

**EDCP 798/799 – Master’s Research Design and Proposal Writing Seminar**  
**Fall Semester 2015**  
**Wednesdays 9am-11:45am**  
**Benjamin 3236**

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Office Hours: By Appointment (<http://goo.gl/bzCHK>)

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### ***Course Introduction and Objectives***

The aim of this class is to encourage you to conceptualize and conduct research that will contribute to understandings of social problems, inspire social change, and contribute to the common good, particularly within the contexts of student affairs and higher education. Through this class, students will acquire a set of tools that will help them learn to design research and when necessary, critique and challenge it. Additionally, students in this course should achieve the following objectives:

1. To become familiar with various qualitative and quantitative research designs, particularly their uses, strengths, and limitations;
2. To design research studies related to student affairs, the college student experience, and higher education. This skill set includes the ability to write, interpret, and critique problem statements, literature reviews, study methods, results and conclusions, and to apply research methods and findings in the broader student affairs context;
3. To apply students’ expanding knowledge about research design to develop research proposals and design and execute appropriate research studies as a student affairs scholar-practitioner; and
4. To develop and refine academic/professional writing skills.

This course is designed for students who have a working knowledge of various methods, including statistics and qualitative data analysis. Students should not expect to learn specific details of executing any one particular research method in this course. Instead, this course introduces students to a broad range of social science methods and provides the tools to help students evaluate the strengths and limitations of such methods.

Accordingly, students working on their theses should consult with their chairs on honing the specific skills necessary to design and conduct their studies. Students developing seminar papers should also work with their professional advisors on their research designs. This course is not a substitute for the professional advisor/chair and student relationship, and students should understand that the professional advisor/chair is the primary and ultimate source of assistance for students’ seminar papers and theses. Therefore, students are expected to meet regularly with their professional advisors or chairs on the development of their research proposals.

### ***Required Readings***

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Please Note:** Because the goal is to work on your papers every week in class, you will need access to a laptop. Please make the appropriate arrangements through our Technology office if you are in need of a laptop.

*Recommended Readings:*

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<sup>1</sup> Please Note: Dr. Espino generally responds to email with 72 hours. Email sent after 9pm will not be answered until the next day(s).

Belcher, W.L. (2009). *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glatthorn, A. A., & Joyner, R. L. (2005). *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

All other readings available on Canvas.

### ***Course Expectations***

The course will employ a variety of approaches to instruction and relies heavily on student participation and discussion. Course requirements include written and oral assignments that involve individual work, peer review feedback, as well as class presentations.

1. **Class participation**—You are expected to be actively engaged in this course by ensuring the following: (1) your participation in class discussions demonstrates thoughtful reflection and understanding of the subject matter; (2) the level of respect you offer to your colleagues and to Dr. Espino; and (3) your submission of assignments on the deadlines noted in this syllabus.

Use of cell phones and PDA devices, including text messaging and on-line chatting, is unacceptable. Do not use the vibrate option as it can be equally disruptive. In the rare occasion when work or personal needs requires you to be on call, please keep the ringer off and let Dr. Espino know that you may need to leave the room to take a call.

2. **Readings**—You are expected to complete the readings that are assigned for each class session. The reading assignments will consist of writings about research design, specific methodological practices, and data analysis. Additional readings will focus on your specific research interests. *Articles assigned for the course are available on Canvas.*
3. **The Pomodoro Technique**—Finding the motivation to write on a regular basis takes a bit of experimentation and an open mind. This semester, the class is using the Pomodoro Technique, which was developed by Francesco Cerillo, who used a timer in the shape of a tomato (a pomodoro in Italian) to study. The entire class will dedicate 25-minute pomodoros throughout a class session to focus specifically on writing their seminar paper or thesis proposals, reading about their topic, meeting with their peer review team to review material, or meeting with Dr. Espino. The point is to stay focused on the task at hand for at least 25 minutes. Students are expected to arrive to each class prepared to tackle an aspect of their seminar papers or thesis proposals.
4. **Weekly Focus**—Every week, one student will be responsible for sharing his/her thoughts and questions pertaining to his/her seminar paper/thesis within a 25-minute timeframe. The student can use this time, for example, to discuss his/her progress in developing the seminar paper/thesis, have students read portions of his/her writing, or formally present the seminar paper/thesis proposal. Please confirm what you want to address to Dr. Espino **no later than the Monday** before class.
5. **Seminar Paper/Thesis Proposal—Due December 16<sup>th</sup>**. You will formulate a research proposal (approximately 60 pages or more) pertaining to a current issue of interest. Throughout the semester, aspects of the research design will be submitted to Dr. Espino. After Dr. Espino has reviewed your work and offered feedback, she will cc: your professional advisor who will then offer additional feedback. If you plan to

submit a thesis, you are expected to complete the CITI training modules (<http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/RCOciti.html>) no later than **October 7<sup>th</sup>**. The Seminar Paper/Thesis Proposal consists of the following elements:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**—You will write an introduction that discusses the significance of the research problem you want to address as well a discussion of what you believe is the potential contribution your research will have to what we currently know within the literature. **DUE September 23<sup>rd</sup> via Canvas.**

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**—You will write a literature review pertaining to your research interests, along with a theoretical/conceptual framework. **DUE October 7<sup>th</sup> via Canvas.**

**Chapter 3: Methodology**—You will submit a discussion of the methodology you are employing that indicates the key aspects of that methodology, including descriptions of the sample, the research instrument, positionality statement, and data analysis procedures. Chapter III will also include a conclusion to close the proposal that discusses limitations of the proposal design and possible implications for student affairs theory and practice. **DUE via November 25<sup>th</sup> via Canvas.**

6. **Seminar Paper/Thesis Proposal Presentation**—At most educational research conferences, research studies are presented within a 12-minute timeframe. You will prepare a 12-minute PowerPoint presentation with no more than 5-7 total slides (including title page and references) on your proposed research study. Your colleagues will provide feedback on the study's viability, the way the proposal is constructed, and recommendations for next steps. Additional information will be provided in class. **DUE December 9<sup>th</sup>**. Please invite your professional advisor/chair.
7. **Peer Review Teams**—You will be responsible for providing feedback to a partner throughout the semester. On the days that drafts are due, you will submit via email to your partner and Dr. Espino by the end of class, one (1) page of typed notes, critiques, and offered recommendations for improving that draft. You may also make suggestions via track changes or on hardcopy. If you use hardcopy, scan the feedback as a PDF attached to your email. Providing constructive feedback is an important skill to gain and hone. You will be evaluated on the quality of the feedback you provide to your peers throughout the semester and at the end of the semester (**DUE December 9<sup>th</sup>**).

**Please Note:** All assignments should be submitted via Canvas by the beginning of class unless other arrangements are made well in advance of deadlines (i.e., at least 72 hours prior to deadline). Only half credit will be given to work submitted after class. Because Dr. Espino is invested in your success in this course, she is happy to review any assignments prior to their due dates via email (no later than Tuesdays at noon) or during a scheduled appointment.

Because our writing evolves, you may find that the peer review process will (hopefully) positively affect your assignments. As a result, you are welcomed to resubmit revised assignments via email at the end of the class session in the event that there is time to peer review a graded assignment.

Because this course is writing-intensive, you are encouraged to utilize the Learning Assistance Service (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS/?t=print.php>) and the Writing Center (<http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter/resources>) for assistance with study strategies, grammar, sentence structure, and organization. Based on her experiences with grading written work, Dr. Espino has several recommendations that are based on the APA Manual. Please reference the section cited in the APA Manual for more information:

- Do not use any contractions in your writing (e.g., can't, didn't, wasn't). (**See 3.18 Verbs, pp. 77-78; 3.06 Smoothness of Expression, pp. 65-66**)

- Do not use the abbreviation “etc.” when listing examples. In accordance with APA format, the reader does not necessarily know what the “etc.” means. (4.22-4.30 Abbreviations, pp.106-108; specifically, 4.26 Latin Abbreviations, p. 108)
- Do not use passive voice. Use active voice. (3.18 Verbs, pp. 77-78)
- Do not capitalize words that should not be capitalized such as “University” or “Student Affairs” or “Higher Education” (4.14-4.20 Capitalization, pp. 101-104)
- Do not put extra spacing between paragraphs. (8.03 Preparing the Manuscript for Submission, pp. 228-231)

Written assignments will be formatted in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Citations are in APA Format. For this course, the acceptable citation format is the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> edition). **Wikipedia is not an appropriate venue from which to cite your work. Please do not cite from this website!**

### *Advice from the Class of 2015*

#### **What I wish I had known about the seminar paper:**

- Our seminar paper is an expanded version of the scholarly literature that we are reading/exposing

#### **What I wish I had known about a literature review:**

- What a macro level literature review looks like vs. a scholarly article literature review (# of pages, depth, how detailed to discuss studies)
- Value/importance of headers – thinking about and discussing difference sections of a literature review
- Literature review should clearly articulate the context of the study, how study was designed, and things we need to think about in relation to the study
- Literature review is not just one study per paragraph summary
- Literature review is not choppy with your thoughts/analysis/opinions diced between each study
- Literature review should clearly show connections between studies
- Literature review is about 20 pages
- The depth of research that should be in the literature review – more specifically that all of the articles I read have helped frame my study and that the literature review explicitly explains why that is

#### **Tips for future SAC students:**

- Reach out to your professor and advisor often!
- Schedule at beginning of semester (bi-weekly or tri-weekly) – take initiative!
- Start in the summer: choose topic, identify research questions, compile literature, read read read
- Create a comprehensive outline and reorganize that as needed before you start writing
- Cite as you go
- Think out loud with your cohort
- Construct an outline with your advisor
- Meet with advisors and discuss regularly
- Compile all articles
- Summarize each article after reading it
- Ask questions
- Reference completed seminar papers/thesis

### **Grading**

Your final grade for this class will be based upon the following points system:

Drafts (3 x 5 pts each)	15
Participation	20
Peer review	10
Final seminar paper	40
Research presentation	<u>15</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Your final grade will be calculated using the following scale:

A+	100-99	B+	90-89	C+	80-79
A	98-93	B	88-83	C	78-73
A-	92-91	B-	82-81		

### ***Proposal Grading***

Since 40 points of your grade for this course (as well as the outcome of the master's comprehensive examination) will be based on the research proposal, the SAC faculty would like to articulate the criteria for the proposal's evaluation as well as other aspects of the course.

**Please Note:** The thesis/seminar paper will be submitted to both your chair/professional advisor and Dr. Espino. Chairs and advisors have also been informed of the grading criteria for this course.

- An "A" proposal includes all three chapters. While the chair/advisor and instructor recognize that these chapters are still "drafts," they are nonetheless logically clear, organized, and well-reasoned. "A" grades also demonstrate that the student has grappled with the issues raised in the course. An "A" grade for discussion participation involves attendance at most or every class meeting, with active engagement in the discussion topics. "A" students also have turned in all of their assignments.
- A "B" proposal includes all three chapters, but they require several additions or revisions that make them less than reasonably clear, organized, and well-reasoned. A "B" grade for participation and weekly assignments would be characterized by sporadic attendance and/or tardiness and only some of the assignments turned in on time.
- A "C" proposal includes all three chapters, but they are in rough form and require significant additions or revisions. (This includes but is not limited to: numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors, incomplete sentences or thoughts, poor organization or non-cohesive paragraphs, and/or large sections of missing information.) Students who frequently miss class and do not turn in a significant number of assignments will receive a "C" grade for class participation and writing assignments, respectively.
- Factors that warrant a grade lower than a "C" include: turning in very few or none of the weekly assignments and turning in fewer than three proposal chapters or chapters that are deemed unacceptable for evaluation.

### ***Comprehensive Examination Evaluations***

The goal of the master's comprehensive examination is for students to demonstrate their competence in a variety of skills vital to the development of a strong scholar/practitioner: to identify and articulate the significance of topics or problems salient to the field of student affairs and higher education; to apply and integrate relevant theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature into their work; and to develop a research design with rigorous methods that will undergird a strong empirical study.

The master's comprehensive examination takes the form of a research proposal, developed through each student's seminar paper (M.Ed.) or thesis (M.A.). Full-time master's students will enroll for 3 credits of either EDCP 798A (M.Ed.) or 799A (M.A.) in the fall of the second year. In EDCP 798A/799A, students work to develop a final draft of their seminar paper or thesis research proposals, which are due at the end of the fall semester.

The research proposal will be evaluated by the student's professional adviser and the instructor of EDCP 798A/799A for two purposes: a) a percentage of the student's final grade for EDCP 798A or 799A; and b) determination of the student's comprehensive examination score.

Completed research proposals include three (3) chapters:

- Chapter I, the introduction, includes a statement of the problem, the research question(s), and the significance of the study.
- Chapter II, the review of literature, summarizes and provides a critical review of the extant research and theory on the topic.
- Chapter III, the methods, states the study's research hypotheses, describes the intended sample and instrumentation, and details the data collection and analysis plan. Chapter III will also include a conclusion to close the proposal that discusses limitations of the proposal design and possible implications for student affairs theory and practice.

Research proposals that do not include three chapters or are otherwise incomplete will not be evaluated. All students are expected to abide by the [University's Code of Academic Integrity](#) regarding their work on the examinations. Any student found to be violating the [Code of Academic Integrity](#) will be reported to the Honor Council.

Evaluations for the research proposal satisfy two requirements for the master's program: (a) 40% of the student's final grade for EDCP 798/799; and (b) determination of the student's comprehensive examination score. Both the student's professional advisor/chair and Dr. Espino will evaluate the research proposal:

Chapter 1:	Professional Advisor/Chair
Chapter 2:	Professional Advisor/Chair
Chapter 3:	Professional Advisor/Chair and Dr. Espino (average)

The following are the criteria for determining the outcome of the comprehensive examination. Each chapter will be evaluated on 9 criteria:

1. Appropriateness of content in light of research question(s)
2. Accuracy of material presented
3. Level of complexity of content (depth)
4. Completeness of chapter (all elements included)
5. Organization of chapter
6. Use of references
7. Conceptualization of approach, thought (e.g., originality, sophistication, etc.)
8. Clarity of writing
9. Grammar, syntax, use of English language

Each of the 9 criteria will be evaluated on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0, with 3.0 as a passing evaluation and 5.0 as a high pass. Evaluations can be assigned in whole or half points. Then, evaluators will assign an overall score for the entire chapter on the 1.0 to 5.0 scale. We expect that evaluators will provide detailed comments and feedback on the chapters, either in the margins of the chapter text or on a separate sheet of paper.

Students must receive an overall score of 3.0 or higher for each chapter in order to successfully pass the comprehensive examination. Again, Chapters 1 and 2 will be evaluated solely by the student's professional advisor/chair. Chapter 3 will be jointly evaluated by the student's professional advisor/chair as well as Dr. Espino. The final evaluation for Chapter 3 will be the average of the two scores assigned by the professional advisor/chair and Dr. Espino.

### **Master's Seminar Paper**

A seminar paper in the master's program is the development of a research proposal without conducting the actual research. A complete seminar paper is comprised of chapters I, II, and III (developed in the Fall semester) that includes a conclusion regarding implications for research and practice as well as the possible limitations of such a study in Chapter III. The seminar paper is directed by the professional advisor in consultation with the instructor of EDCP 798A. Once the seminar paper has been completed and approved by the professional advisor, the student will submit the final seminar paper to the SAC Concentration Director. The seminar paper title page (only) must be filed in the College of Education, Graduate Studies Office by published deadline for the semester in which the student intends to graduate.

The title page of the seminar paper must be submitted in a specific format, which includes signature lines for the SAC faculty member and the professional advisor directing the seminar paper. Three copies of the cover page must be submitted to the SAC Concentration Director.

Please Note: The final seminar paper is due no later than late April generally in order to fulfill Graduate School deadlines for a May graduation. The specific date will be announced annually and can also be obtained from Carol Scott.

### **Master's Thesis**

A Master's thesis is a requirement of the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in the SAC Concentration and demonstrates the student's research competence. The thesis includes design of a study with relevant and appropriate reviews of the literature, analysis of data and presentation of results, and discussion and interpretation of findings.

A thesis is guided by a three-person committee comprised of at least two tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty of the University of Maryland. Affiliate faculty can direct a thesis and serve as the third member of any thesis committee.

A Master's thesis may be original research, or a replication or quasi-replication study. Students may collect their own data for the research study, or may use archival data with permission of the individual or office who "owns" the data. All proposed research, whether using archival data or collecting original data, must have approval of the University's Institutional Review Board prior to proceeding with data collection and data analysis.

A thesis is typically comprised of five chapters:

- The first three chapters are the proposal for the thesis (developed in the Fall semester) and include an introduction to the research, a review of the relevant literature, and the methodology proposed for the study, including limitations, which can be identified in advance of the study.
- Chapter IV is a presentation of the results of the research (completed in the Spring semester).
- Chapter V is a discussion/ interpretation of the results, relating the findings to previous research and literature and identifying limitations of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research (completed in the Spring semester).

After completing the thesis, students will defend their research study. Due to the nature of conducting a full research study, it is possible that students will complete the thesis in the summer after their second year. Students are responsible for keeping track of all deadlines for fulfilling Graduate School requirements pertaining to submitting a thesis.

All students must successfully complete Master's written comprehensive examinations in order to graduate. A research proposal, completed in EDCP 798A/799A during the fall semester of the second year serves as the written comprehensive examination. If a student's comprehensive exam is judged as not passing or incomplete, they have one more chance to turn in a completed exam. The deadline will be determined by the student and advisor, in consultation with the instructor for EDCP 798A/799A.

### ***Academic Integrity***

The University is an intellectual community. Its fundamental purpose is the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. The Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University community share this responsibility, The Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with students.

#### *Honor Pledge*

On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, the student will write by hand and sign the following pledge:

*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination.*

Failure to sign the pledge is not an honors offense, but neither is it a defense in case of violation of this Code. Students who do not sign the pledge will be given the opportunity to do so. Refusal to sign must be explained to the instructor. Signing or non-signing of the pledge will not be considered in grading or judicial procedures. Material submitted electronically should contain the pledge; submission implies signing the pledge.

On examinations, no assistance is authorized unless given by or expressly allowed by the instructor. On other assignments, the pledge means that the assignment has been done without academic dishonesty, as defined in the Code of Academic Integrity, available at <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html>.

The pledge is a reminder that at the University of Maryland students carry primary responsibility for academic integrity because the meaningfulness of their degrees depends on it. Faculty are urged to emphasize the importance of academic honesty and of the pledge as its symbol.

#### *Penalties for Violations of Academic Integrity*

Students who are found to have falsified, fabricated, or plagiarized in any context, such as course work, laboratory research, archival research, or thesis / dissertation writing--will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. The Office of Student Conduct has some discretion in determining penalties for violations of the University's standards of academic integrity, but the normal sanction for a graduate student found responsible for a violation of academic integrity will be dismissal (suspension or expulsion) from the University.

### ***Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities***

Students with a documented disability or in need of an academic accommodation that is registered through the Disability Resource Center should contact Dr. Espino as soon as possible.



### ***Religious Beliefs and Practices***

You will not be penalized because of observances of your religious beliefs. Whenever possible, you will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is your responsibility to inform Dr. Espino as soon as possible of any intended absences for religious observances.

### ***Course Topics, Weekly Readings, and Assignments***

Class	Date	Class Description
1	<b>September 2</b>	<b>Overview, Pomodoros, and Individual Meetings with Dr. E</b> 9:30am-9:40am: Coty 9:40am-9:50am: Jazmin 9:50am-10am: Maya 10am-10:10am: Sarah 10:10am-10:20am: Linh 10:20am-10:30am: Kai Kai 10:30am-10:40am: Noah 10:40am-10:50am: Jacky 10:50am-11am: Dawn 11am-11:10am: Corinne 11:10-11:20am: Caroline
2	<b>September 9</b>	<b>Research Design</b> <b>Weekly Focus:</b> Caroline and Corinne  Read Creswell Chapter 1 Selection of a Research Design and Chapter 4 Writing Strategies and Ethical Considerations
3	<b>September 16</b>	<b>The Introduction (Chapter 1)</b> <b>Weekly Focus:</b> Dawn and Jacky  Read Creswell Chapter 5: The Introduction and Chapter 6 The Purpose Statement  Read Becca's Chapter 1
4	<b>September 23</b>	<b>The Literature Review (Chapter 2)</b> <i>Draft of Chapter 1 Introduction Due via Canvas</i> <b>Weekly Focus:</b> Noah and Kai Kai  Read Creswell Chapter 2 Review of the Literature  Read Becca's Chapter 2 (Stop at p. 38)
5	<b>September 30</b>	<b>The Use of Theory and Conceptual Frameworks (Chapter 2)</b> <b>Weekly Focus:</b> Linh and Sarah  Read Creswell Chapter 3 The Use of Theory  Read Becca's Chapter 2 (Start on p. 38)
6	<b>October 7</b>	<b>Ethics, IRB, and Positionality</b>

***Draft of Literature Review & Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Due (Chapter 2) via Canvas***

***Submit a copy of the CITI Completion Form (if writing a thesis)***

**Weekly Focus:** Jazmin and Maya

Scheurich, J.J., & Young, M.D. (1997). Coloring epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26(4), 4-16.

7      **October 14    Quantitative Research Design**  
**Weekly Focus:** Coty and (Open)

Read Creswell Chapter 8 Quantitative Methods

Read John Fink's Thesis Chapter 3 Methodology

8      **October 21    Qualitative Research Design**  
**Weekly Focus:** (Open)

Read Creswell Chapter 9 Qualitative Procedures

Read Becca's Chapter 3 Methodology

9      **October 28    *Discuss Possible Research Question(s) and Hypotheses***  
**One-on-One Meetings with Dr. Espino during class**

Read Creswell Chapter 7 Research Questions and Hypotheses

10     **November 4    ASHE Conference (no class)**  
**Write, Write, Write! Read, Read, Read!**

11     **November 11   Constructing Research Instruments**  
**Weekly Focus:** (Open)

Fowler, Jr., F.J. (2002). *Survey research methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Read Chapter 5 Designing Questions to be Good Measures (pp. 76-103).

Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction, 5th ed.* Boston: Pearson. Read Chapter 3 Being There: Developing Understanding through Participant Observation, Documents, and Visual Research OR Chapter 4 Making Words Fly: Developing Understanding through Interviewing.

12     **November 18   Data Analysis**  
**Weekly Focus:** (Open)

Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction, 5th ed.* Boston: Pearson. Read Chapter 7 Finding Your Story: Data Analysis.

Fowler, F.J. (2002). *Survey research methods* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Read Chapter 8: Preparing survey data for analysis (pp. 137-146).

13     **November 25   Thanksgiving Break (no class)**  
***Draft of Methodology (Chapter 3) Due via Canvas at Noon***  
**Write, Write, Write! Read, Read, Read!**

14     **December 2    Gamma Sigma Alpha Board Meeting (no class)**

**Write, Write, Write! Read, Read, Read!**

- 15    **December 9**    *Research Presentations*  
                           *Peer Review Evaluation Due*  
                           Please invite your professional advisors/chairs to attend.
- 16    **December 16**    **Seminar Paper/Thesis Proposal Due by noon via Canvas**  
                           *Submit a Hard Copy to Professional Advisor/Chair*

***Advisor/Chair Submits Evaluation Form to Dr. Espino by December 23<sup>rd</sup>***

Due to the timeline for this fall semester, all students will potentially receive incompletes for the fall semester until the Advisor/Chair submits their grade and comprehensive examination evaluation. You are responsible for ensuring that your advisor/chair is aware of this deadline. **Please Note:** Dr. Espino will not release information regarding the outcome of your comprehensive exams until every cohort member's paper has been evaluated.

Once the feedback is compiled, Dr. Espino will informally notify you about the outcome of comprehensive exams and next steps. You will receive a formal letter by the end of January.

For those who are planning to submit theses, once you are informally notified about the outcome of comprehensive exams, you can schedule a thesis proposal defense with a committee comprised of three people, with at least two tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty of the University of Maryland. Affiliate faculty can direct a thesis and serve as the third member of any thesis committee.

**ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK (as designed by Dr. Sheila Slaughter)**

1. What is the problem the scholar addresses?
  - a. Why is the problem important or significant—or is it?
  - b. How does the scholar turn the general problem into concrete research questions?
  - c. What are the research questions?
2. What is the theory or conceptual framework used by the scholar?
  - a. Is the theory articulated?
  - b. If the theory is not articulated, can you nonetheless understand the conceptual framework the scholar is working from?
  - c. What alternative theories address or would address the scholar's data?
  - d. If theories are not used, does the scholar context the problem in specific scholarly literatures? How does she use these literatures to frame her study?
3. What are the assumptions made by the scholar?
  - a. Assumptions are usually ideas that are not tested or proven—they are the ideas that undergird the problem addressed by the author and are often philosophical, ideological, or world view type ideas that are difficult to test. Why is it important to identify assumptions? How do we identify assumptions?
  - b. What is the scholar's vision of higher education as it is? What is the scholar's vision of how higher education should be?
4. What data are used?
  - a. What is the data source used? Is it appropriate for answering the research questions the scholar is addressing? What other data sources are available? Why did the scholar make the choices she did?
  - b. What is the unit of analysis? Is it appropriate for the questions asked?
5. What is the method used by the scholar?
  - a. Does the scholar use quantitative or qualitative methods? How detailed is she with regard to methods—for example, if quantitative methods are used, do the authors tell us the questions/items on which the variables are based? Do these make sense for answering the problem posed? If she is using qualitative methods, does she explain her coding scheme, or can you understand it?
  - b. How would the problem look if addressed by different methods? Would the answers change?
6. How does the scholar deploy her data in a line of argument?
  - a. If data do not speak for themselves, how does the scholar make them speak?
  - b. What scholarly conventions and rhetorical strategies does the author use?
    - i. For example, does the scholar use “reasoned” argument, and rely heavily on tables?
    - ii. How does the scholar deal with ambiguities and contradictions in the data?
    - iii. What parts of her data does the scholar not include or pay less attention to?
  - c. Is the line of argument convincing, and, if so, why? If not, why not?
7. Do the conclusions drawn by the scholar answer the research questions? Do they illuminate, refine, expand or contradict the theories and literature used?
8. What are the strengths of the article? What are the weaknesses?

**SUGGESTED ELEMENTS OF A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PROPOSAL<sup>2</sup>**  
(Compliments of Karen Inkelas)

- I. Introduction to and statement of the problem your research addresses
  - A. Background and context of the problem
  - B. Statement of the problem (including the research question)
  - C. Definitions of key terms in the statement
  - D. Rationale: why is this study important, significant?
    - Expectations/anticipations about results and their usefulness
- II. Review of related literature and research
  - A. Brief roadmap of literature review
    - Overview of why specific literature was chosen and how it will be organized
    - What is known about this topic?
  - B. What is not well understood about this topic? (i.e., what are the gaps in the literature?)
  - C. Critique and methodological limitations of prior work
  - E. If appropriate, incorporation of conceptual/theoretical framework
    - Summary of literature review as it relates to your problem statement and hypotheses
    - Conceptualization of study, either in words or illustrated as a model
- III. Description of study methods/procedures
  - A. Restate study purpose (i.e., research question) and state hypotheses
    - Note: hypotheses can be null or alternative
    - Note: hypotheses should be stated in a way that is testable
  - B. Design of study
    - State design choice (e.g., experimental, correlational, comparative, ex post facto) and why this choice
    - Identify potential threats to internal validity (esp. for experimental designs)
  - C. Sample or population to be studied
    - Describe sampling strategy chosen and rationale for choosing this strategy
    - Describe population sample is generalizing to and how researcher plans to test for representativeness of sample to population
    - State sample size chosen, and give rationale for this choice (acceptable sample error, statistical power considerations, etc.)
    - Describe how sample will be obtained (will it require assistance?)
  - D. Positionality Statement
  - E. Instrumentation
    - Rationale for using instrument
    - Reliability and validity of instrument (as well as how you plan to re-establish reliability for your study)
    - How are variables scored?
    - Plans for pilot-test?
  - F. Plan for data collection
    - How, when, and for how long will you collect your data?
    - How will you solicit participation?
    - How will you handle non-response?

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<sup>2</sup> Note: The above are suggested formats for quantitative and qualitative research proposals. However, all proposals are unique, and thus can vary from these formats.

- Will you use incentives?
  - If applicable, how and when will you follow-up with participants?
- G. Plan for analysis of data
- Describe initial “treatment” of data (e.g., data entry, clean up, scale construction, etc.)
  - Describe statistical analytical method chosen to address research question(s)/hypothes(es)
  - Rationale for analytical choice and how it addresses your research question(s)/hypothes(es)
- H. Limitations of study
- Describe possible limitations of the study as conceived thus far

*(Seminar papers include Chapters I-III, with Chapter III comprised of the methodology, limitations, and implications.)*

*(The full thesis contains two more chapters: IV “Results” and V “Conclusions.”)*

### SUGGESTED ELEMENTS OF A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROPOSAL<sup>3</sup>

- I. Introduction to and statement of the problem your research addresses
  - A. General introduction and background of topic
  - B. Statement of the problem (including the research question(s))
  - C. Initial (but malleable) definitions of key terms
  - D. Rationale: why is this study important, significant?
  - E. Disclose paradigmatic worldview, philosophical assumptions that make this paradigm choice appropriate for your study, and how it shapes your thinking on this topic
- II. Review of related literature and research
  - A. Brief roadmap of literature review
    - Include overview of why specific literature was chosen and how it will be organized
  - B. What is known about this topic?
  - C. What is not well understood about this topic? (i.e., what are the gaps in the literature?)
  - D. Critique and methodological limitations of prior work
  - E. If appropriate, acknowledgement the study may uncover other areas of literature as research progresses
  - F. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework
- III. Description of study methods/procedures
  - A. Present initial questions and objectives for study
    - Initial questions should frame initial procedures for collecting & analyzing data
  - B. Design of study
    - Describe design choice and rationale for choice in light of initial research question identified
  - C. Sample
    - Discuss criteria for selection of participants and setting
    - Articulate rationale for initial choice of sampling
  - D. Positionality Statement
  - E. Instrumentation
    - Since researcher is the instrument, describe researcher's background, closeness to topic, values, etc.
  - F. Plan for data collection
    - Discuss access to site and participants (including roles of gatekeepers, informants)
    - Describe degree of participation in which researcher will engage
    - Describe types of data researcher will collect (e.g., observations, interviews, documents, etc.) and HOW (provide detail on data collection will take place, e.g. give examples of interview questions or interview guide, the nature of participant observation, use of incentives, recruitment strategies, etc. don't skimp on detail! If you are plan to use interviews, you should include an interview guide/protocol as an Appendix, its nature will depend on the type of interviews you plan to use)
    - Describe how researcher will record information (fieldnotes, memos, tape recordings, transcriptions, etc.)
    - Frame initial speculation on time frame for data collection

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The above are *suggested* formats for quantitative and qualitative research proposals. However, all proposals are unique, and thus can vary from these formats.

- Reflect on possible changes in data collected, samples selected, strategies used based on initial speculations
  - Describe pilot study, if appropriate, and how pilot informed initial questions and methodological choices
- G. Plan for analysis of data
- Describe data analysis procedure you plan to utilize (e.g., constant comparative method)
  - Discuss credibility, trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, confirmability, or other methods used to ensure quality of data collected and analyzed
  - Make provisions for audit trail (for reader and/or peer debriefer)
- H. Limitations of study
- Describe possible limitations of the study as conceived thus far