

This seminar is designed for second-year Urban Studies Ph.D. students and all others interested in developing research proposal-writing skills. Students will apply their substantive background and methodological training to develop a proposal that includes: a statement of a focused research question, a theoretical or conceptual model, a relevant literature review, appropriate methodological choices, and design of a data acquisition strategy. Please note that this course is intended to build on the core courses in research design and methods and to encourage the integration and synthesis of knowledge gained thus far. The objective is not to conduct the actual research, but to think through and communicate all the steps leading toward a successful research project.

To successfully complete the seminar, students are expected to demonstrate the following competencies. The ability to:

1. Define a meaningful research question, grounded in the literature and theory;
2. Identify literature relevant to their proposed research idea;
3. Prepare a critical literature review that synthesizes and objectively examines the merits and faults of the existing literature;
4. Identify relevant sources of data or information and to discuss their benefits and disadvantages;
5. Select an appropriate methodology for the research question and to show understanding of the advantages and limitations of the research approach/methods chosen;
6. Develop a plan for carrying out the chosen method(s), including anticipating obstacles and obtaining Human Subjects approval; and
7. Present research effectively in an oral format.

In addition to these objectives, we will spend time discussing more “practical” aspects of your graduate program, including selecting and working with committees, the journal review process, your curriculum vitae, work habits, career management, and more. Please feel free to raise for discussion any issues of particular concern or interest. This seminar is intended to strengthen your abilities individually and as a cohort to undertake independent research.

Readings

There is one main book for the course:

Terrell, S. R. (2023). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: guidelines and examples* (Second edition.). The Guilford Press. Available at the PSU Bookstore.

In addition, parts of the following books are required or optional:

Ridley, Diana, *The Literature Review A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*, Sage Publications, 2012. This book will be available on reserve at the PSU Library, 2-hour check out.

Ragin, C., & Amoroso, L. (2019). *Constructing social research: The unity and diversity of method*. SAGE Publications, Inc. This e-book is available online from the PSU Library.

Bhattacharjee, Anol, Ph.D. *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, And Practices*. 2nd edition. 2012. This e-book is available online from the PSU Library.

This document and website has some useful advice:

Stephen Petrina, Thesis & Dissertation Proposal Guide for Graduate Students, University of British Columbia, June 2014. <http://blogs.ubc.ca/educ500/files/2012/07/researchproposal.pdf>
Link to website: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/educ500/resources/guides-primers/>

Additional readings will be posted or linked from the course Canvas site. Some of these will just be for additional reference.

I also encourage you to use the Sage Research Methods resource accessible through the PSU Library: <https://methods-sagepub-com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/>, Examples of relevant items include:

Wentz, E. (2014). *How to design, write, and present a successful dissertation proposal*. SAGE Publications, Ltd <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781506374710>

James, E., & Slater, T. (2014). *Writing your doctoral dissertation or thesis faster*. SAGE Publications, Ltd <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781506374727>

DeCuir-Gunby, J., & Schutz, P. (2017). *Developing a mixed methods proposal: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483399980>

Assignments and Grading

The main deliverable for this course is a research proposal. Think of this as a “practice run” for a dissertation proposal. Do not think that this will be your dissertation proposal. Students who do so can get too hung up on the topic or research question, change ideas, and struggle to finish. Pick a topic soon and stick with it. What you will produce will not be as thorough as your future dissertation proposal. Going through the process of developing a proposal on any topic of interest to you will prepare you for the real thing that will happen later. Masters students can use this course to write their thesis proposal and/or a large portion of their thesis (everything but the findings and conclusions).

Each week there will be interim written assignments. For the ones leading to your draft proposal, you will submit the assignments as a Google doc, shared with the class. This will allow collective discussion and feedback.

Assignment	Points
Week 2: Text Structure Analysis	2
Week 2: Draft Problem Statement	3
Week 3: Text Structure Analysis	2
Week 3: Draft Purpose Statement & Research Questions	3
Week 4: Analysis of Literature Review	2
Week 4: New Sources	1
Week 5: Revised problem, purpose & research questions + literature review	6
Week 6: Conceptual model	2
Week 6: Peer review	2
Week 7: Methods	7
Week 8: Interim Draft	10
Week 9: Peer review	2
Three Minute Thesis presentation	8
Final Research Proposal, based on the first 6 points above	50
Total	100

Note that this is a 4-credit course, though we only meet for only 2.5 hours a week. You are expected to spend extra time outside of class on assignments. More specifically, you should expect to spend about 10 hours per week on readings, assignments and developing your independent ideas.

The generic grading rubric is as follows:

- A: Demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis. Writing is clear, direct, succinct, minimizes passive voice, and properly cites all work. Outstanding work.
- B: Above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas. Writing is clear and properly cites all work. Very good work.
- C: Shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is not always clear and/or lacks appropriate citations. Below graduate standard.
- D: Misunderstands or misrepresents the material, or is so poorly written or presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work.

Other notes

Parts of this syllabus were borrowed and adapted from Prof. Lisa K. Bates' 2017 syllabus for USP 630.

Schedule and Topics (subject to change, with notice)

Week	Assignments (complete before class) & Class Activities	Reading (complete before class)
1 April 1	Individual interests (and future goals) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course overview • Personal intros • Research topics, questions, and methods 	
2 April 8 Problem Statement	Weekly Assignment (submit to Canvas) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Read three empirical articles on topic(s) of relevance to your likely proposal. Complete the Text Structure Analysis (TSA) form from Canvas. Be brief. 2) Draft a problem statement for your research proposal. This should be 2-3 paragraphs, under one page, single spaced. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what you learned from your TSA. • Briefly share your problem statement and be prepared to discuss the six points on page 25 of Terrell. 	Terrell Intro & Chapter 1 Ragin & Amoroso, Chapter 1 The process of social research ideas and evidence. 3 articles of your choice on your topic. These must be empirical papers published in peer-reviewed journals. They cannot be review papers or only theory. In other words, there must be a research question, methods, and findings.
3 April 15 Purpose Statement & Research Questions	Weekly Assignment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Read three empirical articles on topic(s) of interest to you, different from Week 2. Complete the Text Structure Analysis (TSA) form from Canvas. Be brief. 2) Draft your purpose statement and research question(s). This should be about a half page, single-spaced. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to share your purpose statement and research questions on screen or paper. Which of the goals from Ragin & Amoroso Ch. 2 apply to your research? Regarding research questions, we will discuss: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) clear and focused? (b) too broad or too narrow? (c) too easy or difficult to answer? (d) interesting? (e) analytical, rather than just descriptive? 	Terrell Chapter 2 Ragin & Amoroso Chapter 2 The Goals of Social Research 3 articles of your choice on your topic

Week	Assignments (complete before class) & Class Activities	Reading (complete before class)
4 April 22 Review of Literature	Weekly Assignment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Evaluate the literature review for one of articles you used in Weeks 2 and 3, using Boote & Beile as a guide. 2) Identify 5-10 additional articles or book chapters on your topic. At least one of these should be a review article – an article that reviews the research literature relevant to your topic. Start reading, taking notes, and thinking about the structure of your literature review. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss literature reviews. 	Terrell Chapter 3 Boote, DN and Beile, P (2005). "Scholars Before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation," <i>Educational Researcher</i> , 34(6): 3-15. Ridley: Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 (read/skim what you find new and useful)
5 April 29 Review of Literature	Weekly Assignment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Revise your problem, purpose, and research questions from Weeks 2 and 3. Draft your literature review. Structure it using the advice in Ridley Chapter 6. Aim for 2-4 pages single-spaced. Combine it all into a single document to submit. 	Sources for your literature review and whatever you haven't done from Week 4.
6 May 6 Conceptual models/ frameworks	Weekly Assignment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Go back to the five most relevant articles you have read. Identify the conceptual/theoretical framework for each article. Nothing to write or turn in for this. 2) Draft a conceptual model/framework for your topic. Bring copies to share with the class (one printed page or slide for the screen) 3) Peer review of Week 5 assignment. You will be assigned one of your classmates' Week 5 assignments to review and provide constructive feedback on. Use Table 1 in Boote & Biele and Ridley (Ch. 6) when reviewing the literature review. This will be done via Canvas. Expect to write <1 page and/or comments on the doc. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss conceptual models and revised research questions (from Week 5) 	Park, Grace, and Ewing (2020) "Conceptual Frameworks." Posted on Canvas. Ragin & Amoroso Chapter 3 The Process of Social Research Ideas and Evidence Optional: Jabareen, Y. (2009); Leshem & Treafford, 2007; Bhattacharjee, pp. 1-34.

Week	Assignments (complete before class) & Class Activities	Reading (complete before class)
7 May 13 Methods	Weekly Assignment 1) Identify your methods, including the rationale for using them, data sources, and availability. See Canvas for more detail. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss methods 	Terrell Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 Focus first on the chapters most relevant to your proposal. Use the Sage Research Methods resource available through the PSU Library, as well as resources from USP 630
8 May 20	Weekly Assignment 1) Interim Draft: Introduction, purpose/rationale, question(s), conceptual model (with text), literature review and methods. Pull together your work from weeks 2-7, revise, and submit. In-Class Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal review process • Discuss 3-minute thesis 	Finish Terrell Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 Markusen, Ann (1999). "Fuzzy Concepts, Scanty Evidence, Policy Distance: The Case for Rigour and Policy Relevance in Critical Regional Studies". <i>Regional studies (0034-3404)</i> , 33 (9), p. 869.
9 May 27	Holiday, No Meeting Weekly Assignment 1) Written review of another student's Interim Draft (~1 page). You will be assigned the draft of a different student than previously.	Another student's Interim Draft. Any additional sources to help you with your final proposal.
10 June 3	Weekly Assignment 1) Practice your 3-minute thesis with at least one other student from class and one person who is not a graduate student in USP Class will meet virtually via Zoom	Boice, Robert (1989). "Procrastination, busyness and bingeing". <i>Behaviour research and therapy</i> , 27 (6), p. 605. <i>Recommended:</i> Mokhtarian's Writing Tips and Traps Forsyth, A (1999). "On writing and tenure". <i>Journal of planning education and research</i> , 19 (2), p. 164.
Finals Week	3-minute Thesis Presentations likely on Monday June 12 Final Research Proposal due Thursday June 15 at noon.	

Incomplete grades

I will assign an incomplete (I) grade when circumstances are consistent with PSU's policy on incomplete grades (below). If you do encounter unforeseen circumstances, including those related to the pandemic, approach me as soon as possible about entering into a written agreement for an incomplete grade.

Students do not have a right to receive or demand an Incomplete grade. The option of assigning an Incomplete grade is at the discretion of the instructor when the following criteria are met.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Required satisfactory course completion/participation.
2. Reasonable justification for the request.
3. Incomplete grade is not a substitute for a poor grade.
4. Written agreement. (See [Incomplete Contract](#))
5. Resolving the Incomplete.

For the full Incomplete Policy see <https://www.pdx.edu/registration/grading-system#/?section=incompletegradei>

Course Format

This course is scheduled to be In Person format. If you cannot attend class in person, but could attend via Zoom, let Prof. Dill know at least two hours before class starts and she should be able to set up a Zoom link. Our use of Zoom is governed by FERPA, the [Acceptable Use Policy](#) and PSU's [Student Code of Conduct](#). A record of all meetings and recordings is kept and stored by PSU, in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy and FERPA. Your instructor will not share recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, TAs/GAs/Mentors, and any guest faculty or community based learning partners that we may engage with. **You may not share recordings outside of this course.** Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in plagiarism.

"Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone's work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person's theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments.

Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the PSU Student Conduct Code http://www.ess.pdx.edu/OSA/osa_b.htm."

(source: http://www.lib.pdx.edu/instruction/sharons_originals/citationplag.html#plag)

University policy requires instructors to report all instances of plagiarism and penalize the perpetrator(s) according to guidelines set. Please see me if you ever have any questions about how to cite your work.

Student Services

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

PSU values diversity and inclusion; My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable,, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. Additionally, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. The DRC works with students who have physical, learning, cognitive, mental health, sensory, and other disabilities.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received your faculty notification letter from the DRC so we can discuss your accommodations.

The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union. You can also contact the DRC at 503-725-4150 or, drc@pdx.edu. Visit the DRC online at <https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center>.

Safe Campus Statement

Portland State University desires to create a safe campus for our students. As part of that mission, PSU requires all students to take the learning module entitled Creating a Safe Campus: Preventing Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources on PSU's Enrollment Management & Student Affairs: Sexual Prevention & Response website at <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault>

Student Food Security

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact Committee for Improving Student Food Security for support at foodhelp@pdx.edu. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.

Title IX

As an instructor, students frequently come to me for assistance in matters that are not related to the course material. Please be aware that PSU's policies require instructors to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual and relationship violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to University Officials, who keep the information private. If you would rather share information about these experiences with a PSU staff member who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact one of the following campus resources.

- Confidential Advocates: 503.894.7982, or by [scheduling online](#) (for matters regarding sexual harassment and sexual and relationship violence)
- Center for Student Health and Counseling ([SHAC](#)): 1880 SW 6th Ave, 503.725.2800
- [Student Legal Services](#): 1825 SW Broadway, (SMSU) M343, 503.725.4556 For more information, please complete the required student module Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources in D2L.

[PSU Sexual Misconduct Response website](#) gives you comprehensive information about how to support and/or report an incident.

Please complete the required student module [Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources](#) in D2L, which provides information about PSU policy and resources.

Cultural Resource Centers

The Cultural Resource Centers (CRCs) create a student-centered inclusive environment that enriches the university experience. We honor diversity, explore social justice issues, celebrate cultural traditions, and foster student identities, success, and leadership. Our centers include the Multicultural Student Center, La Casa Latina Student Center, Native American Student & Community Center, Pan African Commons, Pacific Islander, Asian, Asian American Student Center and the Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian program. We provide student leadership, employment, and volunteer opportunities; student resources such as computer labs, event, lounge and study spaces; and extensive programming. All are welcome!

Policies and Practices Related to COVID-19

Please review guidance from [The Center for Student Health and Counseling \(SHAC\)](#) about current COVID-19 recommendations and resources.