SEP 765: Thesis / Dissertation Seminar

Instructor: Dr. James Hannon
Office: CPASS 239
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Office Hours: Monday 9:30-11:00, Tuesday 5-7 p.m., or preferably by appt

COURSE OBJECTIVES

SEP 765 is an advanced seminar course for students pursuing a Master's or Doctoral degree. This course focuses on producing a research proposal for presentation to your committee. The seminar is a process-based course that does not rely heavily on shared readings but rather shared experiences. Different timelines may be enforced for students at different stages in the process. Supplemental readings may be assigned to stimulate discussion.

Objectives for the course:

1. To conceptualize and write a complete draft of your research proposal, including an introduction and problem statement, a methodology section, and a comprehensive literature review with references.
2. To learn how to provide useful and timely feedback on your peers' research proposals.
3. To complete, and receive feedback on, an oral presentation of your study.
4. To learn about WVU's electronic submission process and requirements for document format (see http://thesis.wvu.edu)

Recommended Text

Thomas, J.R., Nelson, J.K., Silver, S.J. (2011). *Research Methods in Physical Activity*. Human Kinetics.
*note, any recent edition of this text will do. Buy a used copy online and save money.

KEY REMINDERS:

1. Research is the reason your degree is worth anything. Without a thesis or dissertation, anyone could earn this degree. Your efforts on research will seem futile at times, but they are worth it in the end.
2. When designing your study, be sure the topic is something you are passionate about and be sure you are capable of pulling it off. You do not need to solve all the world's problems in one study!
3. To earn your MS or PhD, you have to write. Thinking, reading, and conceptualizing are necessary elements of the process but will only get you so far. Spend time finding your formula for working efficiently including the right times and places. Then hold yourself accountable to actually write during those times. Do not focus on writing well, just focus on writing. Write without judgment. Write first, edit later.
4. Use your committee effectively to help you shape your study. They are bright people and have walked this road before. Communicate regularly with them, but don't over burden non-committee chairs.
5. Pilot/Feasibility test as much of your study as possible. This step is the most important thing you can do to make sure the study goes well. Pilot test your methods, pilot the survey, pilot your interview script, pilot everything at least once, but maybe twice or three times.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

GRADING SCALE – This course uses a Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory grading scale. Ultimately, a research proposal will be approved by a committee typically if it is at the "B" level, so we will use that criteria for all

work in this class. Your chair may have a different standard however, so you may want to confirm this standard with him/her. Incompletes (or "I") grades will not be given in this class unless there is a documented life emergency or illness.

S (Satisfactory) = 80+ U (unsatisfactory) = <80%

To earn an "S" in this course, all of the following sections of your proposal must receive a satisfactory grade at some point in the semester (by me and your Chair!), and your final oral presentation must also be satisfactory. Incomplete sections cannot receive a grade of satisfactory.

Section	Date Draft(s) Submitted	Emailed To Chair (Y/N)	Date of Final Draft
Introduction			
Methods			
Literature Review			
References			
ETD "Front Matter"			
Final Document with All Sections Combined			

Important Course Policies

Mobile Phone Use in Class: Mobile phone use, including texting, during class is distracting and disrespectful to the professor and other students. Phones should be turned off during class, not on vibrate. As such, use of mobile phones in class will not be tolerated and can negatively affect your grade in the following manner.

-first offense, student will receive a warning
-second offense, student will be asked to leave class for that day
-third offense, students will lose 10% of final grade
-any additional mobile phone activity beyond this will be referred to the Dept Chair

Communicating With Your Chair: Your Chair has the final say on all matters specific to your project. I recommend you set up weekly or bi-weekly meetings with your Chair this semester. Also, you are required to send all drafts of sections for this class to your Chair via email. Copy me on these emails to verify this requirement.

Cheating and Plagiarism: If you have any questions about using and citing sources, please contact me – nothing is more important than the integrity of your work for your graduate degree.

Social Justice: WVU is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning experience based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated.

Disability: If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in the class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with WVU Disability Services at 293-6700.

SPRING 2015 COURSE OUTLINE (SEP 765)

WEEK	TOPICS TO BE COVERED
Jan 13	General introductions and expectations Overcoming self-imposed barriers to research
Jan 20	**Shaping your idea, and using the literature effectively** -Building "the bridge" – this project is bigger than your methods -Overcoming writing barriers: Success stories and barriers encountered so far
Jan 27	No class meeting – first five pages due (Intro and Methods)
Feb 3	**Presentation #1:** Your ten minute project idea (mini-proposal) **10 minute formal presentation on topic, gaps, and intended methods*
Feb 10	**Organizing and Completing Your Literature Review** -adding depth to study descriptions with specific information; become an expert!
Feb 17	**Developing a Compelling Introduction** -Chapter format vs. Manuscript format; overlap with literature review?
Feb 24	**no class** – required chair meetings **self-assessment of progress and creation of tasks left to complete*
Mar 3	**Thinking Methods** -bring key methods questions in your project to class
Mar 10	**Methods Discussion, Round 2** **final date for completed literature review to be submitted, with reference section*
Mar 17	**no class** – required chair meetings **self-assessment of progress and creation of tasks left to complete*
March 31	**Presentation #2: Your Methods in 10 minutes or less** -planning your pilot research; phases of data collection
April 7	**Bringing It All Together – ETD format and final touches** **complete draft of introduction and methods (and sections for chapter format) due*
April 14	**no class** – required chair meetings, organize time for mock proposal, April 29th or May 1st
Apr 21	**Authorship and Intellectual Property** -also, using your committee effectively to prepare for your proposal
	Course Evaluations, Preparing Your Proposal Slides **Final proposal document due by "high noon" (aka, 12pm) in ETD format*

Exam Week – 20 minute oral presentations in front of class members and your chair – times to be determined, tentatively scheduled for Tue, 29th 1-4 and Thur 9-12