

**DCP 6931 (Doctoral Core 3): Dissertation Preparation**  
**Fall Semester, 2016**  
**3 Credit Hours**

**Instructor:** Richard H. Schneider, Ph.D., AICP (ret)

**Hours:** Friday 3- 6 PM, (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> periods)

**Location:** Room 439, Architecture Building

**Office hours** Tuesdays, 1:30 PM – 2:30 (or by appointment)

**Office:** 431B Architecture Bldg.  
email me 24/7 at rschnei@ufl.edu

**Course Statement**

This mandatory course is designed to assist students in preparing their proposals and dissertations, publishing papers in refereed academic and professional journals and preparing for academic positions at institutions of higher learning. It focuses on honing critical thinking, writing and presentation skills, which are best learned from actually doing critiques, writing and presenting. These are the core skills that comprise doctoral work, subsequent academic enterprise and professional consulting careers.

**Some Initial Observations and Caveats**

The development of a dissertation proposal is your first step toward the preparation of a dissertation. Before you take this step it is a good idea to examine your personal vision of what a dissertation is supposed to accomplish. It is easy to project onto a dissertation process all hopes and fears about your intellectual worth. But, here are some common fallacies you want to avoid:

1. My dissertation will be a classic in its field, integrating profound concepts from many branches of inquiry.”
2. “My dissertation will be startlingly original, opening territory that has never been explored before. It must be perfect.”
3. “My dissertation will be a culminating work of creativity for me, bringing forward the hidden dimensions of my psyche into a comprehensive whole.

On the other hand, a dissertation should:

1. Summarize and integrate pertinent research and theory in its topic area. It is suggested you concentrate primarily on work accomplished within the last five years, although some topics may require more in-depth historical development.

2. Make a contribution of knowledge to the topic. This can be done several ways, such as conceptualizing an issue or problem in a novel and useful manner, collecting new data through quantitative or qualitative research, demonstrating the applicability of a method or treatment, synthesizing and interpreting existing data to gain new insights, or expanding the application of a theory or previous research conclusions to a new area.
  
3. Show how a topic area is illuminated, expanded, or changed by the new perspective brought to it. \*

(\*Above adapted from Columbia Southern University: DBA 7240, Doctoral Writing and Inquiry into Research: Doctoral Inquiry Syllabus.)

### **Practical Considerations**

At a very practical level, the course aims to provide students with tools and frameworks that assist their planning and construction of their proposals and dissertations. The aim, therefore, is to help you develop a valuable dissertation and to, ultimately, walk across the stage with your degree in hand.

Note that this syllabus, like all plans, is subject to change.

### **Course Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory: **one** unexcused absence is permitted. Note that this includes unexcused field trips (if any). On your second *unexcused* absence there will be an automatic 1 letter grade reduction for your final grade (thus, an “A” will be lowered to a “B”, and so on). Moreover, I expect you to get to class on time and to be prepared to participate.

### **Prerequisites**

None, but enrollment is limited to DCP graduate students.

### **Grading**

	<b>% of grade</b>
Project Assignment(s), including short papers	35%
Participation in class discussions and critical peer reviews	40%
Final paper	<u>25%</u>
	100%

Note: a check mark on papers is not a grade but an acknowledgement that you submitted the assignment. I record all such marks and detract from your grade if you have **not** completed the assignment.

## **Course Grading Scale**

93- 100 = A  
90- 92 = A-  
87- 89= B+  
83- 86= B  
80- 82= B-  
77- 79= C+  
73- 76= C  
70- 72= C-  
67- 69= D+  
63- 66= D  
60- 62= D-  
<59or less= E

## **Professional Work Policy**

I expect students to hand in their work on time and will reduce individual project grades for late submissions. Work must be in professional formats and appearance (that is, typed, unless otherwise specified) and include references where appropriate. **Important: I will not accept papers without page numbers.** Papers submitted to me via email **must** contain names on each page as well.

## **Final Papers**

As early as possible but no later than October 21 (when you will be asked to present and defend your final paper topic, in class) begin to think about what you want to write about for your final course paper.

## **Course Readings: Required**

Becker, Howard S. (2007) Writing for Social Scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book or article (2<sup>nd</sup>Ed), University of Chicago Press, Chicago

How to Write a Dissertation or Bedtime Reading for People Who Do Not Have Time to Sleep <https://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>

(see especially the “Terms and Phrases” to avoid in the above article)

Writing from A to B: a guide to completing the dissertation phase of doctoral studies, by Keith Hjortshoj  
[http://gradschool.cornell.edu/sites/gradschool.cornell.edu/files/field\\_file/Writing\\_A\\_B\\_WEB.pdf](http://gradschool.cornell.edu/sites/gradschool.cornell.edu/files/field_file/Writing_A_B_WEB.pdf), Cornell University, 2010

I have also included a number of very short articles relative to some of the

important elements of dissertation writing:

**recommended** books, articles, or institutional resources:

Bryson, Bill, (2003) A Short History of Nearly Everything, Broadway Books, New York

Clark, Irene. (2007) Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation. Prentice Hall.

Goldbort, Robert. (2006) Writing for Science. New Haven: Yale University Press, New Haven.

Strunk, William and White, E.B., (1999) The Elements of Style Allyn and Bacon, Boston.

Trimble, John. (2000) Writing with Style. Prentice Hall, New York.

### **UF Resources**

Library Homepage	<a href="http://www.uflib.ufl.edu">http://www.uflib.ufl.edu</a> (for all library services and collections, including Course Reserves)
Ask-A-Librarian	<a href="http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ask">http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ask</a> (direct email or online chat for assistance)
IR @ UF	<a href="http://ufdcweb1.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/?g=ufirg">http://ufdcweb1.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/?g=ufirg</a> <hr style="border: 1px solid blue; width: 100%;"/> (to access the UF digital Institutional Repository)
Theses & Dissertations	<a href="http://www.uflib.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/etd.html">http://www.uflib.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/etd.html</a>
Library Tools and Mobile Apps RSS feeds, etc.)	<a href="http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/tools">http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/tools</a> (smart phone apps, RSS feeds, etc.)
Dissertation Completion	<a href="https://grad.ncsu.edu/students/professional-development/tdss/dissertation-completion-community/">https://grad.ncsu.edu/students/professional-development/tdss/dissertation-completion-community/</a>
Subject Guides/Specialists (by discipline and/or course)	<a href="http://apps.uflib.ufl.edu/staffdir/SubjectSpecialist.aspx">http://apps.uflib.ufl.edu/staffdir/SubjectSpecialist.aspx</a>

## **Week 1. Friday August 26**

### **Course introduction and overview**

Introductions. Discussion of backgrounds, research areas, and general interests by students.

**Read:** “How to Write a Dissertation or Bedtime Reading for People Who Do Not Have Time to Sleep”, and Chapters 1 - 3 of Becker.

**Assignment:** Write a draft synopsis (1-page max) of what you believe might be your dissertation topic (hand in before next class)

## **Week 2, Friday, Sept. 2**

Successful Proposals

Admission to candidacy exams. (Qualifying Exams)

Discuss elements of the dissertation proposal and the dissertation. Importance of

Committee selection.

**Read:** all of Hjortshoj, Chapter 5 of Becker

## **Week 3, Friday, Sept. 9**

The Introduction setting the context and establishing credibility.

Major Hypothesis and sub-hypotheses/Central Research question(s)

Identify and describe three examples of possible major hypotheses (research questions) for your proposal/dissertation. (2- pages max) Hand before next class.

**Read: “Research Questions and Hypotheses”**

[https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/22782\\_Chapter\\_7.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/22782_Chapter_7.pdf)

## **Week 4, Friday, Sept. 16**

The Literature Review

Are you planning to use any case studies? Where would you find them?

Discuss where would you search for data and data sets to test/evaluate your research

question(s) or hypothesis. Hand in before next class. (1-page max)

**Find** a dissertation in the UF files and **Read** its literature review.  
Chapter 8 of Becker

### **Week 5, Friday, Sept. 23**

Describe and critique the literature review you found. What did you learn from it?

Read: Choosing Scientific Measurements (know the scales of measurement)  
<https://explorable.com/scientific-measurements> Using statistics  
<https://explorable.com/statistics-tutorial>

### **Week 6, Friday, Sept. 30**

Planning the Methodology (and establishing credibility for it):

Are you expecting to use qualitative or quantitative data? What kind of data – archival, primary, survey data, field data, all the preceding?

What is a pre-test: where and how would you pre-test your methods? Hand in before next class (1- page max)

<http://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/analysis.htm>

### **Week 7, Friday, Oct. 7**

Results of the methodology test(s)

Read: “Analyzing, Interpreting and Reporting Basic Research Results”  
<http://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/analysis.htm> see also “Writing a Results Section” <https://explorable.com/writing-a-results-section>.

See required presentation on your paper topic next week.

### **Week 8, Friday, Oct. 14 Homecoming (no class): (Go enjoy the Parade.)**

### **Week 9, Friday, Oct. 21**

Identify and defend your choice of a final paper topic. Present in class (10-15 minutes max). Class will rate your presentation.

Findings of the tested methodology: but what is the difference between findings and results? Hand in before next class (1- page max)

Conclusions based on the tested methodology

On what do you base your conclusions?

(Final paper presentations will begin on Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup> so start thinking about it now.)

**Read:** “Strategies for Writing a Conclusion”

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>

“Dissertation Recommendations”

<http://www.essay.uk.com/guides/dissertation/dissertation-recommendations.php>

**Week 10, Friday, Oct. 28**

Recommendations based on results **and** findings

How broad do you want your recommendations to be? (Consider this for discussion next class)

**Assignment:** write a draft 300 word (max), double -spaced abstract of a paper you’ve already done. Hand in before next class (2- page max). Also write a draft of a brief self-bio. (2 paragraphs max.) Also, include any recommendations that you developed for that (or another) paper.

**Read:** How to write an abstract for your Dissertation or Thesis

<http://www.sfu.ca/~jcnesbit/HowToWriteAbstract.htm>

Becker, Chapter 3

**Week 11, Friday, Nov. 4**

The Abstract, Acknowledgements, self-bio

Present your abstract in class, class rating.

Do you edit and revise your own work?

**Read:** Readwritethink <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/revise-edit-30116.html> on editing and revisions and “Publishing your work”

<http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~wbreslyn/dissertation/publishing-your-dissertation.html>

**Week 12, Friday Nov 11 (Veterans Day) NO CLASS**

### **Week 13, Friday, Nov. 18**

Revising, rewriting your work

What is your current revision process, methodology? Hand in before next class (1- page max). Student Presentations on final course papers begin on Friday December 2.

Discuss your revision processes.

Publishing your work.

Read Becker, Chapter 7

Where would you optimally want your work published (e.g. journals, books, etc.)? Hand in before next class (1- page max).

**Read** 8 Tips for funding your dissertation at <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/07-08/dissertation.aspx>

### **Week 14, Friday, Nov. 25 (no class, Thanksgiving)**

### **Week 15, Friday, Dec. 2**

Construct a budget for your proposal and dissertation: how much money do you believe will it take to support the work on both? (in-class exercise.)

Grants and grant writing: using your proposal to get a leg up.

What are the essential elements of a proposal?

Student Presentations of final papers

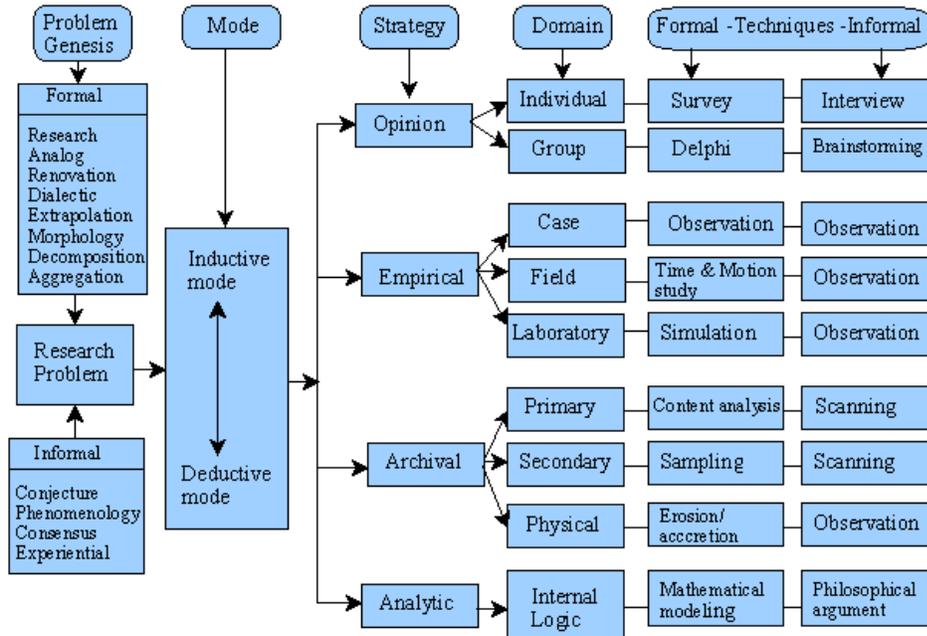
### **Week 16, Friday, Dec.7 (last class), Reading Days begin on the 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Course Review and student presentations of final papers (as necessary)

**December 13: email your final paper to the instructor.**

**If you need to reach me, email or call 352-665-8358.**

## A Framework for Research Methodology\*



\* Adapted from Buckley, Buckley & Chiang Exhibit 1, p. 15.

