RUTGERS

Dissertation Preparation and Research Spring 2025

Course Number: 18:820:700:01
Location: Gordon Road, Suite C (Room 422)
Time: **Mondays, 2:00-4:45 p.m.**
Instructor: Elisa Shernoff, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)
Office: A349
Office Hours: Mondays; 12:00-1:30; Schedule via Calendy
E-mail: elisa.shernoff@rutgers.edu

Description: This course offers group guidance, supervision, and support for students at every stage in the dissertation process. In addition to an overview of the GSAPP dissertation process, the course will include didactic information on selected topics related to dissertations (i.e., prewriting strategies, scholarly writing, conducting a literature review, research design and methodology, writing research questions, APA style, IRB). Assignments are student-driven and dissertation specific. The course also includes weekly goal setting, discussion of progress in meeting goals, and troubleshooting barriers to meeting goals in a supportive environment.

Learning Objectives:

1. **Understand the Dissertation Process**
   o Comprehend the stages and requirements of the GSAPP dissertation process.
   o Increase understanding of the Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for research compliance.
2. **Develop Research and Writing Skills**
   o Apply prewriting strategies and scholarly writing techniques tailored to dissertation study.
   o Learn how to conduct a comprehensive literature review to support dissertation study.
3. **Understand Research Design and Methodology**
   o Formulate dissertation research questions and/or hypotheses based on gaps in the literature and study design proposed.
   o Increase knowledge of types of research designs and analyses to conduct dissertation research.
   o Use IRB research protocol to build dissertation method.
4. **Adhere to Academic Standards**
   o Use APA style (7th Edition) effectively in all dissertation-related writing.
   o Understand how and when AI-tools can be leveraged for research.
5. **Set and Achieve Dissertation Goals**
   o Establish realistic weekly goals for dissertation progress.
   o Monitor progress and enact strategies to overcome barriers to making progress.

6. **Engage in Peer Support and Supervision**
   - o Participate in group discussions and peer feedback to enhance understanding and refine dissertation work.
   - o Collaborate with peers and instructors to troubleshoot challenges in the dissertation process.

Required Text

American Psychological Association. (2020). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.).

Bring the APA publication manual to class weekly, there will be activities yoked to the manual. Selected articles and resources are also uploaded in Canvas.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Participation and Attendance	n/a	12 Participation, 12 Attendance
Track Dissertation Progress Weekly	Weeks 2 (2/3/25) through Week 13 (4/28/25)	30
Select Assignments and Due Dates	Week 5 - 2/24/25	5
Submit Personalized Assignments (Ungraded) –	Assignment 1 due no later than Week 7 (3/10/25) Assignment 2 due no later than Week 14 (5/5/25)	Ungraded
CITI Training	Week 9 - (3/31/25)	10
APA Style In-Class Activity	Week 14 (5/5/25)	20
Dissertation Proposal Product	Week 15 (5/12/25)	11
Maximum Points		100

A Outstanding	90-100
B+ Intermediate Grade	87-89
B Good	80-86
C Average	70-79
F Failure	69 or Below

1. Attendance

Attendance and class participation are a major part of this class. Regular attendance will allow you to maximally benefit from the course. Arriving to class more than 10 minutes after the class has started is considered late.

This is an in-person class. The expectation is that students will attend in person, unless there is a change made by the university and/or the instructor, which would be announced to the students in a timely fashion. If you are not physically in the class, you will be considered absent. Please notify me before class if you are unable to attend class.

Participation is based on verbal contributions during class, staying engaged, and participating in individual consultations with the instructor. I will include other factors, including remaining in class during its scheduled time, being prepared, and **keeping cell phones and computers off during class lectures, activities, and discussions. I will provide hard copies of slides.**

Absence Due to Religious Observances: It is University policy to excuse, without penalty, students who are absent from class because of religious observance and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation are not counted for purposes of reporting.

Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

2. Select Assignments and Due Dates

Review options for assignments in the Possible Assignment Document 2025 to help you identify realistic assignments that meet your goals and writing preferences. Consult with the instructor to identify ideas for your assignments as well.

Please insert your selected assignments and due dates by Week 5 (2/24/25) by 2:00 pm using the Dissertation Progress and Assignments 2025.

Plan to submit your first assignment by Week 7 (3/10/25) and your second assignment by Week 14 (5/5/25).

If you need to revise the assignment selections or due dates, please let the instructor know via email but please adhere to Week 7 and Week 14 deadlines.

3. Submit Personalized Assignments

Students will submit at least 2 personalized assignments to the instructor via email at the start of class based on due dates selected by the student. The instructor can help students identify possible assignments if needed. Students who need to revise a selected due date should update the Dissertation Progress and Assignments 2025 (Assignment Selections Worksheet) and notify the instructor via email.

Please practice using APA Style (7th Edition) for your personalized assignments. Please be particularly attentive to APA style guidelines related to point of view, word choice, bias, citations, quotations, and editorializing.

Please proofread everything you submit for the course. We all make typos and minor mistakes, but the vast majority should be caught before submitting an assignment.

4. Track Dissertation Progress Weekly

Use the [Dissertation Progress and Assignments 2025](#) (See Module 1 in Canvas) to identify weekly goals for the course (Weeks 2-14) and to summarize progress in meeting those goals.

Progress in meeting goals should be completed no later than the start of class (2:00 pm) and new goals should be completed before the end of class (4:45 pm) to receive credit. **No points will be assigned outside of those time parameters**. Set challenging goals that are specific and measurable. Stretch yourself so you can get the most out of the course. We will use this document to communicate regarding your goals and progress in the course. See [Rubric Weekly Goal Setting](#).

5. Complete CITI Training

Human subject research requires IRB approval, and all IRB applications require students to show evidence they completed relevant CITI training (Social-Behavioral-Educational Course). This course provides foundational training on ethical and regulatory aspects of conducting human subjects research within the social and behavioral sciences. [Rutgers Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).](#) **Please email the course instructor a copy of your CITI training certificate by Week 9 (3/31/25).**

6. APA Style In Class Activity

APA style is required in the social sciences and for production of a dissertation. There will be one in-class activity (open book) designed to demonstrate your competence with APA Style (7th ed.). This activity will require you to identify and correct APA style errors in an example dissertation.

7. Dissertation Proposal Product

The final product should be a draft of the dissertation proposal document. This is not a complete draft but rather a document that organizes your progress into one document.

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Classroom Culture/Policies

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Respect for Diversity and Commitment to Intersectionality: I would like to acknowledge that we are all individuals with multiple sociocultural identities that intersect and shape our worldview through the lens of privilege and oppression. As your instructor I am committed to minimizing systemic forces of oppression within the classroom such as ableism, classism, racism, sexism, transphobia, and heterosexism in efforts to create a safe learning environment for all of us.

It is also my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class is viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated, and I ask that you join me in this commitment to foster respect for one another, enhance solidarity, and build community. https://gsapp.rutgers.edu/about-gsapp/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dei/diversity-statement

Statement on Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all University's educational programs. To receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus

where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations to share with me. To begin, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration

Late Policy: Due dates specified for the assignments are firm. Assignments submitted after the due date/time specified will be considered one day late, and one day will be added for each additional 24 hours until the assignment is submitted. A grade reduction of 5% per day will be given for late assignments.

Names and Pronouns: Class rosters are provided with student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Person-First Language: Please refer to the APA Publication Manual (7th Edition, Section 5.4) for guidelines related to using person first or identify first language when writing and speaking about individuals with disabilities and/or special needs (https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability)

Statement on Academic Integrity: The University's academic integrity policy, to which this class will adhere, can be reviewed at: https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf
All suspected infractions of academic integrity will be referred to the GSAPP Deans Office who will consult with the Rutgers Office of Student Conduct regarding disciplinary action.

Use of AI Tools: Please consult with your dissertation chairs regarding use of Generative AI (GenAI) for the dissertation process. If your chair has provided you with permission to use GenAI for your dissertation assignments for this course, students are required to explicitly cite GenAI tools used in their work using APA guidelines. Unauthorized use of GenAI outside these parameters will be considered a breach of academic integrity.

Tentative Weekly Schedule (Topics will be added or adjusted as needed)

Week 1 - January 27, 2025: Reviewing Course Goals, Expectations, and Syllabus

Reviewing where students are in the dissertation process. Planning for the semester and goal setting - how to best accomplish your dissertation goals using lessons from research on goal theory. Establishing assignments, timelines, and due dates.

Readings/Resources:
Locke, E., & Latham, G. P. (2006). New directions in goal-setting theory. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*,*15*, 265-268.
Latham, G. P., & Locke, E. A. (2006). Enhancing the benefits and overcoming the pitfalls of goal setting. *Organizational Dynamics*, *35*, 332-340.

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Week 2 – February 3, 2025: Dissertation Road Map

Student goal setting. Overview of GSAPP procedures, timelines, process, and expectations for conducting a dissertation. Including securing a chair, timelines/procedures, elements of the dissertation proposal and process, roles of chair and other committee members. Panel discussion of GSAPP faculty and their role as chair.

Readings/Resources:
GSAPP Dissertation Manual
GSAPP Dissertation FAQs
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Week 3 – February 10, 2025: Early Stages of Dissertation

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Review the early stages of the dissertation, focusing your topic, moving from ideas to research questions.

Readings/Resources:
GSAPP Dissertation Manual
GSAPP Dissertation FAQs
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Week 4 - February 17, 2025: Prewriting Strategies

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Resources on prewriting from Stacy Blackwell (Senior Director, Rutgers Learning Centers). Panel discussion of GSAPP Alumni discussing the dissertation experience.

Readings/Resources:
Prewriting Resources
Rutgers Learning Center Resources for Graduate Students
Resources to Improve your Academic Writing
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Week 5 - February 24, 2025: Scholarly Writing

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Barriers and facilitators to scholarly writing.

Assignment Due: Select Assignments and Due Dates

Readings/Resources:
APA Publication Manual - Chapter 4 (Writing Style and Grammar)
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Week 6 – March 3, 2025: Searching the Literature and Organizing the Literature Review

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Goals and structure of the literature review. Conducting a literature search using manual approaches and AI. Keeping the literature organized.

Readings/Resources:
Rutgers Dissertation Library Resources
Shehzad, W. (2011). Outlining purposes, stating the nature of the present research, and listing research questions or hypotheses in academic papers. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *41*(2), 139-160.
Video: Literature Review - An Overview for Graduate Students
Video: Writing the Literature Review

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Week 7 – March 10, 2025: Developing Effective Writing Habits (Peterson Prize Presentation 1:45-3:15)

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Review Week 7 Slides on barriers to productivity and complete the Unleashing Your Productivity Worksheet to help you identify concrete strategies for enhancing and maintaining motivation to complete your dissertation.

Assignment Due: Personalized Assignment 1

Readings/Resources:
The real reason you procrastinate Video
Helpful Resources for Dissertators
Free Tools to Help Scientists Improve their Writing

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Week 8 - March 24, 2025: Generating Research Questions and Hypotheses

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Writing research questions and hypotheses based on design and goals. Mid semester evaluation.

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Week 9 – March 31, 2025: IRB Procedures and Resources

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Review IRB procedures, including Rutgers eIRB and Student Handbook. Identifying the appropriate research protocol for your dissertation.

Assignment Due: CITI Training

Readings/Resources:
Rutgers Student Handbook: A Guide To Human Subjects' Protection In Research

Updated February 26, 2025

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Week 10 - April 7, 2025: What Makes a Good Method Section

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. Key elements of a method section. Using the IRB protocol to make decisions regarding methodology you will use.

Readings/Resources:
Appelbaum, M., Cooper, H., Kline, R. B., Mayo-Wilson, E., Nezu, A. M., & Rao, S. M. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for quantitative research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist*, *73*(1), 3-25.
Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist*, *73*(1), 26-46.
Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(1), 77-100.

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Week 11 – April 14, 2025: APA Style – <mark>Bias Free</mark> and Inclusive Language

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. APA style with a focus on inclusive language guidelines and how to describe research participants throughout the dissertation (e.g., describing studies in lit review, describing your sample).

Readings/Resources:
APA Publication Manual - Chapter - Chapter 5 (Bias-Free Language Guidelines)
[APA Inclusive Language Guidelines 2021](#)

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Week 12 – April 21, 2025: APA Style - Mechanics of Style

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. APA style with a focus on style and grammar.

Readings/Resources:
APA Publication Manual - Chapter 2 (Paper Elements/Format)
APA Publication Manual - Chapter 6 (Mechanics of Style)

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Week 13 - April 28, 2025: APA Style – Tables, Figures, In Text Citations, and References

Student review of dissertation progress and new goal setting. APA style with a focus on tables/figures, in text citations, and references. In class practice.

APA Publication Manual – Chapter 8 (Works Credited In Text)
APA Publication Manual – Chapter 9 (Reference List)

Updated February 26, 2025

APA Publication Manual – Chapter10 (Reference Examples)
APA Publication Manual – Chapter 7 (Tables and Figures)

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Week 14 – May 5, 2025: APA Style In-Class Activity

There will be one in-class activity (open book) designed to demonstrate your competence with APA Style (7th ed.). This activity will require you to identify and correct APA style errors in an example dissertation.

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Week 15 – May 12, 2025: Writing Results and Discussion & Setting Summer Goals

Writing analyses, results, and discussion. Summer commitments/goals.

Assignment Due: Dissertation Proposal Document

Readings/Resources:
Duquia, R. P., Bastos, J. L., Bonamigo, R. R., González-Chica, D. A., & Martínez-Mesa, J. (2014). Presenting data in tables and charts. *Epidemiology and Biostatistics Applied to Dermatology, 89*, 280-285.

Cook, T. D., Campbell, D. T., & Shadish, W. (2002). Statistical conclusion validity and internal validity. In *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference* (pp. 33-63). Houghton Mifflin.

Cook, T. D., Campbell, D. T., & Shadish, W. (2002). Construct validity and external validity. In *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference* (pp. 64-102). Houghton Mifflin.

Discussion phrases guide: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the*
DiPierro, M. (2010). Preparing for the oral defense of the dissertation. *ASQ Higher Education Brief*

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Other Resources

APA Style
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

Conducting and Writing the Power Analysis
Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Cohen, J. (1992). Power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, *112*, 155-159.

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G* Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, *41*(4), 1149-1160.

Data Analysis and Missing Data
Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: our view of the state of the art. *Psychological Methods*, *7*(2), 147-177.

Creating APA Figures in Excel

SPSS Primer/Tutorial

Publishing Your Dissertation
Publishing your dissertation

Seven steps to publishing in a scientific journal

Qualitative Research Methods
Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(3), 124-130

Research Design, Methods, and Analyses
Donders, A. R. T., Van Der Heijden, G. J., Stijnen, T., & Moons, K. G. (2006). A gentle introduction to imputation of missing values. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, *59*(10), 1087-1091

Leary, M. R. (1995). *Introduction to behavioral research methods* (2nd Ed.). Brooks/Cole.

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2015). *Practical research: Planning & design* (11th Ed). Pearson.

Hosp, J. L. (2016). What school psychologists need to know about multilevel modeling. *Communique*, *44*(7), 4-6. http://www.nasponline.org/publications/

Rutgers Dissertation Repository
Finding dissertations at Rutgers

Scale Development
DeVellis, R. F. (1991). Guidelines in scale development. In *Scale development: Theory and applications* (pp. 51-91). Sage.

Giles, D. (2002). Scale design and construction. In *Advanced Research Methods in Psychology* (pp. 103-120). Routledge.

Survey Methods
Writing survey questions

Seven tips for good survey questions

Bias in surveys