

Designing a Thesis

UEP-293-04 Fall 2017 (.5 Credits) Full semester

Instructor: Sheldon Krinsky

Tues. 4:30-5:45PM

UEP Seminar Room

Designing a Thesis

The course, directed at UEP master's candidates, will guide students through the stages of the thesis process including: selecting a topic; narrowing the focus; turning a topic into a problem; framing researchable questions; choosing a method (qualitative or quantitative) of inquiry; developing a systematic literature review; citation analysis; writing styles; using figures and tables; incorporating cases; embedding the thesis questions into a theoretical framework; developing the policy implications of your findings; preparing the prospectus.

Goals: Complete thesis prospectus, introduction and literature review by the end of the course.

Required Book

Yvonne N. Bui, *How to Write a Master's Thesis*. Sage, 2009.

Gary Thomas, *How to do your Research Project*. Sage, 2017.

Sess. 1 Sept. 5 Introduction

Organization of the course; readings; assignments; deadlines.

The nature of the master's thesis. UEP's expectations. Thesis vs Capstone.

Sess. 2. Sept. 12. Finding a Topic.

Ideas and sources for finding a topic; narrowing the topic; defining research questions; evaluating the time to take for answering the questions; relating the topic to your previous work; manageable in size; within your range of competence; does the thesis have to be original? What is originality? Does it have to produce primary data?

Reading: Bui, Ch. 1. "Overview of the Master's Degree and Thesis," pp.1-20;
Ch. 2, "Selecting a Research Topic," pp. 21-44. pp. 20-34.

Umberto Eco, "Choosing the Topic, In: *How to Write a Thesis* Ch. 2, pp. 9-34.

Sess. 3. Sept. 19. Defining Research Questions

Students bring to class a page with a suggested topic and some research questions. There will be a discussion of the various research questions and whether the questions fit the scope and criteria for a master's thesis. How to gauge the literature review to the research questions.

Reading: David Madsen, Selecting and Shaping the Research Topic," *Successful Dissertation and Thesis: A Guide to Graduate Student Research from Proposal to Completion*. Jossey-Bass, 1992, pp. 20-32. (B)

Sess. 4. Sept. 26. Lit Search & Developing a Methodology

Defining the type of thesis; analytical; theoretical; case study; survey; investigating the literature; gathering data.

Readings:

Bui, Ch, 7 "How to Write Chapter Three, Methods", pp. 137-159
Thomas, Ch. 5 "Methodology Part 1: Deciding on an Approach."

Sess. 5. Oct. 3. Writing a Prospectus

Elements of a UEP master's degree prospectus.
Introductory section; research questions; methodology;
chapter breakdown; preliminary bibliography. Timeline.

Readings:

Thomas, Ch. 6 Methodology Part 2: The Design Frame."

Sess. 6. Oct. 10. Literature Review

Purpose of the literature review; how to structure a literature review; the use of databases; key word algorithms in Boolean form; choice of databases; peer-reviewed literature; books.

Readings:

Bui, Ch. 3 "Using the Literature to Research your Problem, " pp.45-76; Ch. 6 "How to Write Chapter Two, Review of the Literature.," pp, 120-159.

G. David Garson, Ch. 8 Format of your literature review. In: *Guide to Writing Empirical Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. New York: Marcel Dekker, 2002. pp. 95-104.

Thomas, Ch.3 The Literature Review.

Sess. 7. Oct. 17. Research Ethics

Legal and ethical principles involved in researching and writing a thesis; Interviewing and surveying; human subject research; IRBs; citing sources; using primary literature; responsible conduct of research; avoiding plagiarism; avoid cherry-picking data to fit a pre-determined hypothesis.

Readings:

Bui, Ch. 4. "Conducting Ethical Research," pp.77-95.

Garson, 2002, Ch. 16 Research ethics, pp. 221-231. (T)

Thomas, Ch. 2. Preparing: Project Management, Ethics and Getting Clearance.

Sess. 8. Oct. 24. Reviewing Successful Prospectuses

A set of prospectuses will be distributed for discussion.

Readings: Sample Prospectuses on Trunk

Sess. 9. Oct. 31. Use of Figures, Tables, Graphs, Charts

The best uses of figures, graphs and charts. Summarizing data through tables.

Sess. 10. Nov. 14. Conceptual Frameworks, Models, Theories

The value of theory or conceptual frameworks in interpreting or guiding your analysis; the use of flow charts for showing linkages in interactive spaces.; drawing insights in your conclusion from your literature review.

Sess. 11. Nov. 21. Data Gathering

Use of pre-existing data sets; creative ways of generating data; focus groups; surveys; Twitter data; Government data sources.

Reading:

Garson, 2002, Ch. 18, Data gathering resources, pp. 251-265; Ch. 5, Reference search resources. (B)

Thomas, Ch.7. "The Right Tools for the Job: Data gathering."

Sess. 12. Nov. 28 Developing a Conclusion and Policy Implications

The final chapter of your thesis summarizes your findings and should return to the initial questions you raised in the introduction.

Readings:

Bui, Ch. 8, "How to Write Chapter Four, Results, pp. 160-190, Ch. 9. How to Write Chapter 5, Discussion, pp. 291-307.

Garson, 2002, Ch. 19, Drawing inferences and making generalizations, pp. 267-277. (B)
Thomas, Ch.8. How to Analyze and Discuss the Information You Gather.”

Sess. 13 Dec. 5 Final Considerations in Preparing a Thesis

Role of Advisor; 2nd reader; formatting; citations-author-date system; bibliography; endnotes; responding to comments. Citing from the web; access dates.

Deliverables for credit.

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| 1. Draft topic outline & research questions: due: Sept 19 | 10 pts |
| 2. Revised topic outline & research questions: due Sept 26 | 10 pts |
| 3. Literature Review due: Nov. 14 | 30 pts |
| 4. Thesis Prospectus due: Nov. 28 | 30 pts |
| 5. Class Participation: attendance and discussion | 20 pts |
| This includes attendance; participation in discussion
of other research proposals; preparedness of readings. | |
| | 100 pts |

Students who have an accepted thesis prospectus (forms signed by both readers) by Dec. 15 will accrue additional points toward their final grade.