



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

**SPPA 863: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL WORKSHOP  
SPRING 2023**

Tuesdays 1:25-4:25pm  
Class Location: Graham 187

**Instructor Information**

---

Dr. Sarah K. Bruch  
Associate Professor  
Biden School of Public Policy and Administration, Department of Sociology & Criminal  
Justice, and School of Education  
University of Delaware  
298A Graham Hall  
[skbruch@udel.edu](mailto:skbruch@udel.edu)

Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Overview**

---

This course focuses on the development of a dissertation research project. The course provides opportunities for students to learn the following aspects of research project development and design: how to craft research questions from research ideas and problem statements; the various roles of theory in research project development and design; how to identify and analytically synthesize the most relevant existing research; how to identify the current gaps in existing knowledge and potential contributions of the project; and how to select the most rigorous and appropriate research designs, data, and methods for the project.

**Course Goals/Learning Outcomes**

---

- Ability to construct research questions and determine appropriate research design, data, and method for answering them.
- Knowledge of and ability to analyze strengths and limitations of various research designs and methods.
- Understanding of the application of public policy and public administration theories and research methods in empirical research.

- Ability to read policy literature analytically for substance and methods, including identifying contributions and knowledge gaps.
- Ability to synthesize theoretical perspectives and substantive content within and between the fields of public policy and public administration.
- Application of public policy and public administration theories and substantive content to area of interest.
- Ability to identify one's own perspectives (epistemological and theoretical) and apply them to make original and significant contributions to knowledge.
- Think critically and systematically about one's own position as researchers in relation to one's research and policy interests and career goals.
- Ability to give, receive, and respond to constructive criticism, and incorporate feedback related to the design and development of a research project.

## **Course Material/Readings**

---

All readings and course material will be available on the Canvas site for the course ([www.udel.edu/canvas](http://www.udel.edu/canvas)).

## **Assignments**

---

### **WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS**

Week 2 Dreaming of a Dissertation Project Essay  
 Week 3 Research Questions Take 1  
 Week 4 What's Theory Got To Do With It Essay  
 Week 5 Research Statement 2-Pager  
 Week 6 One-on-One Meetings with Faculty (2)  
 Week 7 Top 10 Most Relevant Studies List  
 Week 8 Analytical Review Essay  
 Week 9 Research Question Take 2  
 Week 10 Alternative Research Design Assignment  
 Week 11 Selecting Research Methods Assignment  
 Week 12 Dissertation Proposal Extended Abstract  
 Week 13 Presentation PowerPoint Slides  
 Week 14 External Funding Opportunity Assignment

### **DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

Dissertation proposals for all PhD programs in the Biden School should adhere to the *Biden School Dissertation Proposal Guidelines* which describe the school-wide expectations for dissertation proposals.

Students should also regularly consult the *Biden School Dissertation Proposal Defense Policy* for details on the administrative requirements and process related to the proposal defense.

Dissertations submitted for all PhD programs in the Biden School must adhere to the requirements described in the *Biden School Dissertation Defense and Submission Guidelines*, the [University of Delaware Thesis and Dissertation Manual](#), and should conform to the [University of Delaware Thesis Style for Graduate Theses and Dissertations](#).

## **PARTICIPATION**

Active participation during class sessions is essential for learning the material. Active participation during class meetings includes asking questions, contributing your perspectives to class discussions, and responding to your classmates' ideas in ways that are respectful, generative, and constructive.

## **Grading Scale**

---

This course is graded on the P/F scale ("P" indicates Pass and "F" indicates Fail). At the end of the semester, students will receive a temporary grade of "S" (Satisfactory) or "NS" (Not Satisfactory). This temporary grade will be replaced with a "P" upon successful completion of a dissertation proposal defense.

## **Dissertation Writing Resources**

---

### **UD Graduate Student Writing Center**

Offers free one-to-one and small group tutorials for all UD graduate students for assistance with theses, dissertations, articles, or any other type of writing on which graduate students may be working. The Graduate Student Writing Center also facilitates Dissertation Retreat sessions during Winter and Summer sessions, and periodically offers Dissertate Write Now! A weekly time for dissertating students to devote to writing their dissertations in a supportive environment. Check their website for up-to-date information:

<https://www.writingcenter.udel.edu/for-graduate-students/graduate-student-writing-center>.

### **National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity**

The National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD) is an independent professional development, training, and mentoring community of faculty, postdocs, & graduate students from over 450 colleges and universities. NCFDD partners with colleges and universities to provide professional development and external mentoring. The University of Delaware is an institutional member, and graduate students are eligible to be individual members at no cost. One of the ongoing multi-day trainings and opportunities includes: a 12-part Dissertation Success Curriculum.

<https://www.facultydiversity.org/institutions/udel>

### **Sarah's Dissertation Proposal Workshop Library**

Copies of several dissertation writing, research design, and research methods books are available for checking out for one week at a time from Sarah's personal library. See list of available books provided in class.

## University of Delaware Resources and Policies

---

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

In addition to impacting your overall wellbeing, diminished mental health can interfere with optimal academic performance. If this course is causing or contributing significant mental or emotional stress, then please reach out to me directly. The University of Delaware also has several types of resources available to support your wellbeing.

UD's Center for Counseling & Student Development (CCSD) provides cost-free and confidential mental health services to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your emotional or academic well-being. Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself and for those who care about you. CCSD is open and available remotely, and 24/7 mental health support remains available on the UD Helpline at 302-831-1001 for any student in need of someone to talk to. Visit [CCSD's website](#) for additional information and resources.

UD's Crisis Text Line is available to connect with a professional who specializes in supporting students of color via a confidential text message. Text "UDTEXT" or "STEVE" at 741741.

The Division of Student Life also has a comprehensive listing of well-being resources, activities and services available to all students on their [Wellbeing webpage](#).

### Accommodations

I am eager to hear from anyone who may require accommodations in this class for reasons related to ability or life situation. Please let me know if I can help by modifying seating arrangements, deadlines, or other features of the class so that appropriate arrangements may be made. The earlier you can let me know about anything that is going on that could cause problems for you, the better. If we know about it early on, we can work together to make sure it doesn't create bigger problems for you.

All deadlines for this class are firm, and can be changed only at my discretion for individuals who contact me in advance to discuss legitimate reasons for needing extensions. I can be reached most easily through email, because I check it often.

Any student who may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) office as soon as possible. For more information, please visit [Getting Registered at DSS](#). Contact DSS by phone: 302-831-4643; fax: 302-831-3261; website: [www.udel.edu/dss](http://www.udel.edu/dss); email: [dssoffice@udel.edu](mailto:dssoffice@udel.edu); or visit 240 Academy Street, Alison Hall Suite 130 during business hours (8-5 M-F).

## **Syllabus Modifications**

This syllabus describes a plan, which like any plan may be revised or updated if it is reasonable and appropriate to do so based upon the experience of implementing it.

## **Academic Integrity**

Please familiarize yourself with UD policies regarding academic dishonesty. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance. View the [university's academic integrity policies and procedures](#). Office of Student Conduct, 218 Hullihen Hall, (302) 831-2117. E-mail: [student-conduct@udel.edu](mailto:student-conduct@udel.edu)

## **Use of Advanced Automated Tools**

Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.

## **Non-Discrimination**

The University of Delaware does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, disability, religion, age, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in its employment, educational programs and activities, admissions policies, and scholarship and loan programs as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. The University of Delaware also prohibits unlawful harassment including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

For inquiries or complaints related to non-discrimination policies, please contact: Office of Equity & Inclusion- [oei@udel.edu](mailto:oei@udel.edu), 305 Hullihen Hall Newark, DE 19716 (302) 831-8063

For complaints related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact: Office of Disability Support Services, [dssoffice@udel.edu](mailto:dssoffice@udel.edu), Alison Hall, Suite 130, Newark, DE 19716 (302) 831-4643 OR contact the [U.S. Department of Education - Office for Civil Rights](#)

## **Harrassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct**

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment and sexual misconduct. As a member of the community, your rights, resource and responsibilities are reflected in the Non-Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Title IX policy. Please familiarize yourself with this policy at the [University's Office of Equity & Inclusion's website](#).

You can report any concerns to the University's Office of Equity & Inclusion, at 305 Hullahen Hall, (302) 831-8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police (302) 831-2222 or the [EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline](#). Read the [full policy](#) or [file a report](#).

### **Faculty Statement on Disclosures of Instances of Sexual Misconduct**

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that a student may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated by federal law to inform the university's Title IX Coordinator. The university needs to know information about such incidents to, not only offer resources, but to ensure a safe campus environment. The Title IX Coordinator will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I promise to protect your privacy--I will not disclose the incident to anyone but the Title IX Coordinator.

For more information on Sexual Misconduct policies, where to get help, and reporting information, please refer to [www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct). At UD, we provide 24/7/365 crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. Contact 302-831-1001 to get in touch with a sexual offense support advocate, as well as confidential and anonymous counseling services for other concerns.

## Course Schedule

---

### Week 1 (February 7): Navigating the Dissertation Process

#### Agenda

We will begin class with introductions. As part of the introductions, plan to share your current thoughts about the topic and progress to date on your dissertation research project development.

In this session, we will review the syllabus and answer questions about the course structure, goals, assignments, and expectations.

We will review several resources that will assist you in the process of writing a dissertation proposal including:

- Biden School Dissertation Proposal Guidelines
- Biden School Dissertation Proposal Defense Policy
- Biden School Dissertation Defense and Submission Guidelines and Deadlines
- University of Delaware dissertation guidelines and instructions (including thesis/dissertation manual and style guides)
- Weekly Progress Report template

#### Reference Readings

Kamler, Barbara and Pat Thomson. 2008. "The Failure of Dissertation Advice Books: Toward Alternative Pedagogies for Doctoral Writing." *Educational Researcher* 37 (8): 507–514.

Carter, Susan, Cally Guerin, and Claire Aitchison. 2020. "Writing the Thesis." Pgs. 127-176 in *Doctoral Writing*. Singapore, Springer.

---

### Week 2 (February 14): Clarifying the Intellectual, Practical, and Personal Stakes of Your Project

#### Assignment: Dreaming of a Dissertation Project, due Monday, February 13

Write an essay (2-4 pages single-spaced) that explains your motivations, what you see at stake, and what you hope to accomplish in your dissertation project. In writing this essay, address some of the considerations for selecting a dissertation topic described in Rothman 2008 and Locke et al. 2016, as well as the questions posed in Ravitch and Riggan 2017 (on page 206-207), and in Lareau 2021 (on pages 11-12).



## Agenda

In class, we will share from and discuss the essays you've written about your potential dissertation project. We will discuss important considerations for selecting dissertation research topics. In this session, we will devote time to discussing how to balance or prioritize among theoretical, practical, policy, and societal significance, as well as recent calls for increased policy and/or practice relevance of research in public policy and administration.

## Reference Readings

Rothman, Steven B. 2008. "Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41(2): 367-369.

Lareau, Annette. 2021. "Before You Begin: Dreaming and Thinking" pgs 11-37 in *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, and Stephen J. Silverman. 2016. "Developing the Thesis or Dissertation Proposal: Some Common Problems" pgs. 41-62 in *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals, 6th edition*. Sage Publications.

Ravitch, Sharon M. and Matthew Riggan. 2017. "The Conceptual Framework as Guide and Ballast" in *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*

Sage Project Planner. Defining a Topic: Checklist: Questions to Ask Yourself When Deciding on a Topic.

Tseng, Vivian and Adam Gamoran. 2017. *Bringing Rigor to Relevant Questions: How Social Science Research Can Improve Youth Outcomes in the Real World*. William T. Grant Foundation.

Doucet, Fabienne. 2021. *Identifying and Testing Strategies to Improve the Use of Antiracist Research Evidence through Critical Race Lenses*. New York: William T. Grant Foundation.

Carboni, Julia L., Todd Dickey, Stephanie Moulton, Sean O'Keefe, Rosemary O'Leary, Suzanne J Piotrowski, and Jodi Sandfort. 2019. "Start with the Problem: Establishing Research Relevance with Integrative Public Administration." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 2(4): 267-274.

---

## Week 3 (February 21): Generating Research Ideas and Questions

**Assignment: Research Questions Take 1, due Monday, February 20**

Write an essay (1-2 pages single-spaced) that describes the research problem (see Booth et al. 2016; Terrill 2015) your project seeks to address, and 3-4 potential research questions that would allow you to answer different aspects of this problem.

## **Agenda**

This session will focus on strategies and methods for generating research ideas and moving from research topics and/or problems to concrete research questions. We will discuss the specific challenges you feel you are struggling with in relation to this important task. As you work through the assignment and readings, and prepare for class, try to think of specific challenges, concerns, strategies, and questions about generating ideas and formulating them into concrete research questions that you'd like to discuss. This will be a topic that we consider for the first several weeks of the course, and this will be our first opportunity to begin our discussion. Some of the specific topics we will discuss are: how to craft strong research questions, and strategies for developing an effective response to the infamous "so what" question.

## **Reference Readings**

Gordon, Nora and Carrie Conaway 2020. "Turning Problems of Practice into Research Questions." pgs 9-28 in *Common-Sense Evidence: Leader's Guide to Using Data and Research*. Harvard Education Press.

Lantsoght, Eva. 2018. "Formulating Your Research Question." Pg. 75-87 in *The A-Z of the PhD Trajectory: A Practical Guide for a Successful Journey*. Springer Publishing.

Alvesson, Mats and Jorgen Sandberg. 2011. "Generating Research Questions Through Problematization." *Academy of Management Review* 36(2): 247-271.  
Sage Project Planner. Types of Research Questions.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. *The Craft of Research, Fourth Edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Chapter 3: From Topics to Questions
- Chapter 4: From Questions to Problems

Terrill, Steven R. 2015. *Writing a Proposal for Your Dissertation: Guidelines and Examples*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Chapter 1: Developing the Problem Statement
- Chapter 2: Writing Purpose Statements, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Alvesson, Mats and Jorgen Sandberg. 2013. *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Week 4 (February 28): Thinking with Theory

### Assignment: What's Theory Got To Do With It Essay, due Monday, February 27

Write an essay (2 pages single-spaced) that provides a descriptive summary of two or three theoretical perspectives used in your area of research, and describes how you plan to use or apply them in your project and specifically in relation your proposed research questions.

### Agenda

In this session, we will discuss the roles that theory play in research – from motivating research questions to applying theoretical perspectives to research problems and questions, to building new theoretical insights through social inquiry.

We will also have a panel of doctoral students who have recently completed and defended their dissertation proposals. Panelists will share their experiences in developing their dissertation research project and proposal, and provide advice and strategies for successfully navigating these processes.

### Reference Readings

Fuhse, Jan A. 2022. "How Can Theories Represent Social Phenomena?" *Sociological Theory* 40(2): 99-123.

Lundberg, Ian, Rebecca Johnson, and Brandon M. Stewart. 2021. "What Is Your Estimand? Defining the Target Quantity Connects Statistical Evidence to Theory." *American Sociological Review* 86(3): 532-565.

Rohlfing, Ingo and Christina Isabel Zuber. 2021. "Check Your Truth Conditions! Clarifying the Relationship between Theories of Causation and Social Science Methods for Causal Inference." *Sociological Methods and Research* 50(4): 1623-1659.

Emerson, Kirk. 2022. "On Theory and Theory Building in Public Administration." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 5: 3-10.

Capano, Giliberto and Michael Howlett. 2021. "Causal Logics and Mechanisms in Policy Design: How and Why Adopting a Mechanistic Perspective Can Improve Policy Design." *Public Policy and Administration* 36(2): 141-162.

Burstein, Paul. 2021. "Testing Theories about Advocacy and Public Policy." *Perspectives on Politics* 91(1): 148-159.

Pandey, Sanjay K. 2017. "Theory and Method in Public Administration." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 37(2): 131-138.

Chijioke Onah Celestine, and Asadu Ikechukwu. 2021. "Understanding Theory in Social Science Research: Public Administration in Perspective." *Teaching Public Administration* 39(2): 156-174.

Swedberg, Richard. 2017. "Theorizing in Sociological Research: A New Perspective, a New Departure?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 43: 189-206.

Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "The Meaning of 'Theory.'" *Sociological Theory* 26(2): 173-199.

Miles, Steven. 2001. "The 'Reality' of Social Theory" and "Theorizing for 'Real'" in *Social Theory in the Real World*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Grant, Cynthia and Azadeh Osanloo. 2014. "Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical Framework in Dissertation Research: Creating the Blueprint for Your 'House.'" *Administrative Issues Journal* 4(2): 12-26.

Abner, Gordon B., Sun Young Kim, and James L. Perry. 2017. "Building Evidence for Public Human Resource Management: Using Middle Range Theory to Link Theory and Data." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 37(2): 139-159.

---

## **Week 5 (March 7): Thinking with Concepts**

### **Assignment: Research Statement Two-Pager, due Monday, March 6**

Write a two-page, single-spaced essay that includes the following elements:

- Research Problem/Problem Statement: what is the focus of the research?
- Significance: what is the benefit of investigating the problem?
- Research Purpose Statement: what is the purpose of the research?
- Research Question: what is the primary research question?

### **Agenda**

In this session, we will spend time discussing how to use concepts in our research. We will also review the purpose of conceptual frameworks in research projects.

The majority of our session will be providing feedback on the Research Statement Two-Pager assignments submitted by fellow students.

### **Reference Readings**

Schaffer, Frederic C. 2016. "Why Do Concepts Need Elucidating?" pgs 1-26 in *Elucidating Social Science Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gerring, John. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good? A Critical Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences." *Polity* 31(3): 357-393.

Becker, Howard. 1998. "Concepts." Pgs 109-45 in *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While Doing It*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Ravitch, Sharon M. and Matthew Riggan. 2017. *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Conceptual Frameworks
- Chapter 2: Why Conceptual Frameworks
- Chapter 9: The Conceptual Framework as Guide and Ballast

Berman, Jeanette. 2013. "Utility of a Conceptual Framework within Doctoral Study: A Researcher's Reflections." *Issues in Educational Research* 23(1): 1-18.

Rocco, Tonette S. and Maria S. Plakhotnik. 2009. "Literature Reviews, Conceptual Frameworks, and Theoretical Frameworks: Terms, Functions, and Distinctions." *Human Resource Development Review* 8(1), 120-130.

Casanave, Christine Pearson and Yongyan Li. 2015. "Novices' Struggles with Conceptual and Theoretical Framing in Writing Dissertations and Papers for Publication." *Publications* 3(2): 104-119.

---

## **Week 6 (March 14): Faculty Roles and Expectations in Dissertation Research**

### **Assignment: Report out on two one-on-one meetings with faculty members**

Set up meetings with two faculty members to discuss your dissertation project ideas. If you have a primary advisor who will serve as your dissertation chair, this is an opportune time to solicit advice about the best ways to move forward in the remaining weeks of the semester, and clarify any specific expectations your advisor may have regarding the substantive content, methodological approaches, or other aspects related to the nature and scope of your dissertation proposal. It is recommended that you share your Research Statement 2 Pager Assignment, and the Biden School Dissertation Proposal Guideline document to guide your discussion.

### **Agenda**

In this session, we will debrief the faculty meetings, and discuss the roles that dissertation chairs and committee members play in the dissertation process.

We will also have a panel of faculty who are experienced in supervising dissertation proposal development and mentoring doctoral students at the Biden School. The panelists will provide advice on how to engage with faculty in relation to your dissertation project,

how to navigate faculty-student relations, building a dissertation team, etc. as well as how to craft and successfully defend a dissertation proposal at the Biden School. Please prepare questions that you would like to have answered.

## Reference Readings

Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2020. "Building Your Team pgs. 55-83 in *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum*. Princeton University Press.

Hatemi, Peter K. and Rose McDermott. 2022. "Strategies for Picking the Right Adviser." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 55(4): 1-6.

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "Combat in the Dissertation Zone." *The American Sociologist* 36(2): 43-56.

Pare, Anthony. 2011. "Speaking of Writing: Supervisory Feedback and the Dissertation." Pgs. 59-74 in L. McAlpine, C. Amundsen (eds.), *Doctoral Education: Research-Based Strategies for Doctoral Students, Supervisors and Administrators*. Springer.

University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School. 2018. *How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students*.

---

## Week 7 (March 21): Searching and Sorting Literature

### Assignment: Top 10 Most Relevant Studies List, due Monday, March 20

The purpose of this assignment is for you to use the searching and sorting techniques that allow you to identify research related to your topic of interest, and most importantly, that represent the most important pieces of scholarship related to your specific research questions. For the assignment, provide a list of the 10 most relevant studies that you have identified through your searching and sorting process. For each of the 10 studies, provide a full reference, and a 2-3 sentence justification for why it is one of the most relevant or important pieces of scholarship to inform the development of your research questions and project.

### Agenda

In this session, we will focus on various approaches to searching and sorting through literatures related to your topic of study. This session will cover some of the recommended practices for searching and finding relevant research to read, and most importantly - determining how to decide what to read. These strategies are meant to help you not get "terrorized" by the literature or lost in the literature, reading too long, and/or read without getting a sense of the field (current debates, approaches, and empirical patterns).

## Reference Readings

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp.135-49.

Boell, Sebastian K. and Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic. 2014. "A Hermeneutic Approach for Conducting Literature Reviews and Literature Searches." *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 34(12): 257-286.

Machi, Lawrence A. and Brenda T. McEvoy. 2016. "Step 3: Search the Literature" and "Step 4: Survey the Literature" in *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hart, Chris. 2018. "The Purpose of Literature Reviewing." In *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

---

## Week 8 (April 4): Analyzing Literature and Identifying Contributions

### Assignment: Analytical Review Essay, due Monday, April 3

Write an essay (3-4 pages single-spaced) that includes the following three elements.

1. A concise synthesis of the Top 10 most relevant studies you identified in last week's assignment. The synthesis should provide an integrated summary of the key arguments (theories), methods, and evidence (data and findings). This requires that you go beyond simply summarizing each of the readings separately (although this might be a helpful first step for you to do prior to writing the essay).
2. Describes the remaining knowledge gaps and contributions that future scholarship can make in this area.
3. Discusses the specific contributions you see for your proposed research questions.

### Agenda

In this session, we will discuss the purposes of a literature review for a dissertation proposal. We will focus on various approaches and purposes of reviewing prior work in an area of research, and strategies for approaching literature reviews. We will spend time discussing the different approaches described in the readings as well as answering specific questions you have related to your own literature reviewing and analyzing.

### Reference Readings

Bearfield Domonic A. and Warren S. Eller. 2007. "Writing a Literature Review." In Miller, G. and K. Wang. *Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration*.

Machi, Lawrence A. and Brenda T. McEvoy. 2016. "Step 5: Critique the Literature" and "Step 6: Write the Review" in *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hart, Chris. 2018. "Understanding and Analyzing the Ways Ideas are Organized." In *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Educational Researcher back-and-forth on the purpose of literature reviews in dissertations

- Boote, David N. and Penny Baile. 2005. "Scholars Before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation." *Educational Researcher* 34(6): 3-15.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2006. "Literature Reviews of, and for, Educational Research: A Commentary on Boote and Beile's 'Scholars Before Researchers'." *Educational Researcher* 35(9): 28-31.
- Boote, David N. and Penny Baile. 2006. "On 'Literature Reviews of, and for, Educational Research': A Response to the Critique by Joseph Maxwell." *Educational Researcher* 35(9): 32-35.

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. 2018. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing with Readings, 4th Edition*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Lancaster, Zak. 2016. "Do Academics Really Write This Way? A Corpus Investigation of Moves and Templates in 'They Say/I Say'" *College Composition and Communication* 67(3): 437-464.

American Political Science Association Educate. 2020. Assessment Device for Student Literature Reviews.

---

## Week 9 (April 11): Research Question Assignment Workshop

### Assignment: Research Questions Take 2, due Friday, April 7

Write an essay (3-5 pages single-spaced) that includes the following elements:

- Research Problem/Problem Statement: what is the focus of the research?
- Significance: what is the benefit of investigating the problem?
- Research Purpose Statement: what is the purpose of the research?
- Research Question: what is the primary research question?
- Contribution: what are the contributions of the project (theoretical, conceptual, methodological and/or substantive)?

### Agenda



We will spend this session providing feedback on the drafts of the Research Question Assignment submitted by fellow students.

---

## **Week 10 (April 18): Considering Alternative Research Designs**

### **Assignment: Alternative Research Design Assignment, due Monday, April 17**

Write two (1 page single-spaced) essays that each describe a potential research design for your project. Each memo should describe a different research design, and should include a description of the design as it relates to answering your specific research questions and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of using this design in your project.

### **Agenda**

In this session, we will discuss alternative research design possibilities for the dissertation projects of our classmates and consider strengths and weaknesses of the various designs.

### **Reference Readings**

Bickman, Leonard and Debra J. Rog. 2009. "Applied Research Design: A Practical Approach." In *SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*.

Institute of Education Sciences and National Science Foundation. 2013. Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development.

Penuel, William R., Robbin Riedy, Michael S. Barber, Donald J. Peurach, Whitney A. LeBouef, and Tiffany Clark. 2020. "Principles of Collaborative Education Research With Stakeholders: Toward Requirements for a New Research and Development Infrastructure." *Review of Educational Research* 90(5): 627-674.

Abutabenjeh, Sawsan and Raed Jaradat. 2018. "Clarification of Research Design, Research Methods, and Research Methodology: A Guide for Public Administration Researchers and Practitioners." *Teaching Public Administration* 36(3): 237-258.

Workman, Samuel and Christopher M. Weible. 2022. "The Design of Policy Process Research" in *Methods of the Policy Process*. Routledge.

---

## **Week 11 (April 25): Selecting Research Methods**

### **Assignment: Selecting Research Methods Assignment, due Monday, April 24**

Write two (1 page single-spaced) essays that each describe a potential research method for your project. Each memo should describe a different research method, and should include a description of the method as it relates to answering your specific research questions and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of using this method in your project.

### **Agenda**

In this session we will discuss various strategies for selecting research methods for your project, discuss strengths and weaknesses of different methods, and share specific challenges, concerns, strategies, and questions people have related to selecting appropriate research methods for their projects.

---

## **Week 12 (May 2): Putting the Dissertation Proposal Pieces Together**

### **Assignment: Dissertation Proposal Extended Abstract, due Monday, May 1**

Write an extended abstract (3-5 pages single-spaced) that includes the following elements a statement of the research question, and a description of the theory, research design, methods, and data proposed for the project. Extended abstracts are a common format for academic conference submissions, and is also a good format to use for sharing your dissertation proposal development to date with potential dissertation committee members.

### **Agenda**

In this session we will focus on the process of dissertation proposal development, share progress to date on this process, and discuss challenges, concerns, and questions about the process.

---

## **Week 13 (May 9): Student Presentations**

### **Assignment: PowerPoint Slides, due Monday, May 8**

### **Agenda**

This session is devoted to student presentations on the development and design of their dissertation research projects. In addition to our class, faculty will also be invited to attend and provide feedback on the presentations of the dissertation research project progress to date.

---

## **Week 14 (May 16): Funding Opportunities for Your Dissertation Research**

## **Assignment: External Funding Opportunities Assignment, due Monday, May 15**

Use the resource document, *Public Policy, Education, Human Development and Family Sciences and Related Social Science Fields Research and Dissertation Funding, Internships, and Training Opportunities* to identify at least one dissertation fellowship opportunity that you could potentially pursue for soliciting external funding for your dissertation research.

Write a one-page document summarizing the substantive requirements (components of the narrative proposal and/or project description etc.), and come up with at least two questions about the application process for each external fellowship opportunity you identify.

### **Agenda**

This session will provide an opportunity to discuss how to identify potential funding opportunities, questions about the application processes for different opportunities, and advice on how to write a dissertation fellowship proposal.

### **Reference Readings**

Bruch, Sarah K. and Laura M. Desimone. 2023. *Public Policy, Education, Human Development and Family Sciences and Related Social Science Fields Research and Dissertation Funding, Internships, and Training Opportunities*.

Calarco. Jessica McCrory. 2020. "Doing Research and Finding Funding" and "Writing about Your Research" pgs. 152-211 in *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum*. Princeton University Press.

---