

**ELMP 9979 NA, Fall 2018  
Dissertation Seminar I  
Wednesday, 5:00-7:10 PM**

**Syllabus Version 2.0—last updated September 6, 2018**

**Contact Information**

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2-4:30 or by appointment

**Course Description**

This first course of a two-semester sequence is designed to assist students in developing a dissertation proposal consisting of three chapters. This includes working to develop a clearly defined research idea, introduction, literature review, theoretical/conceptual framework, and research design. The Dissertation Seminar sequence will also provide networking opportunities with students in a similar place in their graduate studies as well as professional development designed to help students complete the dissertation after finishing the course sequence.

**Course Expectations**

**Attendance and Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend and participate in each class to the greatest extent possible during the course of the semester. Students who do not attend class and do not make sufficient progress on their dissertation proposal may not receive a passing grade, so communication with me is critical. However, I recognize that many of your schedules are extremely busy and that a class may be occasionally missed. I ask you to please let me know in advance if you will be unable to attend, and we can bring you in via Blackboard Collaborate if that is possible.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity. All writing must consist of your own ideas, and must include appropriate citations of others' ideas. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. As a student in this course, you are responsible for knowing and adhering to the spirit of University and ELMP policies regarding academic integrity and student conduct. Please contact me immediately if there are any questions regarding proper citation and attribution techniques.

**Department of ELMP – Cheating and Dishonesty**

**I. Statement** —The Department of ELMP will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Infractions will be appropriately penalized; students should understand that suspension or expulsion from the University is a possible result.

**II. Definitions** — “Academic Dishonesty” shall be understood to encompass at least the following:

*Cheating* — whether on tests or on other course assignments, whether by the giving, receiving or taking of information.

*Plagiarism* — stealing and/or passing off as one’s own the ideas or words of another; using without crediting the source. It includes: (1) copying of text/research/assignments; (2) using someone else’s papers/research/assignments without permission and citation; (3) representing as one’s own work what is really the work of another person. This includes downloading from WEB sources.

### **III. Penalties:**

1. A student determined to be cheating on any test or who plagiarizes on a course assignment will be appropriately penalized at the **discretion of the instructor**. This may include receiving a zero on the assignment or “F” for the course.
2. Notice that a student has cheated or plagiarized will be sent to the department chair. All cases of plagiarism resulting in an “F” for the course will be reported to the Dean. This can result in a recommendation to the Dean for suspension or expulsion from the university.
3. If the chair of the ELMP department finds that a student has been found to have committed acts of academic dishonesty in more than one ELMP course, the student is expelled from the ELMP program after due notice of the discovery. After one year, the department may rescind the expulsion upon the application of the student provided the student evidences a genuine, informed, and vigorous commitment to academic integrity to the satisfaction of the department’s faculty as a whole.
4. All department or instructor actions resulting from suspected violations of this policy will be taken in accordance with the students’ due process rights. Nothing in this policy statement shall be construed to preclude the department from taking appropriate disciplinary action against forms of academic dishonesty not stipulated here.

**Services:** Disability Support Services offers services to students with disabilities to facilitate their full participation in all campus activities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The office provides documentation review, reasonable accommodations, training groups, resource materials and referrals. For more information, see <http://www.studentaffairs.shu.edu/dss/>

## Course Requirements

**Dissertation Plan:** Students will submit a dissertation plan by the first class of the semester containing information about the following points:

- Career goals: What is your current position, and what position do you desire to obtain after completing your doctoral degree?
- Proposed research topic: What would you like to research in your dissertation?
- Progress already made: How much progress have you made on your proposal?
- Strengths and weaknesses: What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and writer? What can we best do in class to help you make progress?
- Goals for the semester: What do you hope to accomplish on your proposal by the end of the semester?
- Timeline for the dissertation: When do you hope to complete your dissertation and graduate?

Forms are due via Blackboard by **noon on August 29** so we can discuss them on the first day of class. We will revisit the forms during individual consultations and at the end of the semester.

**Weekly Updates:** Students must submit weekly updates of their progress throughout the semester (except for weeks with scheduled presentations and individual consultations). These updates can range from a few sentences (other obligations kept me from working on my dissertation—which happens some weeks) to entire chapters with feedback requested in certain areas. This keeps both me and you updated on your progress, which can help speed your progress through the proposal stage. The updates must be submitted via Blackboard by midnight on the Monday night before each class meeting, and I ask that students with longer submissions not wait until the last minute to submit.

**Research Presentations:** Students are expected to give three presentations on their own research during the course of the semester. The first presentation (September 5) will be five minutes in length and is designed to give the class an idea of your proposed research topic. The second presentation (October 17) will be up to ten minutes in length and should focus on the introduction, purpose, and research questions. The final presentation (November 28) will be 10-15 minutes in length and should touch on all three chapters. There will be a short question and answer period following the first two presentations, and an extended discussion following the final presentation.

Any missed presentations should be made up as soon as possible and must be made up by the end of the semester in order to receive a satisfactory course grade. If you know you will be gone for a presentation date, please let me know immediately so we can make arrangements.

Students who will be defending their proposal during the semester are welcome to have a practice presentation in class; they should contact me to set up a date and time.

**Dissertation Reviews:** One of the best ways to become familiar with dissertations is to read and critique other dissertations. For this reason, you are required to find a doctoral dissertation that interests you and complete the following steps:

- Briefly summarize the dissertation's research questions, methods, and main findings.
- Identify some of the key strengths and weaknesses. What went well and what do you think should have been improved upon?
- What are some of the key lessons that you have learned from reading the dissertation?
- Look up the author. What is he or she doing now? Can you find any dissemination of the dissertation and signs of impact for research, policy, or practice?

This review should be approximately 1,000-1,500 words in length and is due on **Monday, September 24 at 11:59 PM**. You will then be expected to give a brief oral presentation in class on September 26 (no slides are needed).

**Final Submission:** The final assignment for this class is to submit the current draft of your dissertation proposal as of the end of the semester. While I do not expect a proposal that is ready to be defended, I do expect outlines to be in place for sections that you have not yet written. In addition to the current proposal, you should submit a 1-2 page reflective summary of your progress during the semester. Go back to your dissertation plan form and assess your progress. What went well? What did not? And what is your updated timeline for completing the dissertation? Please submit these documents by **Wednesday, December 12 at 5 PM**.

### **Course Recommendations**

In addition to the required components of the course, I have several other recommendations based on my prior experiences with the course and in mentoring dissertations.

**Dissertation Support Groups:** Moving from coursework to the dissertation process is difficult for many students; not only are you now fully responsible for choosing your path forward, but the only contact many of you will have with your peers is through this class. Therefore, I strongly recommend that you form dissertation support groups based on factors such as topics of interest, dissertation mentors, or ease of scheduling. These groups are a great way to hold each other accountable for writing and can also be used to get feedback on drafts in a less formal way.

**Individual Meetings:** I strongly encourage students to meet with me at least twice during the course of the semester. Appointments are not necessary during regular office hours, but are strongly encouraged to avoid a potential wait. I am happy to arrange alternative office hours, either in person or via Skype or Google Hangout, if the regular office hours do not work for you.

**Mentor Meetings:** Everyone in this course should already have a dissertation mentor selected and approved (if not, contact me as soon as possible). As it can be awkward getting feedback

from both me and your mentor that may diverge in cases, please keep your mentor apprised of your progress in the course (and prioritize their feedback over mine). I encourage students to check in with their mentor at least once a month during the course of the semester, even if draft chapters are not yet ready to share.

## **Guidelines**

**Writing Guidelines:** The quality of writing is important, including clarity, proper formatting and citations, and correct spelling and grammar. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the Writing Center (<http://www.shu.edu/academics/artsci/writing-center/>) as soon as a draft chapter is complete in order to receive feedback. All assignments and updates should be submitted via Blackboard; please let me know immediately if you encounter any problems uploading papers.

**Presentation Guidelines:** Learning how to give an effective presentation is one of the most important skills that you can learn in graduate school. The effectiveness of a presentation is strongly correlated with the amount of preparation, so take time to practice your presentation and make sure it is as clear as possible. This will also make sure the presentation fits within the given time limit, as our schedule likely will not allow for overruns of more than a minute or two. I strongly recommend using simple slides with large font sizes that can be easily read in the back of the classroom.

There are three course-specific requirements for presentations. First, all slideshows must be sent to me by noon that day (via Blackboard) so it can be loaded on the computer in advance of class. Second, I request that students not use Prezi for presentations and also avoid special graphics for transitions. (My eyes cannot handle the sudden zooms and transitions of Prezi, and they make some other people dizzy.) Finally, course presentation days are designed to be interactive. Please come to class on presentation days to provide feedback to other students, as well as to receive feedback on your own work.

For the final presentation, make sure to spend time on all three chapters of the dissertation proposal. Students in the past have spent most of their time on the literature review, which is easy to do given the sheer number of relevant studies for most students' work. Prioritize discussing the key studies in the presentation—other studies can come up in the question and answer period.

**Grading Scale:** This class is graded as S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) based on submitted materials and progress made toward a defended dissertation proposal. Students must either complete all presentations and individual consultations to receive a satisfactory grade, or they must successfully defend their proposal before the end of the semester.

## **Course Readings**

This class does not have a textbook or a list of assigned readings to be completed outside of class. We will occasionally be reading portions of journal articles and dissertations in class, but I will provide these materials at that time. There are a number of books and articles providing advice for students working on writing dissertations, and I am happy to provide suggestions upon request.

Students should familiarize themselves with APA style—the required style format for dissertations at Seton Hall. Failure to closely adhere to APA style will result in excessive copy editor fees after the dissertation is approved, so learning APA style is cost-effective. You can purchase an APA handbook online, but most material is readily available online through sites such as Purdue’s OWL.

## **Schedule (subject to change)**

### **August 29 (dissertation plan form due at noon)**

Introduction to syllabus and course expectations

Discussion of potential research topics

### **September 5**

Introductory presentations (5 minutes)

### **September 12**

First half of class: The dissertation process and approval map

Second half of class: Developing research topics and questions

### **September 19**

Writing the introductory chapter

### **September 26**

**Presentations on a completed dissertation (review due to me September 24 at 11:59 PM)**

**October 3**

“Dissertation Confidential” session featuring Omayra Arocho and Ryan Westman (both of whom recently defended dissertations)

Note: If my travel schedule allows (come on, United!), I will be there to introduce the panelists before leaving. But otherwise, this is a confidential opportunity to learn more about the dissertation process without any pesky faculty present.

**October 10**

First half of class: IRB protocols

Second half of class: Writing literature reviews

**October 17**

Student presentations—10 minute time limit (first nine presentations)

**October 24: No class (IPEDS technical review panel)**

**October 31**

First half of class: Student presentations—10 minute time limit (last five presentations)

Second half of class: Starting the data and methods chapter

**November 7**

The road ahead: Moving from the dissertation proposal to a completed dissertation

**November 14: No class (ASHE conference)**

**November 21: No class (Thanksgiving break)**

**November 28 and December 5**

**Final presentations (15 minutes maximum)**

**December 12**

**Proposal draft and reflective memo due at 5 PM**