

**COURSE TITLE/SECTION:** SOCW 8395 (042656) Pre-Dissertation Research

**TIME:** Independent Study Format with monthly required meetings individually scheduled

**FACULTY:** Sheara Williams Jennings, Ph.D.      **OFFICE HOURS:**

- Wednesday mornings, 8a-12 noon
- 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 paper, development of the dissertation proposal or preparation for the dissertation proposal defense. Course may be repeated for credit.

#### B. Purpose

This course provides opportunities to continue preparation for qualifying paper, the identification of a dissertation topic and methodology, and/or the dissertation proposal.

### II. Course Objectives

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

1. Prepare effectively for and submit the qualifying paper or dissertation proposal
2. Master the process of dissertation research in doctoral education
3. Formulate and define an appropriate dissertation topic
4. Strengthen and refine research skills as needed in the dissertation process
5. Understand and complete the process of 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 topical (content) areas:

1. Required elements of the qualifying paper and dissertation proposal
2. Research process, including library research
3. Development of research questions, hypotheses formulation and testing
4. Formulation of an appropriate dissertation topic

#### IV. Course Structure

The format of this course is likened to a self-directed, independent study. Students must meet with the instructor individually at least three times a semester to discuss progress. Meetings can occur in person or by telephone, depending on student needs. The face-to-face method is the instructor's preference.

#### V. Textbooks / Reading Materials

##### Recommended Books / Resources:

1. American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*, (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.
2. Drake, B., & Jonson-Reid, M. (2008). *Social work research methods: From conceptualization to dissemination*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc. / Allyn & Bacon.
3. Kline, Rex B. (2009). *Becoming a behavioral science researcher: A Guide to producing research that matters*. New York: The Guilford Press.
4. Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R.R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
5. Szuchman, L.T. & Thomlison, B. (2008). *Writing with style: APA style for social work*. Belmont CA: Thompson/Brooks Cole. ISBN:0-495-09883-3.
6. University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. (n.d.). *Doctoral student handbook*.  
(The handbook provided the semester/year the student was admitted to the PhD program.)

Journal Articles. Students will be expected to conduct individual literature searches and reviews according to their areas of research. The UH library has full text articles online through the electronic resources section. Students are encouraged to register for remote access to the HAM-TMC Medical Library at the M.D. Anderson Library Service Desk, which allows students to access other journal resources. Students are also encouraged to obtain software to manage their references (e.g., Endnotes<sup>®</sup>, Refworks<sup>®</sup>, etc.) and to seek training in the use of their preferred software. Lee Hilyer, Associate Librarian in the M. D. Anderson Library, is a great resource on the use of Endnotes<sup>®</sup> and other bibliographic software. He also maintains an Endnotes blog (lahilyer@uh.edu, 713-743-9714).

##### Online Resources:

- <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/>
- <http://iis.berkeley.edu/content/dissertation-proposal-resources>
- <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/dissbooks.html>

## VI. Course Requirements

### A. Update Meetings with Instructor

[Each student is responsible for contacting the instructor to schedule these meetings]

1. Meeting 1 – Week 3 (February 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> )
2. Meeting 2 – Week 8 (March 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> )
3. Meeting 3 – Week 15 (May 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> )

### B. Written Assignments

1. *Semester Timeline, Reading List & Proposed Final Product* – due Week 3
  - o Timeline: Develop a timeline for the entire semester that includes a plan for weekly tasks/activities associated with your qualifying paper or dissertation proposal
  - o Negotiated Deliverable / Mid-Term: Propose a deliverable to be approved by the instructor. This should be a one page summary in which you propose a product for mid-term that will contribute to your progress of the final product / goal. E.g. – IRB proposal, annotated outline of qualifying exam, annotated outline of dissertation proposal
  - o Proposed Final Product: Provide a one page summary in which you propose your final product for this course. The instructor must approve this product.
2. *Negotiated Deliverable / Mid-Term* – due Week 8
  - o Submit a substantive write product according to the proposal that was approved in Week 3
3. *Semester Progress Report and Final Product* – due Week 15
  - o Submit a written report documenting progress (completed tasks, activities, barriers, etc.) in preparing for the qualifying examination and/or developing the dissertation proposal over the course of the semester.
  - o Submit the final product that was approved by the instructor during Meeting #1. A copy of the progress report and final product should also be provided to the chairperson of the student's qualifying paper / dissertation committee.

## VII. Evaluation and Grading

This course is graded S/U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory). A grade of S requires the completion of three meetings with the instructor AND the submission of all three written assignments.

## 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 completed 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 presentations, 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. It also includes securing another person to complete any required activities, assignments, quizzes, papers, or exams in an online course, or in any on-line environment. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see the instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

## X. Course Schedule, Activities and Assignments

Week 1	January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Review syllabus, schedule meetings with instructor & begin preparing Assignment #1
Week 2	January 25 <sup>th</sup>	Continue and complete Assignment #1
Week 3	February 1 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting #1 with Instructor (February 3rd or 4<sup>th</sup>)</li><li>• Submit Semester Timeline, Reading List &amp; Proposed Final Product at meeting with instructor ***</li></ul>
Week 4	February 8 <sup>th</sup>	Activities and tasks related to development of mid-term deliverable (Assignment #2)
Week 5	February 15 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 6	February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	“
Week 7	February 29 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 8	March 7 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting #2 with Instructor (March 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup>)</li><li>• Submit Mid-Term Deliverable at meeting with instructor ***</li></ul>
Week 9	March 14 <sup>th</sup>	SPRING BREAK
Week 10	March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Activities and tasks related to development of final product & semester progress report
Week 11	March 28 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 12	April 4 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 13	April 11 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 14	April 18 <sup>th</sup>	“
Week 15	April 25 <sup>th</sup>	“
Final Exam Week	May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Meeting #3 with Instructor (May 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>)</li><li>○ Submit final product and semester progress report at meeting with instructor (Assignment #3)</li></ul>

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*If meeting with instructor is a conference call, the assignment should be e-mailed to the instructor at least 24 hours before the conference call.*

## XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines,

each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the UH Center for Disabilities at 713-743-5400.