

UPP 580 - CRN: 24590
Dissertation Proposal Workshop
Semester: Spring 2011

Location: CUPPA Hall 262 on all dates (2204 ADH on March 31)
Time: 3 to 5 PM on specific Thursdays indicated below
Instructor: Dr. Piyushimita Thakuriah (Vonu)
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Email: vonu-pt@uic.edu (preferred method of contact)
Phone: 312-355-0447
Required Text: None. All materials will be posted online.

1. Course Objectives, Learning Goals and Expected Outcomes

The objective of this workshop is to present the students with the academic and professional background needed to successfully complete a dissertation proposal, with the goal of completing a dissertation and finding an academic position after graduation. Students taking this workshop are close to the point of writing a dissertation proposal or may have already begun writing one. At the end of the course, successful students will have accomplished the following five learning goals:

- 1) Finding and expanding on the “right” research topic;
- 2) Writing a focused dissertation proposal;
- 3) Understanding the dissertation process;
- 4) Managing and optimizing an academic career pre-graduation;
- 5) Insights into the first few years as post-doc, assistant professor etc.

The expected outcome of this course is for students to be better informed about the formal and informal aspects of the overall doctoral process. Your advisor and dissertation committee are the faculty who will ultimately guide your work. My role will not be to supersede that in any way; rather, my role will be to give an overview of the entire process and to give you specific comments about the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal from the viewpoint of an “outsider” (someone to bounce ideas off, if you will).

There is no textbook for this course. Learning will occur through discussions, student activities and lectures.

2. Schedule Details

(Student work is indicated in red.)

Jan 20: Overview of course. Stages of doctoral studies. Role of the dissertation proposal. Managing an academic career pre and post dissertation.

Feb 3: Discussion of student research.

Student Activity before class: Students should prepare a one page document and upload to Blackboard *before class*. The document should include an (approximate) working title, research area (for example, “Urban Transportation: Urban Transit Funding”) and an abstract of your research topic (approximately 300 words). If you are not sure what your dissertation proposal will ultimately be on, write an abstract of your research interest area. The document should also indicate the stage of studies, in terms of completion of required courses, stage of dissertation proposal etc. The student will present their abstract to the class (10 minutes per student) on Feb 3,

Feb 17: Introduction to the Dissertation Proposal: Purpose, format, requirements and examples of a dissertation proposal. Steps in synthesizing ideas and literature review to start the proposal writing process. Starting the bibliography and considering data and information sources.

Feb 24: Dissertation: Requirements of the dissertation and defense. Format of a dissertation. Strategies to start and complete dissertation. Keeping in touch and managing time.

March 17: Student Activity: Submit outline of dissertation proposal to Blackboard. The outline should contain an extended abstract of the proposed research (not to exceed 800 words) and additionally, sections and subsections that address specific aspects of the research. It may be the case that some students do not have a dissertation topic as yet. I would still like them to write a “mock” proposal for an idea that they have within their chosen areas, so that I can give feedback about strengths and potential problem areas. Students should submit the mock proposal to the instructor via Blackboard on March 17. Instructor will provide written comments on the mock proposal and will discuss the proposals, as a group and in general terms, in class on March 31.

March 31: Dissertation Proposal (revisited): Overview of proposals submitted on May 17. Discussion of main strengths and weaknesses.

Student Activity before class: Students should prepare any questions that arose while preparing the mock proposal so that the entire class benefits from discussions regarding their questions and concerns.

April 7: Managing pre-graduation time and focus: Writing journal papers, making conference presentations, writing grant proposals, applying for pre-doctoral awards.

Student Activity before class: Submit your CV (this is discretionary and will be held confidentially by the instructor – but if you do submit it, I may be able to provide feedback) and write an application for mock assistant professor position (“advertisement” for position will be crafted by instructor).

April 21: *Preparing for tenure-track job interview and the academic market:* Developing an academic curriculum vita, generally making yourself "visible" in your scholarly community, where to look for jobs, applying for jobs, the job assistant professor job interview. What about post-doctoral fellowships? What to expect in the first few years on the job? What is the promotion for tenure process?