



COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 8395 (15935) Pre-Dissertation Research

Spring 2011

TIME:

FACULTY:

Maxine W. Epstein

Or by Appointment

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I. Course

A. Catalog Description:

Pre-Dissertation Research Cr. 3 (3-0). Prerequisites: Doctoral standing in social work and successful completion of all coursework. Focuses on preparation for qualifying exams, development of the dissertation proposal and preparation for the proposal defense. Course may be repeated for credit.

B. Purpose

This course provides opportunities to prepare intensively for qualifying exams, and to move toward identification of a dissertation topic and methodology.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

1. prepare effectively for their qualifying papers.
2. master the process of dissertation research in doctoral education.
3. formulate and define an appropriate dissertation topic.
4. strengthen and refine their research skills as needed in the dissertation process.
5. understand the various issues in identifying an appropriate dissertation chairperson and committee.
6. develop skills needed in developing the dissertation proposal, as well as preparing for the dissertation proposal defense.

III. Course Content

This course will include the following content areas:

Content includes the research process, including library research, hypothesis formulation, and definition of an appropriate dissertation topic. Attention is also given to guidelines and preparation for the qualifying paper.

IV. Course Structure

Students must meet with the instructor individually at least three times a semester. Meetings can occur in person, by telephone or email depending on your needs.

V. Textbooks

This is a good online resource: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

Please select one of these textbooks or a similar text on proposal/dissertation guidelines. **Required Reading** for this course.

1. Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R.R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
2. Szuchman, L.T. & Thomlison. B. (2008). *Writing with style: APA style for social work*. Belmont CA: Thompson/Brooks Cole. ISBN:0-495-09883-3..
3. American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*, (6th Ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.
4. Review of Doctoral Handbook

VI. Course Requirements

Assignments

In addition to readings (see Texts) students are required to submit a written report demonstrating their progress in preparing for the qualifying examination and/or developing the dissertation proposal. Please put in a time line for the semester. This is due at **Mid-Semester the week of March 28th. Your final progress report is due the week before the last day of class and should reflect your accomplishments for the semester. If you are writing you qualifying paper or are working on your dissertation proposal, please give a copy of your progress report to your chair as well. You can email both to me. A grade of S requires two progress reports given at their respective due dates.**

Please schedule a time to meet with me during the semester.

VII. Evaluation and Grading

Course is graded S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). No incompletes will be given.

VIII. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete)

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either **(a)** passing a course or **(b)** still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work complete in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of **W**.

IX. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty. Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author (or authors), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person's work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from

students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

X. Americans with Disabilities Statement

Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance.