RM 903: Dissertation Seminar

Textbooks

Required:

Bloomburg, D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your Qualitative Dissertation (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage.

Ravitch, S., & Riggan, M. (2017). *Reason & Rigor (2nd ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Recommended:

American Evaluation Association. (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th ed*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Course Description
This two-semester seminar takes students through the process of refining a dissertation topic into a researchable question or hypothesis, supporting it through literature, and selecting an appropriate research design and method of data analysis in order to write a dissertation proposal. The course utilizes a group format for students to vet, get feedback from colleagues and to refine their research ideas

Learning Objectives
This course does not aim to provide additional substantive material or methodological toolkit, the way typical graduate courses do. Its goal is rather modest as it attempts to apply your cumulative understanding and skills to specific research situation. On balance, a successful completion of the course is marked by a student's ability to do the following:

1. Apply your theoretical and methodological understanding and skills into devising researchable ideas and specific research questions and hypotheses,
2. Conduct a focused review of the relevant literature and create appropriate conceptual framework,
3. Develop a realistic research design with specific research strategies,
4. Think through and articulate a chapter-by-chapter outline of the intended dissertation,

5. Communicate research ideas and their appropriate theoretical and methodological issues effectively and efficiently,
6. Critique other's ideas paying particular attention to both theoretical and methodological rigor and reality, and
7. Gain understanding of the process of dissertation including stress, time, and project management, committee formation, dissertation proposition and defense, and human subjects reviews.

Assignments
All assignments must include an APA formatted title page that includes the working title of your dissertation topic. Failure to include a title page for assignments wills result in an automatic deduction in points.

Assignment #1 – Foregrounding Draft Section (10%)

The first assignment will be a two-page paper that will eventually serve as the foregrounding section for your Chapter 1. This paper will answer the following two questions"What do you want to study?" and "Why do you want to study what you want to study?" You may include a summary of any related research you have conducted in the past on your chosen topic.

Assignment #2 – Chapter 1 Draft (this assignment will not contribute to the student's overall
grade, but failure to turn in this assignment will reduce the student's final grade by one letter) (due Nov 28)

The third assignment will be a draft of the student's Introduction Chapter. This paper will use the dissertation proposal outline handed out in class. This paper must include a completed purpose statement and research questions and/or hypotheses. Points will be lost for any missing sections of the outline.

Assignment #3 – Annotated Bibliography (30%)

The second assignment will be an annotated bibliography including a minimum of 10 peer reviewed articles relevant to your dissertation topic. Between classes, students will be expected to locate articles to add to their annotated bibliography and must be ready to present those articles at the start of class. These articles should have strong potential for being included in the references section of the student's dissertation.

Assignment #4 – Chapter 1 Final Revision (60%)

The fourth and final assignment will be due 1 week after the last day of class. This assignment will include a final revision of the student's Chapter 1 draft. All edits and recommendations made to your draft must be reflected in this final revision. This chapter should be at an **advanced stage of development** by this time. All references and formatting for all papers must conform to APA style (6.0). Appropriate literature for the substantive content area is derived from prior classes, independent studies and further independent research. Students will be responsible for finding and reading the appropriate materials after class discussions. Class members are often good resources for each other in finding material as are bibliographies of dissertations, articles or books in related areas.

It is essential that the assignments be completed on time in order for students to take full advantage of the opportunity to have feedback from the class and the instructor. Grades are based on class participation as well as written work. Obviously missed classes reduce the opportunity for class participation and may be reflected in the final grade. During the last class students will get 1 hour of one-on-one consultation with the professor, which will include a final review of the student's Chapter 1.

Classroom Etiquette: Netiquette

In order to maintain a positive online environment for this class, everyone needs to follow the etiquette guidelines summarized below. All learners are expected to:

1. Show respect for the instructor and for other learners in the class.
2. Respect the privacy of other learners.

3. Express differences of opinion in a polite and rational way.
4. Maintain an environment of constructive criticism when commenting on the work of other learners.
5. Avoid bringing up irrelevant topics when involved in group discussions or other collaborative activities.
6. Use appropriate grammar and structure in on-line communication.
7. Never use all caps since this is the equivalent of yelling in the online environment.

The following list summarizes the kind of behavior that is not acceptable. Items listed below are grounds for removal from the class. Learners should not:
1. Show disrespect for the instructor or for other learners in the class.
2. Send messages or comments that are threatening, harassing, or offensive
3. Use inappropriate or offensive language.
4. Convey a hostile or confrontational tone when communicating or working collaboratively with other learners

Respect for Diversity
Guided by NASW and ACA Codes of Ethics and the mission of ICSW, students and faculty have a shared responsibility for championing social and emotional justice for all members of society, This includes a commitment to eliminate personal and institutional discrimination, ensure access to needed resources and opportunities for all persons, especially those who are disadvantaged or disenfranchised. Prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices are examined. Students are expected to be respectful of the opinion of others while at the same time striving to attain the ideals of social justice.

Gender Pronouns and Name on Roster
Addressing one another at all times by using appropriate name and gender pronouns honors and affirms individuals of all gender identities and gender expressions. Misgendering and heteronormative language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Explicit identification of pronouns is increasingly used in professional identification (e.g. conference nametags, Twitter handles, etc). As part of our professionalization and in the spirit of our professional values, during our first class as we introduce ourselves, you may choose to share your name and gender pronouns (e.g., Hello, my name is Sam and my gender pronouns are she/her/hers or Hello, my name is Lou and my gender pronouns are they/them/theirs). If you would only like to introduce yourself by name, without pronouns, that is also completely fine. If you do not wish to be called by the name listed on the roster, please inform the class. The goal is to create an affirming environment for all students with regard to their names and gender pronouns.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs or difficulties in learning and completing course assignments are

strongly encouraged to notify instructors as soon as possible so that appropriate resources and accommodations can be provided.

Student Evaluation and Grades
Classroom instructors grade students on their course work and submit evaluations on the caliber of each student's work. The purpose of grading is evaluative, as well as to provide a learning tool for students, i.e., to provide feedback on progress, strengths and weaknesses, and issues that need to be addressed. Cumulative grade point average is based on full letter grades, not plus or minus grades. Only letter grades are recorded in the student's' transcript. Instructors are required to submit full letter grades (not pluses or minuses) within two weeks after classes end.

Grading Standards

Grades are assigned according to the following
standards: A – Superior Work (4.0 value)
B – Satisfactory Work (3.0
value) C – Marginal Work (2.0
value)
F – Failure* (0.0 value) - *Applies only to Field Placement/Practicum and Thesis
Seminar P – Pass* (0.0 value)
AU – Audit (0.0 value) – Auditing a course with approval of
instructor INC – Incomplete (0.0 value)

Grading Policy
Incompletes: An incomplete can be granted only in cases of significant personal emergency and when the student has been in touch with the instructor in advance of the due date for the required work. Any incompletes must be resolved by the first day of the following semester (fall, spring, summer). If the work has not been completed by this date, the incomplete grade will convert to a failing grade. It is always the student's responsibility to initiate the process for an incomplete **as soon as the problem arises**. It is also the responsibility of the student to turn in the completed work by the following semester's end.

Late papers: A late paper is one that is submitted after the deadline but before grades are submitted. Approval for turning assignments in late is determined by individual instructors.

Attendance: Students are required to attend class every class session. The intimacy and intensity of our classroom environments make consistent attendance very important. Students who miss more than one class session may see that reflected in their grade. Missing more than two class sessions will result in either a withdrawal from

the class or a failing grade.

Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct
ICSW is committed to the support of the standards and ideals of the social work, counseling, and psychology professions. In accordance with these goals, each student at ICSW is expected to be

bound by the code of ethics for their respective discipline. Students are expected to adhere to principles of academic honesty and integrity. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty, which includes giving or receiving unauthorized aid to any assignment or examination, plagiarism, or tampering with grades or irregularities shall be subject to disciplinary action. Such action may include a failing grade in the course, suspension, or dismissal from the program as determined by the Progression Committee and the Dean. Students are expected, at all times, to respect the confidentiality of their clients and must, therefore, appropriately disguise client materials in all oral and/or written presentations to consultants, and/or to teachers and fellow students during class discussions.

Plagiarism Policy
Plagiarism is unacceptable at any time, and constitutes a severe academic violation. When plagiarism is suspected, students may be asked to submit their papers electronically to a third party plagiarism detection service. If a student is asked to submit the paper and refuses to do so, the student must provide proof that all work is correctly sited and/or original. Papers that are determined to contain plagiarism will receive a failing grade, and the student will be referred to the Progression Committee and the Dean.
Plagiarism Defined: "Plagiarism takes many forms, but falls into three main categories: using a source's language without quoting, using information from a source without attribution, and paraphrasing a source in a form that stays too close to the original" (Yale Writing Center, 2014). If a student has any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact the Associate Dean.

Reusing Your Own Work: Cutting and pasting from or re-submitting a paper written for an earlier purpose or class is a form of academic dishonesty commonly referred to as "self-plagiarism." It is prohibited at ICSW to reuse your own written work. It is allowable to quote from your own earlier work, but the material is subject to the same rules of citation that govern all academic writing.

Papers
- Papers should include the following elements: 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font, with 1" margin, numbered pages, a cover page, and a reference page if sources are cited. Points will be deducted from assignments that are not formatted according to the current APA citation style and formatting guidelines (including the cover and reference pages). Papers should also make ample use of headings and subheadings.
- All papers submitted for class requirements are to conform to the style guide in the "Institute for Clinical Social Work Style Manual," which is located on the ICSW website in the academic resources section http://www.icsw.edu/_resources/ICSW%20Style%20Manual%2029%20Apr%202009.pd f
- Insofar as is practicable, ICSW style follows the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, commonly referred to as the "APA style manual." A handouton **APA citation style 6th edition** is available in the Robert Morris University Library website, which is located in the APA Guide section http://www.robertmorris.edu/library/webresources/courseresources/APAStyleCitationHandout6ed.pdf
- **Additionally, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) has many examples and paper

format guidelines (including information on the mechanics of writing, correct grammar, and proper punctuation) http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
● It is recommended to submit assignments electronically over email or the BlackBaud system; however, assignments can be submitted in paper form at the beginning of the class held on the due date.
● Late assignments will be dropped one letter grade every subsequent week after the due date. Students are expected to review the OWL website regarding quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/

Sample Course Schedule - Fall

Class 1 Introduction to Research - On site

- **Review of Syllabus & Assignments**
- **Overview of Dissertation Panel**
- **Overview of ICSW Proposal Hearing Process**
- **Overview of ICSW Dissertation Defense Process**
- **Overview of Proposal Outline**
- **PhD vs ABD**
- **Verifying Truths**
- **Dispelling Myths**

Readings:

ICSW Policies & Procedures Manual (most current)

Bowen, G. (2005). Preparing a qualitative research-based dissertation: Lessons learned. *The Qualitative Report, 10*(2), 208-222.

Riebschleger, J. (2001). Writing a dissertation: Lessons learned. *Families in Society, 82*(6), 579-582.

Katz, E. (1997). Key players in the dissertation process. *New Directions for Higher Learning, 99*, 5-16.

Class 2

The Dissertation Process

- **Overview of the dissertation process at ICSW**
- **Mindset**
- **Process**
- **Skill building**   10
- **Article updates**

`   Readings:

Bloomberg, L, & Volpe, M. (2013), Ch. 1: A Complete Dissertation [pp. 3-12]; Ch.2: Gearing Up: There is Method in the Madness [pp. 13-25]; Ch. 3:

Choosing a qualitative research approach [pp. 27-41]

Creswell, J., & Miller, G. (1997). Research methodologies and the doctoral process. *New Directions for Higher Education, 99*, 33-46.

Green, K. (1997). Psychological factors affecting dissertation completion. *New Directions for Higher Learning, 99*, 57-64.

Blum, L. (2010). The "All-But-The-Dissertation" student and the psychology of the doctoral student. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 24*(74), 74-85.

Class 3

Theory and Conceptual Framework

- **Conceptual Framework**
- **Clinical Theory**
- **Article updates**

Readings:

Ravitch, S., & Riggan, M. (2017). Ch. 1: Introduction to conceptual frameworks [pp. 1-20], Ch 2: Why conceptual frameworks? [pp. 21-34], Ch 3: Origins of a conceptual framework: The birth of grit [pp. 35-56]
Sample Dissertation Chapter 1 (TBA)

Class 4

Research Questions/Hypotheses Development

- **Research Questions vs Hypotheses**
- **Developing a Purpose Statement**
- **Assumptions**
- **Article updates**

Bloomberg, L, & Volpe, M. (2013), Ch. 4: A First Step: Developing Your Proposal [pp. 42-55]

Ravitch, S., & Riggan, M. (2017). Ch. 4: Excavating questions: Conceptual frameworks, research questions, and research design [pp. 57-78]

Class 5

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Introduction to Your Study

- **Variables and Operalization**
- **Epistemology**
- **Study Significance**

- **Article updates**

Readings:

Bloomberg, L, & Volpe, M. (2013), Ch. 5: Introduction to Your Study [pp. 60-72]

Ponterotto, J. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of care. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 5*2(2), 126-136.

Sample Dissertation Chapter 1 (TBA)

Class 6
Literature Review

- **Funneling method**
- **Lit Review Intro Section Development**
- **Use of citations**
- **Article updates**

Readings:

Bloomberg, L, & Volpe, M. (2013), Ch. 6: Developing and Presenting Your Literature Review [pp. 73-99]

Boote, D., & Beile, P. (2009). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher, 34*(3), 3-15.

Randolph, J. (2009). A guide to writing the dissertation literature review. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 14*(3), 1-13.

Boote, D. N. & Beile, P. (2009). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher,*
34, 3-15. Available at: http://www.sagepub.com/mertensstudy/articles/Ch_3-1.pdf.

Class 7

One-on-one consults