Practice for Appropriate Methods and Research Design." Energy Research and Social Science 45: 12-42.

Week 13 (November 20): Linking Theory and Method and Faculty Guest

Assignment

You will sign up for an individual meeting with me on November 18th. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss how you are progressing on revising your research question based on the feedback you received earlier in the semester, your progress on the other components of your dissertation prospectus, and your thoughts regarding your end-of-the-semester presentation. Please come prepared with specific challenges, concerns, strategies, and questions that you'd like to discuss with me.

Assigned Readings

Faculty Guest piece of scholarship

Pandey, Sanjay K. 2017. "Theory and Method in Public Administration." Review of Public Personnel Administration 37(2): 131-138.

Abner, Gordon B., Sun Young Kim, and James L. Perry. 2017. "Building Evidence for Public Human Resource Management: Using Middle Range Theory to Link Theory and Data." Review of Public Personnel Administration 37(2): 139-159.

Week 14 (December 4): Student Presentations #1

Agenda

We will spend this session listening to student presentations on their dissertation proposals. In addition to our class, a few selected faculty will attend to also provide feedback on these drafts.

Week 15 (December 11): Student Presentations #2

Assignment: Reflective Essay Part 2, due Friday, Dec 13th by 3pm

Write a two-page, single-spaced essay in personal, informal prose that explains how your thoughts about the dissertation have evolved during the course of the semester, and turn a critical eye on yourself to discuss how you "see yourself in the story" of your project. Engaging in questions of "reflexivity," ask yourself how your social positions, worldviews, and identities matter for your project.

Agenda

We will spend this session listening to student presentations on their dissertation proposals. In addition to our class, a few selected faculty will attend to also provide feedback on these drafts.

Assigned Readings

Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond. 2012. "Race and Reflexivity." Ethnic and Racial Studies. 35(4): 574-99.

Assignment: Draft Dissertation Proposal, due Friday, February 7th