R795: Dissertation Proposal Preparation (Fall 2019)
IST Department, IU School of Education
(Section 9142; Online Version; Syllabus (HTML, PDF, Word))
Syllabus: http://curtbonk.com/r795_2019.htm
Zoom (Optional Synchronous Sessions): https://IU.zoom.us/j/8123222878
Course Link to Canvas: http://canvas.iu.edu/

Instructor: Professor Curt Bonk, Indiana University, IST Dept, Email: cjbonk@indiana.edu
Instructional Assistant: Junghun Lee, IU, IST/Sch. of Public Health, Email: leeju@indiana.edu

Course Overview
This course is designed for advanced doctoral students who are close to completing the requirements for the Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Instructional Systems Technology (IST). Students should view this course as an opportunity to develop plans for empirical research in IST. An operating assumption is that you will develop a research plan that can be applied to future dissertation work. Ed.D. students will also be preparing for your qualifying exams.

Course Description and Purpose
In this course you will develop the central components of a viable dissertation study proposal. PhD students might address some big weighty topic or thorny issue in a particular field or area that has come into the limelight or attempt to design a new instrument or model. That is called the "make a difference in the world" dissertation. These dissertations are rare. More likely, a dissertation might narrow on a specific gap or opening for their research focus. That is called a "smart dissertation." Sometime dissertations take advantage of convenient data or sample population or both even though one not fully passionately committed to the study. That is often called a "get it done" dissertation.

Typically, the dissertations of Ed.D. students apply theory to practice. They often will not build knowledge to be generalized across populations or contexts, but it can be used within the context where they carry out their empirical study. At the same time, the dissertation of an Ed.D. student will not simply be a large project; it will be a scholarly effort in which you bring theory to bear on a problem or question situated within a specific context. Consequently, identification of that problem or context will occur first, followed by your identification and exploration of the appropriate constructs, frameworks, and theories applicable to that problem or context. Then you will consider the design of your proposed study—the research methods to be used, population, instruments, timing, specific research questions, etc. This sequence will form the structure of the course.

If you have come into the course with an idea for your study already in mind, then you will use the course structure to examine and build out that idea into your full proposal. Each situation is different. There is no one size that fits all. But this course can help you in general. You will get a chance to see samples of prospectuses and proposals. And you will hear from a few recent students how they succeeded; I will invite a few of them in in Zoom.

Advice and Observations

Write down the nubs or kernels of research ideas as they come up. Each article you read will have open issues and some will suggest future directions. If you find one interesting, write it down and note the author(s), article title, journal, and page number. Personally, I did this and had 68 dissertation ideas when I was ready to dissertate. I went with idea #46 on computer prompts (generative and evaluative) and the development of middle school children's writing. Having some ideas on paper will build your confidence. Share those ideas with friends, family members, professors, your advisor(s), and anyone willing to listen, even Uber and Lyft drivers (you'll be amazed at what they know).

When you are planning research, you may find that your interests change or are modified. Researchers change questions all the time; that is to be expected. You read some new technical report and journal article and it excites your passions. You will also refine your ideas and focus in a bit. In addition, when you are planning research situated in the context of an organization and institution, you may find that their projects, processes, or interests have also changed. Due to these change you might not get approval for your original idea but can slightly modify it and it will be approved. You have to consider the people and their territory or turf and be sensitive to controversial topics or age groups.

Still other considerations are what your advisor prefers or has experience with. When working with your advisor, you will often find that new and relevant ideas and directions come up; these will sometimes necessitate re-thinking, re-work and re-writing. However, you do not need to pursue every area of interest or expertise of your advisor. In fact, he or she will greatly appreciate it if you can find your own personal quest; handholding students through a dissertation process is a dreadful feeling. Still, advisors will have many sage suggestions for changes. Listen to them and decide what ones you want to do. Of course, this rethinking and re-envisioning is a natural part of the research process, not a problem or mistake that you or the advisor has made.

Goals and Objectives

A fundamental course goal is for students to refine their ability to plan and articulate a research project that should yield a dissertation idea and ultimately a publishable product. It will therefore be ideal for students to develop a realistic dissertation question and associated methodological plan. I will arrange for optional synchronous sessions in Zoom with guest experts and former students so you can learn something about the process. Students are also responsible for communication with their research advisors between meetings

Students should leave the course with a draft of a research prospectus that is similar to Chapters 1 and 3 of a dissertation, assuming a standard five-chapter dissertation model is followed.

- Chapter 1 – Is an overview and justification of the research questions
- Chapter 2 – A review of the related literature
- Chapter 3 – Methodological plan
- Chapter 4 – Analyses
- Chapter 5 – Conclusions

As noted earlier, as with all research, dissertation plans are subject to change pending refinement of thinking and alteration of the context in which a study will be conducted. Indeed, almost all aspects of any given research project will evolve over time. For this reason, students should not expect that the course will yield a final draft of a research proposal. Indeed, active scholars should also be: (1) pondering what is known and unknown in their field; (2) considering what knowledge or findings should be advanced; (3) working out how to answer new questions that came up; and (4) pondering about and preparing for their dissertation outlets. Therefore, although it will be ideal for students to leave the course with a solid dissertation idea and some writing accomplished, the more fundamental goal is to gain experience with research planning.

The second big goal here is for you to practice working on qualifying exams. Ed.D. students will spend some time on these exercises. I have several sample questions and preparation ideas but do not list them in the syllabus.

Individual Consultations in Zoom
I will hold about 10 sessions in Zoom during the semester to discuss the articles and issues you are struggling with or excited about related to this course or your outside readings. It says Thursday, but that is just a placeholder; it might be a different date. Anyone can show up for the first part meeting. In the second half, I will hold individual consultations with any students needing help. You are welcome to sit in to other students' consultations.

In addition, 1-2 consultations during the semester with your academic advisor are mandatory. While this class helps you prepare for the dissertation, your advisor is a primary stakeholder in your success. The best outcome is that you will complete a draft proposal that is ready to be reviewed when you form your research committee. Your advisor will not expect frequent requests for consultation, but he or she should expect that you will contact him/her by phone or Zoom/Skype at least once during this course. Your consultations will be most productive if you send material to be reviewed in advance, together with some questions you have about the current or future state of your work toward the proposal.

Discussion Forum
There will be no regular discussions in this class. I would rather you create a personal blog about your reflections. However, there may be some impromptu discussions depending on student interests and Week 1 asks for expectation and commitments as well as hobbies and interests.

Course Structure:
This course reflects two sections combined into one: R795 on campus and R795 online (Note: Presently, there are no on campus students enrolled in this course). The bulk what we do will take place online. In general, our week will run from Sunday through the following Saturday. All assignments are due Monday by 11:59 pm unless otherwise indicated.
1. Develop a realistic, sole-authored dissertation question and associated methodological plan with guidance from the faculty member expected to direct your dissertation. The R795 instructor will help with general issues in conceptualizing research problems and in writing your proposal.
2. Complete the 7 required deliverables (plus additional assignments as required).

3. PhD students only: participate in your Third Dossier Review within six weeks of the end of the semester or within six weeks of the beginning of the next semester (with your program advisory committee).

4. Articulate next steps (to include IRB approval).

Submission and Grading:

For Tasks #1-7, please submit to Canvas assignments in Word. Make sure it is editable by me so do NOT post a PDF). These must be in APA format and have your name on them and a title matching the assignment.

I tend to use rubrics for grading. Given this is the first time that I am teaching this course, I do not have any examples just yet. Typically, I look for clarity, flow and logic, completeness, originality, relevance, etc.

Tasks/Assignments	Points	Due Dates + 48 hour grace
1. Statement of Research Goals	20 points	September 2
2. Research Questions	20 points	September 16
3. Research Design and Sampling Plan	30 points	October 7
4. Analysis Plan	30 points	November 4
5. Draft of Prospectus	60 points	December 9
6. Blog/Journal Reflection or Reading Reflections	50 points	December 2
7. Quals Practice or Former Student Interview	30 points	December 2
Total Points	**240 points**	

GRADING SCALE:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D...
95-100	90-94	87-89	83-86	80-83	77-79	74-77	70-73	<70
224 Points	216 Points	208 Points	199 Points	192 Points	185 Points	178 Points	168 Points	

Course Schedule

All topics, readings, due dates, and assignments subject to change. I will try to host evening meetings online as well that are optional.

Week	Primary Topics	Readings & Assignments*
Week 1: 8/25 – 8/31	- Course introduction - Plagiarism and copyright - On your own reading / research	**DUE by 8/26 - Plagiarism Tutorial or Paper (optional)** Zoom Mtg on Thursday August 30. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required)
Week 2: 9/1 – 9/7	- On your own reading / research - How do I know if I'm making a scholarly contribution? - Constructs, research gaps, research problem statement, etc. - Developing / Refining	**DUE by 9/2 - Task #1: Statement of Research Goals** Zoom Mtg on Thursday Sept 5. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Meet a former student who passed quals and finished proposal.
Week 3: 9/8 – 9/14	- On your own reading/research	**DUE by 9/16 - Task #2: Research Questions**
Week 4: 9/15 –9/21	- On your own reading / research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Sept 19. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Meet a former student who passed quals and finished proposal.
Week 5: 9/22 – 9/28	- On your own reading / research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Sept 26. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Meet a former student who passed dissertation.
Week 6: 9/29 – 10/5	- On your own reading / research - Sampling + more	Meet and discuss topics of choice – IRB Zoom Mtg on Thursday Oct 3. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required)
Week 7: 10/6 – 10/12	- On your own reading / research	**DUE by 10/7 - Task #3: Research Design & Sampling Plan** Zoom Mtg on Thursday Oct 10. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required)

Week 8: 10/13 – 10/19	- On your own reading / research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Oct. 17. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Guest: Dr. John Hitchcock presents on inferential statistics
Week 9: 10/20 – 10/26	- On your own reading / research - Analysis	
Week 10: 10/27 – 11/2	- On your own reading / research	
Week 11: 11/3 – 11/9	- On your own reading / research - Analysis, Alignment (& More)	**DUE by 11/4 - Task #4: Analysis Plan** Meet and discuss topics of choice
Week 12: 11/10 – 11/16	- On your own reading / research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Nov 14. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Curt Bonk presents on academic writing Part I
Week 13: 11/17 – 11/23	- On your own reading / research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Nov. 21. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) Curt Bonk presents on academic writing Part II
11/24-11/30	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 14: 12/1 – 12/7	- On your own reading / research - Reflect on your own reading research	Zoom Mtg on Thursday Dec. 5. 6:00--8:00 pm (not required) **Due 12/2: Task #6: Blog Reflection or Readings Reflection** **Task #7: Practice Quals or Interview**

Week 15: 12/8 – 12/14	Putting things together…	Meet and discuss topics of choice and draft prospectus **DUE by 12/9 - Task #5: Draft Prospectus** Zoom Mtg on Thursday Dec. 12. 6:00-800 pm (not required)

Administrative and Course Polices

Students with Disabilities: The Adaptive Technology and Accessibility Centers at IUB provide a wide range of services for students with disabilities, including adaptive hardware and adaptive software, creation of electronic text from print media, conversion of print to MP3 format, and more. http://www.indiana.edu/~iuadapts/

Lateness: I have a 48 hour lateness policy with no penalties for any assignment. So if it says it is due Monday at midnight, you actually have until Wednesday at midnight to turn it in without penalty. Assignments are to be submitted through Canvas by 11:55 pm Eastern Time on the designated date, unless otherwise stated. If assignments are submitted after the 48 hour grace period, 10% of the grade value will be deducted per day.

Incompleteness, Copyright, Plagiarism, and Original Work: I expect personally created highly unique and original work on all assignments. Please acquaint yourself with the "*IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct*" for the concept of plagiarism. If you are unsure of the rules and regulations regarding plagiarism, you can take a self-paced course on Understanding Plagiarism from Dr. Ted Frick from the IST department. This website is devoted to teaching people about plagiarism and it has tutorials and tests (info). Any assignment containing plagiarized material will be awarded a grade of F. No incompletes will be awarded unless there is an emergency or mutually agreed upon reason.

Professional Responsibilities: The course is structured so that students develop inter-related products that will culminate in a draft proposal. You are expected to continue to refine your ideas, as well as incorporate feedback from me and your advisor(s) in your subsequent drafts. In some cases, I may ask for resubmissions prior to moving forward; this is not punitive but, rather, a natural part of the research process.

R795 Course Tasks
Bonus Points: (https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html). Send to me or my assistant, Junghun Lee, certificate of completion to Canvas. We will give you two bonus

points. If you have already taken the IU Plagiarism tutorial, you are to write 2-4 paragraphs (maximum of one page single spaced paper) of what you remember about plagiarism and why it is important. You too will get two bonus points.

Task #1. Statement of Research Goals (Due: September 2nd, 20 points)
This should address the kind of knowledge you hope to build over the first several years of your post-doctoral career, and the impact you want that knowledge to have in the world. Your plans to increase knowledge should be contextualized – for whom will the results of your research be useful, or who will be impacted by those results? If you anticipate that the results of your research will impact theory itself, what area of theory? What theory in particular? What kind of theory is it? How might you approach several years of study anticipating the accomplishment of your goals? **To Submit:** Write one or two paragraphs addressing the questions above. This is the long-view and broad-brush structure that communicates how you think about your problem or issue and your potential contributions.

Task #2. Research Questions (Due: September 16th, 20 points)
You should nominate a research question or questions that are well rooted in prior research literature. The questions you develop should make sense given what is known in your specific area of inquiry. That is, the questions must be well articulated and justified. The questions and your reasons for asking them should be clear to an expert in your field and a general audience. You must vet questions with your primary advisor. **To Submit:** Provide me with a document that briefly introduces and justifies your questions. What is the gap in our understanding? What is the problem statement? What is the purpose? Add to that 1-2 paragraphs in which you define critical terms, give examples where necessary, and identify the main theories your work is connected to. Add to that 3-5 knowledge claims that you are working on developing right now. This is just a listing to give me a sense of the logic of your ideas. I'm just looking for your logic and idea progression. One of your knowledge claims should lead directly to your research problem in the form of either a tension, contradictory research findings, unsettled idea, or under-researched area. This should be no more than two pages single spaced.

Task #3. Research Design and Sampling Plan (Due: October 7th, 30 points)
This purpose of this assignment is to show the refinement and development of your ideas. One page single spaced for the refined research questions, research design, context, etc. and one page on your sampling plan. Below are the basic elements that will be refined given your questions and context.

> **Refined Research Questions:** Based on my feedback and your advisor's, you should refine your research questions and critically reflect of what's feasible. No more than a paragraph.

> **Research Design.** This is no more than a paragraph or two that describes the study design you are imagining right now - this will likely change as your ideas are refined. In your paragraph include the following.

>> **Qualitative study:** the overall study design (i.e., Case Study), the assumptions you are making about your study, and the specific ways in which your study is this type of design.

Quantitative study: the dependent and independent variables under study, the assumptions you need to meet, the ways you will maximize power, and the hypothesis you are working from.

Mixed Methods: any of the following might apply: variables, ways to address/understand your research questions, assumptions, or similar. What are you trying to understand and how does it warrant mixed methods?

Context. Describe the context under which your study will take place. What type of organization, group, or institution (and one or many)? How big is it? Link this back to your research questions - why is it important to conduct the study in this setting? What are some nuances to know about with regard to this setting?

Sampling Plan: This should typically be no more than one page single spaced. Describe your sampling plan, logistics, and sample characteristics.

Describe your population of interest and how you will get a sample.
- What characteristics should the sample have?
- For those of you planning a qualitative study, there are a number of related considerations you will need to articulate.
- Why are you selecting/pursuing a sample with these features? That is, what broader population do you intend to generalize back to (or reflect)?
- Consider issues of external validity, generalization (probabilistic and logical), and transferability.

How will you measure/understand sample characteristics?
- Why have you chosen to measure these specific characteristics?
- What materials do you need?
- What will you need to develop?
- What is an adequate sample size given your research question?
- How do you know this is adequate? (From a statistical point of view, this is largely a matter of power. From a more qualitative point of view, this is largely a matter of logic and data saturation, such as consistently getting the same names when obtaining a snowball sample [or chaining].)

Logistics: Generate a realistic sampling plan.
- How will you recruit the sample?
- What features of your data collection plan can you put in to limit non-response and/or absentees (e.g., plans to revisit an organization or someone's home if part of your sample wasn't around the first day)?
- What records will you keep to adequately report and otherwise handle problems of non-response?

Note: that you will not collect any actual data in the confines of this course. The reason for this is because data collection requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and we will not have the time for this endeavor. Depending on your circumstances you may however wish to begin the process of seeking IRB approval.

Task #4. An Analysis Plan (Due: November 4th, 30 points)

Once you get the data, how will you analyze it in a way that should answer your questions? Be sure to articulate best practices from related methodological literature (e.g., statistical, qualitative, mixed methods, etc.) so as to justify your plan. Cite the relevant literature. **To Submit:** Two pages single spaced with an analysis plan and a reflection on the analysis plan.

Data Sources:

Discuss each data source separately along with the purpose of each data source. What does each source inform?

- If qualitative: describe the interviews, observations, documents, etc.
- If quantitative: describe the dependent/independent variables, criterion measures, instruments, etc.
- If mixed methods, you should have one or more of each. Describe the sequence; which comes first?

Data Analysis:

- What is your unit of analysis? (individual, team, classroom, course, organization, etc.)
- How the data informs your research questions.
- How the data will be analyzed: coding plan, codes from previous studies, examples of codes you plan on studying, etc.

Task #5. Draft of Prospectus (Due: December 9, 60 points)

This is what you have been waiting for—the grant finale. Here, you are to pull together the elements in a coherent plan that follows current APA formatting expectations and is fully referenced. This should be chapters 1 (introduction) and 3 (methods). Combine Task #2: Intro, Research Context, and Questions, Task #3: Research Design & Sampling Plan, and Task #4: Data Sources & Analysis. Then add a projected timeline and any appendices.

To Submit (in addition to Prospectus): Then add a 1-2 page personal reflection on the process and progress of your dissertation. In it, you will speculate on what will you practically need to pull off this dissertation. How feasible is it in reality? What will this look like in the world? What assumptions are you making? How will you recruit? What do you imagine is the knowledge you will contribute (in other words, what new insights and deeper understandings will we gain)? What is your plan B if you can't put the pieces into place for this study?

Task #6 (Pick one of the two options below)

Task #6a. Blog or Wiki Journal Entries (December 2nd, 50 points)

In this option, you will keep a weekly (or however often you want to post) log of research thoughts and ideas. Your research log should include any of the following that are applicable on a given day:

- Aha moments and moments of insights.

- Important contact and connections and building up of your professional network.
- Record of interviews, discussions, document reviews, and other activities aimed at identifying appropriate problem/context.
- Internet or library searches you conduct as you pursue constructs, frameworks and theories – include the terms you are using for such searches.
- References (APA style) for articles and books you have identified *and expect to use* in your proposal (not everything you have read, which should be a good deal more than what you use).
- New thoughts and ideas about your dissertation project.
- Reflections on how the work is going and fine tunings that need to be made.
- Thoughts on strengths and weaknesses of the material you have found addressing the constructs of your interest.

To Submit: A link to your blog or journal and a two-page single spaced reflection on what you learned from your blog. This is a meta-reflection of key themes.

Task #6b: Reading and Exploration Reflections (December 2nd, 50 points)

You are reading extensively in a self-directed manner this semester about a topic or a research method. What did you learn about your topic or research method? Why is research on it important? What do you still have left to know? Are you excited? **To Submit:** This will be a 2-3 page single spaced paper plus a bibliography related to your topic with at least 30 references and other appendices.

Task #7 (Pick one of the two options below)

Task #7. Ed.D. Students Quals Practice (December 2nd, 30 points)

If you have not yet taken the EdD qualifying exam, you will have the chance to practice in this course. You will have most of the semester to do this. There are two questions, one patterned after each of the regular Department Questions. I will start these at a scheduled time. You have only 3.5 hours to finish and submit your answer to each question. This is the authentic format for the quals, which is an important element of the practice. You will be writing a paper for each question. I recommend you open Word or your favorite word processor before you start, with a blank document open. Open a browser window for searching, and tabs for any other resources you normally use. Get your copy of the APA Manual, 6th edition and make sure it is close at hand. Find a timer – from the kitchen or on your phone maybe. You can set a warning timer if you want, or just keep track of the amount of time you have left after you begin. If you are going to want drinks or snacks, get them now to have nearby. Silence your phone – and your family/roommate/pets, if appropriate. This is going to be a sprint. However, if your house catches fire during the practice, or your appendix bursts, you can try again. **To Submit:** Turn these two papers in to Canvas. You can turn this one in anytime.

Task #7b. Ph.D. Students Interview of a Former Student (December 2nd, 30 points)

I want you to interview a former (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) about their prospectus, proposal, and final dissertation. I will give you a list of IST student names and emails. What lessons did they learn? What advice does he or she have? What were the problems did they encounter? **To Submit:** Write this up as a 2-page single spaced paper and post it to Canvas. You can turn this in anytime.