

**WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WELFARE**

**SWK 8920: DISSERTATION PROPOSAL WRITING SEMINAR**

**Fall 2018**

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**I. COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course builds upon SWK 8904, “Dissertation Proposal Seminar I: Literature Review.” It focuses on the nuts and bolts of dissertation proposal development. In light of what was gleaned from SWK 8904, we begin by conceptualizing an empirically testable research question relevant to Social Work, and continue through to drafting mock results tables. Ideally, at the semester’s end, each student is expected to have completed a draft of the entire dissertation proposal, as outlined in Wurzweiler School of Social Work (2006), *Guide for the Writing of the Dissertation Proposal*. This timeline anticipates that each student begins the seminar with a well-defined dissertation topic and literature review.

The attainment of a doctoral degree is a scholarly pursuit. Scholarly work requires written and oral communication of ideas. **It is expected that this seminar’s written assignments—draft proposal chapters—will be prepared with the utmost attention to: clarity, sharpness of focus, organization, and grammar.** Students who need assistance in these areas are encouraged to avail themselves of the Writing Center’s services.

Note on Feedback: Students can expect written feedback on each chapter or section submitted through the CANVAS course platform within 7-10 days. Students are advised to send me a copy as an email attachment to caputo@yu.edu

## II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

### Knowledge objectives:

At the conclusion of this seminar, students will:

1. Understand the components of the proposal process.
2. Have the knowledge about resources needed for a dissertation proposal and study.
3. Be familiar with and able to apply ethical principles relevant to research.
4. Be familiar with the purpose of, and procedures required by, the Yeshiva University Committee on Clinical Investigations.
5. Have mastered the appropriate application of the APA reference style.
6. Be knowledgeable about expectations for a dissertation proposal defense.

### Skill objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Clearly articulate the research question of their proposed dissertation, its importance to social work, and the knowledge gap that it fills.
2. Distinguish between theory, hypotheses, variables, and research questions.
3. Conduct a targeted literature review of electronic databases for scholarly journals, government documents and statistics, and dissertation abstracts.
4. Critically evaluate and synthesize the relevant literature.
5. Understand how to apply theory, by translating its propositions into testable hypotheses.
6. Evaluate the reliability and validity of measures.
7. Evaluate and compare the strengths and limitations of their research designs
8. Complete an acceptable dissertation proposal, using the *Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association* (2010) for style

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### **A. Texts and Readings:**

##### **Required:**

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Patten, M. (2014). *Proposing empirical research: A guide to the fundamentals* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.

Wurzweiler School of Social Work. (2006). *Guide for the writing of the dissertation proposal*.

Wurzweiler School of Social Work. (2002, revised August 2015). *Student Manual for the PhD in Social Welfare*

NASW Code of Ethics. (2006). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers. (Available online: <https://socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>)

#### **B. Assignments**

##### **1: Analysis of Dissertation Accepted Proposals and Dissertations (Online Discussion) Due Date: Classes 2-4 September 13-October 3**

As an exercise in “look where you want to land,” skim the copies of accepted proposals and successfully defended dissertations under Files on the CANVAS course platform. Think about what might be your own dissertation proposal topic. Raise any related questions given your interests and what you deem is expected of you in light of the examples provided.

1. *Problem Definition*- Clarity and importance of study to enhancing knowledge of profession?
2. *“So What?”*- How is research question justified re: contributions to SW knowledge building?
3. *Boundaries of Study* – What is/isn’t covered? How well defined and appropriate are boundaries?
4. *Literature Review Organization*- How is it organized and how effective is this schema?
5. *Literature Review Focus*- succinctness and relatedness to study problem?
6. *Literature Review Range & Recency*- includes “classic’ and recent books, journals, government documents?
7. *Theory Choice and Explication*- appropriateness of theory and application to study problem?
8. *Research Question* – How is the research question operationalized?

9. *Hypotheses, & Variables*- How well is the rationale for these directly derived from the literature review?
10. *Methodology*- Identify the data source, and primary analytic methods

**2: Draft Sections of the Proposal Due Date: Classes 5-13 October 4 – December 6**

Follow the "Guide" to prepare draft sections of your proposal. Submit each chapter or section of the dissertation proposal on the CANVAS course platform under Assignments:

Assignment: Section I: The Proposal Overview [I recommend doing this last.]

Assignment: Section II: The Study Problem

Assignment: Section III: The Literature Review [Builds upon/refines work done for SWK 8904.]

Assignment: Section IV: Theoretical Framework

Assignment: Section V: The Research Questions

Assignment: Section VI: Research Methodology

Assignment: Section VII: Limitation of the Study

Assignment: Section VIII: Anticipated Contributions of the Study

Plan for Completion of the Dissertation

Sections can be submitted at any time during the semester through December 06, 2018, to afford me sufficient time to give you feedback by December 13, 2018, the last official class scheduled for the semester as it appears on the PhD Monthly Calendar. Given satisfactory completion of SWK 8904, "Dissertation Proposal Seminar I: Literature Review," for purposes of this course the literature review and theoretical sections may already be well-developed, though there will be ample opportunity for further refining these sections under guidance from whoever serves as your dissertation chair and committee members.

The theory section should lead the reader directly to an understanding of your research question and the place of your topic in social work knowledge development. Draft chapters are intended as such; the purpose is to get you started and to provide opportunity for feedback that you are headed in the right direction. It is essential to keep up with the steady flow of work. Students will have additional opportunity to revise their proposals in upcoming semesters when the

register for and take Dissertation Proposal Planning I and II (SWK 8911 and SWK 8912) until such time as their dissertation committee and the YU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research approve the proposal. **No data collection and/or use/analysis of secondary data for purposes of the dissertation is permitted to begin prior to IRB approval of the proposal.**

Note: Students are advised to consider who among the faculty would make an appropriate chair of their dissertation committees, which for purposes of the proposal would include the chair and either two WSSW faculty members or one other WSSW faculty member and another scholar in the area of study subject to approval and invitation of the Doctoral Program Director – see the *Student Manual for the PhD in Social Welfare* for related information. This can be discussed with their current advisors, who may or may not become the chair of the dissertation committee. should maintain close contact with their faculty advisor, i.e., should submit copies of their assignments to the advisor. The seminar is intended to build upon and facilitate group process and accountability structures between the course and individual consultation available in the faculty advising process. Students are well advised to discuss with their advisors who might be an appropriate faculty member to serve as chair of the dissertation committee and to have that person in place when registering for SWK 8911 & SWK 8912, Dissertation Proposal Planning I & II in subsequent semesters until such time as the proposal is formally accepted by the dissertation proposal committee and approved by the YU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

By the semester's end, ideally each student should have completed a draft the proposal. Sections should be prepared according to guidelines (the checklists in the Guide should be helpful). Be sure that every citation has a reference. Use *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for correct format for citations in text and references at the end. See the Guide for format and style requirements for the entire proposal.

**C. Grading Policy:**

A grade of S will be assigned.

## D. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, [rkohn1@yu.edu](mailto:rkohn1@yu.edu), Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, [akelsen@yu.edu](mailto:akelsen@yu.edu), during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.

## E. E- Reserves

What is eReserve?

eReserve (Electronic Reserve) is Yeshiva University's on-line web based system used to provide access to journal articles, book excerpts, and other course materials. Most articles listed in each syllabus are available on eReserve. Due to copyright restrictions, however, some assigned readings are only available on Print Reserves (Pollack Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor). You can access full text articles from your home or from a university computer.

### To access E-Reserves from Canvas:

*Electronic reserve lists are now automatically added to all Canvas course pages. Students can **directly** access the list without a password by clicking the "Library and Research Services" link on the Canvas page.*

### To access E-Reserves from the library website (2 ways):

- The E-Reserves platform URL: <https://library.yu.edu/er.php> (Direct link)

- Go to <https://library.yu.edu/home> (Homepage)

Click on "E-Reserves" under the "Resources" drop-down menu.

- Search for & select your course by beginning to type course number, course name, or instructor name.
- Enter your course password when prompted (**FALL8920**).

To view documents that are in pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html)

**F. PLAGIARISM:**

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action, which may include expulsion.

**G. HIPAA ALERT:**

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Session/Module 1: September 6-12 INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE**

- View Instructor's Video for Overview of course
- Introduce Yourself in Session 1, Module 1 Discussion
- Peruse these files whose links are in Session 1, Module 2: 1) the Dissertation Proposal Guideline Manual; 2) dissertation proposals accepted by the student's dissertation proposal committee,
- Raise any questions about course expectations and assignments

**Session/Module 2: September 13-October 3 ASSIGNMENT ONE:** Analysis of Accepted Dissertation Proposals and Dissertations (Online Discussion – See above)

**Session/Module 3: October 4-December 6 ASSIGNMENT TWO:** Draft sections of the Proposal – See above)

**Session/Module 4: December 7-13 Online Discussion of Course – Wrap-Up**