

TUFTS UNIVERSITY
CH197: Community Health Senior Honors Thesis
Seminar

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Class: Wednesday from 9:00-10:15 @ 574 Boston Avenue, Room 404

Course Description

This one-semester seminar is open to students who have received approval from faculty in the Department of Community Health (CH) to complete a senior honors thesis. A CH senior honors thesis is typically a 60 to 100-page scholarly written product of a student's independent research that is directly supervised by CH faculty. For most students, writing an honors thesis is intellectually rewarding and challenging. Students can explore an emerging interest in research, acquire concrete research skills, develop productive one-on-one relationships with faculty mentors, and jumpstart a career in research. Regardless of the topic chosen, the extent to which the student has previously researched this topic, and the nature of the data, every good CH thesis has clear and concise research aims and relies on high-quality empirical evidence.

Variability in Student Research Timelines

Students start senior year at different places in their thesis timelines. For example, some students have already written a literature review and have begun data analysis, while others have yet to submit an IRB application and are just beginning to develop partnerships. This class meets each student where they are; your progress is determined relative to each person's starting point, rather than by comparison with other thesis writers. Research cannot be rushed. Research *always* entails unanticipated challenges that can prevent students from making progress in the way that they would hope. However, there are ways to manage the inevitable issues that arise, and this class will help students navigate these obstacles and gain skills to deploy in similar situations in the future.

Thesis Seminar Expectations and Assignments

In addition to attending the seminar sessions, you will be expected to meet with me individually twice during the fall semester and required to complete 13 assignments related to your thesis. These assignments which are described in the class plan below will help you further develop and refine your thesis and will lead *directly* into your written thesis product.

Grading Policy

Students do not receive a grade for any assignments completed in this seminar, though they will receive extensive feedback from the seminar instructor. Students who have not made sufficient progress by December 2019 will receive a recommendation from Dr. Tendulkar and their chair to end their thesis. If appropriate, Dr. Tendulkar and the chair may recommend the student receive independent study credit instead.

You will receive a grade and honors designation (Highest Honors, High Honors, Honors, No Honors) for your thesis after completion. Dr. Tendulkar does not provide input on this grade and honors designation unless she is a member of your thesis committee. This will be solely determined by your committee and will be given only after you have completed your oral thesis defense and have submitted a final version of your thesis to your committee.

Thesis Committee Roles and Responsibilities

While most thesis writers have some prior research experience and training through coursework or internships, the thesis is often the first time they are exploring an original research topic, independently and in-depth, with the support of faculty mentors, and on occasion, external community and academic partners. The thesis seminar taught by Dr. Tendulkar is an opportunity for accountability and support for students to learn about departmental thesis expectations including deadlines and deliverables; share, discuss and receive feedback on all stages of thesis development (from conception through defense); and receive guidance on key aspects of thesis research, writing, and committee management.

The thesis seminar does not replace ongoing engagement with and support from a student's thesis committee. A student's committee consists of a "chair" (thesis advisor), who is a faculty member in the Department of Community Health, and usually 1 "reader" who may be from CH or from outside the department. If a student is working closely with a community partner, it is often appropriate for a person from that organization to either serve as one of the student's readers or to provide more informal input throughout the thesis process.

Thesis Committee's Role and Responsibilities

- Ensure that students meet regular deadlines throughout the fall and spring semesters
- Ensure that students understand meet the highest ethical standards with respect to plagiarism and the ethical conduct of research
- Work with students to develop a research question that's appropriate in scope and timeframe
- Provide regular feedback on the formal literature review
- Guide students in developing their methodological approach
- Provide guidance, suggestions, and feedback on thesis results
- Teach students to contextualize their findings within the peer-reviewed literature in the discussion section
- Teach students to develop and deliver effective oral thesis presentations

Dr. Tendulkar's Role and Responsibilities

- Communicate thesis expectations, deliverables and deadlines
- Help students learn to manage faculty and thesis committee relationships with professionalism
- Reinforce feedback from committee members about identifying and articulating feasible and important research questions and aims
- Provide guidance on human subjects' protection and developing an institutional review board (IRB) application
- Literature reviews: searching and synthesis strategies
- Provide an accountability structure to support completion of the literature review
- Ensure that students meet the deadlines to develop a strong methods section
- Ensure that students meet the deadlines to develop appropriate analytic plans
- Communicate proper citation and referencing of the literature

Course Readings

Relevant resources will be shared with students on Canvas. All students will compile, read, summarize, and synthesize an extensive list of peer-reviewed publications to form the literature review for their individual theses. There is no textbook for this course.

Student Accessibility Services

Tufts is committed to providing support and equal access for all students so that they may fully realize their academic potential. If you need academic accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. All discussions will remain confidential. For specific accommodations (e.g., extra time to complete written assignments), you are responsible for making arrangements with the Student Accessibility Services office and notifying the instructor two weeks in advance to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

Academic Integrity

It is critical to maintain a high level to integrity when writing a Senior Honors thesis. Plagiarizing is defined as intentionally or unintentionally using someone else's words or thoughts without giving proper credit. When a source is not cited, it is assumed that the words thoughts and ideas are the sole product of the student. When a student uses material from another source, the extent and nature of the borrowing must, to avoid the charge of dishonesty, be fully and explicitly noted in the text or footnotes. Direct quotations must be differentiated from the text by using quotation marks or by indenting or single spacing and be accompanied by appropriate APA citation. It is the responsibility of the student to learn the proper forms of citation and this will also be covered in class. The use of papers or other work obtained from commercial or other services is a clear case of plagiarism and is specifically prohibited. Handing in as one's own work a paper on which a student has received extensive help without acknowledging that help is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and it is reportable to the Dean. Please read the Academic Integrity Handbook at <http://uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/documents/HandbookAcademicIntegrity.pdf> Finally, all students will submit their work to Turnitin.com and their work will be checked for plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Date	Session Content	Assignments (submit to Canvas unless otherwise specified)
9/4/19	Introductions Review of CH Thesis guidelines and deliverables Working with committee/ partners Support resources Writing a background section, developing a topic outline	None
9/8/19	No scheduled class	Assignment #1: Draft a Gantt Chart with activities and proposed timeline through December 2019
9/11/19	Developing Research Aims	Assignment #2: Draft 2-3 paragraphs of background content related to your topic, with 3 citations. Try to include at least one review article and utilize a reference management software such as Zotero to organize your citations
9/18/19	Constructing your IRB application	Assignment #3: Draft a research question and 2-3 research aims
9/25/19	Writing Boot Camp	Assignment #4: Download and review IRB submission paperwork, develop plan for completion including questions for IRB staff and committee
10/2/19	Finding resources (Library resources)	Assignment #5: Develop Thesis Draft #1 (5-page background section, with 12 citations). See Thesis guidelines for more details on submission.
10/3/19-10/9/19 Schedule one on one meetings with Dr. Tendulkar		
10/9/19	Writing a methods section	Assignment #6: Revise your 5-page background section, incorporating input from Dr. Tendulkar
10/11/19	No scheduled class	Assignment #7: Submit IRB paperwork to Tufts IRB
10/15/19	No scheduled class	Assignment #8: Submit Senior Honors Thesis Candidate Form online https://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-advising/senior-honors-thesis
10/16/19	Developing an analytic plan	
10/18/19	No session	Assignment #9: Submit your Thesis Draft #2 (13 pages double-spaced with 20 citations). See Thesis guidelines for more details on submission.

10/23/19	Time Management/prioritization strategies	Assignment #10: Develop a methods outline
10/30/19	Literature review check-ins	Assignment #11: Develop a plan for analysis
11/6/19	Checking in on literature review progress and addressing barriers and concerns.	
11/13/19	One on one check in with Dr. Tendulkar	
11/20/19	Writing Boot Camp	
11/24/19	Writing Boot camp	Assignment #12: Submit your Thesis Draft #3 (20 pages double-spaced with 30 citations). See Thesis guidelines for more details on submission.
11/27/19	No class, Thanksgiving Holiday	
12/1/19	No scheduled class	
12/4/19	Plan for the remainder of the academic year to complete thesis with dates listed every week; obtain sign-off from thesis committee members	
12/9/19	No scheduled class	Assignment #13: Submit your Thesis Draft #4 (25 pages double-spaced with 40 citations) and a 3-page double-spaced methods section. See Thesis guidelines for more details on submission.