Course Information:
Course Name: Proposal Seminar
Course Number: DPLS 730
Credits: 3
Day of the Week/Time: Saturdays 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
Location: TBA
Instructor: Chris Francovich, Ed.D
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Phone: 313-3592
Office Hours: By Appointment

We are finding out what we are going to say, what we are going to do, by saying and doing, and in the process, we are continually controlling the process itself (Mead, 1934, p. 140)¹

The DPLS culture is one of avowed tolerance, inclusion, and respect. These ideas must, if they are to be relevant to leadership studies, be carried through in our actions – in our speech and in our manner. Please try to be mindful of your assumptions and the effect your speech and actions have on others. While part of our work is to develop critical thinking and a habit of critical thought it is also vital that kindness and respect undergird our words and our actions.

Course Overview:

The primary objective and purpose of this course is to help stimulate and add richness to your doctoral research plan and design, your proposal, and your practice of scholarship. The dissertation process can be transformative and life changing. It can consolidate and integrate years of knowledge and effort toward understanding, clarity, and critical thought. It is my hope that this process of Proposal Seminar will help do all these things.

This seminar will include dialogue and discussion on the topics of scholarly writing, research design, and the purposes and intentions of doing research. We will spend time learning about each other’s work and helping each other see elements of the work from different perspectives. The primary component of this course is the development of a rigorous and systematic organization of your research proposal. This is supported by continuous writing and analysis and both individual and group reflection on purpose statements, conceptual frameworks, research questions, methodological perspectives and plans, and the overall meaning of your work.

Each participant will read and critique the work of one other class member. Each partnership will last for the semester. Drafts and critiques/comments will be posted on the Blackboard site in the discussion area under the name of the author whose work is being read.

Each member of the seminar will present their study outline at the at the annual Leadership Symposium in early March. This will be an opportunity to present your emerging or congealing thoughts on your proposal and have a wider conversation about your purpose, conceptual

framework, research questions and methods. More specific information will be available on Blackboard.

**Course Hopes and Aims**

- To exhaustively critique, evaluate, and refine your purpose statement such that the paradigm assumptions, conceptual framework, research questions, and study methodology and methods are crystal clear
- To substantially add to the composition and refinement of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of your dissertation (assuming a traditional 5-chapter dissertation)
- To deepen your exploration of the literature on writing dissertations and conducting scholarly research
- To explore the science of critical thinking (deduction, induction, abduction) as it relates to qualitative research methodology and the structure of your dissertation and continue the development of a sound foundation in the basic vocabulary and concepts of scholarly research
- To understand and apply selected models and tools from the literature and topics discussed to ones’ own work
- To understand and apply knowledge of conceptual frameworks in the research design
- To stimulate and stretch our thinking around how we make meaning and how we and others write for scholarly purposes
- To help develop, nurture, & promote confidence, clarity, and calm through the entire dissertation process

**Texts for the Course:**


Other readings will be made available on Blackboard and assigned on the meeting day prior to the meeting where the reading will be discussed.

**Content Criteria:**

The content of DPLS written work should reflect the level and style of content of the literature you read and use to develop your thinking. There is an expectation that doctoral students will reach outside of their comfort zone in terms of appropriation of ideas, concepts, and frameworks. The substance of your work will be weighed against the general level of discourse in class meetings and the style and density of expression of the literature you use in preparing your
proposal. Substantial progress on the proposal is defined as increasing the page count of your petition by more than a factor of 3. For example, if you come into ProSem with a petition of 40 pages then substantial work done would be counted as work equal to or in excess of 120 pages (incl. initial 40).

**Thought and Expression Criteria**

Student writing should raise vital questions or issues, formulating them clearly and precisely. I will be looking for evidence of breadth and depth and the insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas. Main points should be developed and supported with relevant information and references that are appropriately incorporated.

The organization and logic of your writing is critical. The expectation is for well-focused, well organized, and well-reasoned conclusions. The writing should flow with the reader not getting lost or having to work to determine what you are saying.

There is also an expectation that your writing/thinking has an open and inclusive character when exploring alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as appropriate, their assumptions, implications, and/or practical consequences.

**Technical Criteria**

Your writing should be clear and demonstrate a high level of vocabulary through careful word choice. Sentences should be constructed skillfully and purposefully. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are important and will evaluated for their efficacy in weaving your concepts, themes, and purposes together. Summaries and conclusions are also vital elements of good writing and will be evaluated based on their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Of course grammar, punctuation, and spelling are expected to be flawless. Careful proof reading of your paper is a basic expectation. All work is to be completed in APA style. References should be cited properly within the text and a complete reference list must be provided. Formatting and other structural guidelines will be discussed in class. Quality work is considered to be work where all the criteria are met. Deviations from criteria reflect reductions in the perceived quality of the work.

**Supervision of Thesis**

Your dissertation advisor remains the primary supervisory of your project and should be consulted at every step of the process. During Prosem it is advised that you do not ask your advisor to actively read your emerging work (this is because this work will change as a function of feedback and a process of constant revision) but that you keep her or him apprised of your thinking and your direction if you sense a substantial shift in your thinking or your topic. The final say on your proposal prior to submission to your committee is your dissertation advisor’s.

**Expectation/Grade correspondence:**

If you miss more than one class session you will receive an IP and be required to take the course again in a different semester. You must present your proposal at the Research Symposium on April 1.

Substantial high quality work done on proposal = A
Less than substantial work of high quality done on proposal = A-
Less than substantial work done on proposal = B
Less than substantial work of poor quality done on proposal = B-

**Tangible outcomes by the end of the course:**

1. A draft of chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the dissertation
2. A 2 minute ‘elevator’ speech describing your dissertation project
3. A 5 slide PowerPoint presentation of your dissertation research plan including a
graphic describing your conceptual framework presented at the Research Symposium.
4. A sense of confidence and competence regarding the proposal process