Designing a Thesis  
UEP-293-04  Fall 2015  (.5 Credits)  Full semester  
Instructor: Sheldon Krimsky  
Tues. 4:30-5:45PM  

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  

Sess. 1  Sept. 8  Introduction  
Organization of the course; readings; assignments; deadlines.  
The nature of the master’s thesis.  

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?  


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

Bui, Ch.1. Overview of the master’s degree and thesis, pp. 1-20.  

Sess. 3.  Sept. 22. 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.

Sess. 4. Sept. 29. Developing a Methodology
- Defining the type of thesis; analytical; theoretical; case study; survey

Reading: Bui, Ch 7 “How to Write Chapter Three, Methods”, pp. 137-159

Sess. 5. Oct. 6. Writing a Prospectus
- Elements of a UEP master’s degree prospectus.
- Introductory section; research questions; methodology; chapter breakdown; preliminary bibliography. Timeline.

Sess. 6. Oct. 13. Literature Review
- Purpose of the literature review; how to structure a literature review; the use of databases; key word algorithms in Boolean form.

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.


Sess. 7. Oct. 20. 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; avoiding plagiarism.

Readings:
Bui, Ch. 4. “Conducting Ethical Research,“ pp.77-95.
Garson, 2002, Ch. 16 Research ethics, pp. 221-231. (B)

Sess. 8. Oct. 27. Reviewing Successful Prospectuses
- A set of prospectuses will be distributed for discussion.

Readings: TBA

Sess. 9. Nov. 3. Use of Figures, Tables, Graphs, Charts
- The best uses of figures, graphs and charts. Summarizing data through tables.

Nov. 10. No Class Meeting. Wednesday schedule.
Sess. 10. Nov. 17. Conceptual Frameworks, Models, Theories
The value of theory or conceptual frameworks in interpreting or guiding our analysis; the use of flow charts for showing linkages in interactive spaces; drawing insights in your conclusion from your literature review.

Sess. 11. Nov. 24. Data Gathering

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

Sess. 12. Dec. 1 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)

Sess. 13 Dec. 8 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.

1. Topic outline and research questions: due: Sept 22 20 pts
2. Literature Review due: Nov. 3 30 pts
3. Thesis Prospectus due: Nov. 24 30 pts
4. Class Participation: attendance and conversation 20 pts

Students who have an accepted thesis prospectus (forms signed by both readers) by Dec. 10 can qualify for an A in the course.