



McMaster Divinity
College

MS 5A01 Dissertation Project Seminar

Course runs Sept–Dec 2021

Class consists of one-on-one Zoom tutorials with the professor

Professor. Dr. Paul S. Evans

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Course Description:

This tutorial will lead students through the process of completing their dissertation project proposal. The tutorial will involve criticizing and focusing a proposal in order to make it sufficiently rigorous, yet within the capacity of the student's expertise. The importance of an appropriate methodology for the research question will be underscored. The tutorial will consider how a topic can be reworked sufficiently to address deficiencies or overreach in scope and how to write a clear thesis statement. The objective of this course is to lead the student into writing a focused and usable dissertation project proposal.

*This tutorial will consist of one-on-one sessions with the professor via the Zoom conferencing app.

The draft proposal will be examined along the following lines:

A) Dissertation Project Focus – is the dissertation proposal sufficiently focused?

Have students identified a topic that they are capable of handling?

Is the topic of sufficient depth to qualify as doctoral work?

Is the project manageable and likely to be completed in the time remaining?

B) Scope of Research – What strategies have they used to locate the range of research already accomplished in this area? The tutorial will guide students into reaching into previously unconsidered areas for academic sources and discuss what makes a literature review rigorous, sufficient, and significantly comprehensive.

C) Methodology – Have students worked out an appropriate method that is suitable, rigorous, and sufficient? Does the chosen methodology follow on the chosen research question? In this tutorial, the professor and student will identify common elements of methodological orientation and discuss strategies for choosing, developing, and using a research method that is appropriate to the topic.

Meeting One (Sept 21, 22)

This tutorial begins with an assessment of the latest draft of a student's dissertation proposal, or ideas for a dissertation project. In this first meeting the professor and student will discuss these ideas and/or evaluate the last draft of the proposal. If

available, feedback from students' primary supervisors will be examined and there will be discussion regarding the student's own self-assessment and any barriers and impediments that have prevented the student from having a successful proposal thus far.

From this meeting the **professor will set out assignments and the procedure** that will be completed subsequent to the second meeting.

Subsequent Meetings (TBD)

The proposal will be broken down into assignments that will be determined *in situ* with the professor during the first meeting. They will likely break down as follows.

1. Dissertation Abstract. 1-2 pages (Double-spaced): Due: Oct 6

Students will write a short abstract summarizing their dissertation project. This abstract represents a student's formulation of their topic which is further defined and explored in their research proposal. The abstract must not exceed 350 words. Students will send the abstract to the professor at least two days before the scheduled meeting time arranged with the professor at which time they will go over it together via a Zoom conference.

2. Literature Review Section: 5-8 pages (Double-spaced): Due: Oct 20

Students will write a review of previous literature applicable to the student's particular area of research interest that critically interacts with this secondary literature and shows how their proposal responds to this body of research. In this section, the professor will provide some guidance on how to find research on a topic and how to ensure their research question is based on an awareness of what has been said in the secondary literature and is responding to the academic discussion. Students will send the literature review to the professor at least two days before the scheduled meeting time arranged with the professor at which time they will go over it together via a Zoom conference.

3. Research Methodology Section. 5-8 pages (Double-spaced): Due: Nov 24

Students will write the methodological section of their proposal that demonstrates an awareness of issues in the literature regarding their chosen methodology with special reference and application to a student's particular area of research interest.

Students will send the methodology section to the professor at least two days before the scheduled meeting time arranged with the professor at which time they will go over it together via a Zoom conference.

3. Draft of Dissertation Project Proposal: 6,000-8,000 words. Due: Dec 8

Students will prepare their dissertation project proposal based on the abstract which will describe the thesis, the literature review, and the methodology to be employed. The proposal will also summarize anticipated conclusions or outcomes. Proposals must evince logical argumentation, clarity of expression, understanding of the relevant scholarly literature and the methodology employed, and their potential to contribute to the chosen academic field. Students will send the draft to the professor

at least four days before the scheduled meeting time arranged with the professor at which time they will go over it together via a Zoom conference.

Students must complete draft on time and **arrange a meeting with their primary supervisor** to discuss and receive feedback and critique.

4. Dissertation Project Proposal: 6,000–8,000 words. Due Dec 2

After meeting with supervisor(s) students will revise their preliminary proposal in light of the feedback received, making the required changes and then submit the final draft of the proposal. Students will send the proposal to the professor at least four days before the scheduled meeting time arranged with the professor at which time they will go over it together via a Zoom conference.

Role of Supervising Committee/Mentors

Students must meet with their primary supervisor/mentor to discuss their research. This will entail planning ahead with their mentor to arrange dates to meet that fit with the schedule outlined.

**** n.b.** Although professor Evans will be providing guidance for student proposals, it is important to remember your research is done under the supervision of your assigned mentor and committee and they must approve your work before it is submitted to the faculty for approval.

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

Disclaimer.

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.