

University of California, San Francisco  
Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences

**S239 Dissertation Proposal Seminar**  
**Fall 2016**  
**Wednesdays 5pm – 7pm**  
**Oakland**

**Facilitator:**

Lily Walkover – lily.walkover@ucsf.edu

**Course Mission:**

This course will provide a positive and reflexive forum where students writing a dissertation proposal can make concrete progress on their proposal as well as discuss the process, means of assessing progress, and challenges common to this experience. Meetings will be student-centered and will focus on skills helpful in completing a successful dissertation proposal. Our hope is that this seminar will facilitate a supportive and informative environment for student-to-student discussion during the planning and writing of the dissertation proposal.

This course will be filed as S239 for 1 unit (pass/fail). The Faculty of Record (FOR) is Janet Shim.

The syllabus and all course materials are available on the CLE site for the course: <https://courses.ucsf.edu/course/view.php?id=2323>

**Course Schedule:**

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Topic</b>   | <b>Assignments</b>  | <b>Due</b> |
|----------------|-------------|--|---|------------|
| 1              | Oct 5       | Understanding dissertation structures, making committee decisions, funding               | Read a sample proposal, meet with advisor, make a map                                   | Oct 2      |
| 2              | Oct 19      | Methods, feasibility, and timeline   | Read sample methods section, write one-page research design brainstorm                  | Oct 16     |
| 3              | Nov 2       | Research questions / aims  | Read articles and sample questions/aims, write research questions and aims              | Oct 30     |
| 4              | Nov 16      | Literature review  | Read Dumit, write inventory of existing writing and outline of your proposed lit review | Nov 13     |
| 5              | Nov 30      | Goals and Staying on Track: dissertation proposal defense, IRB, outside committee member | Draft dissertation proposal outline, proposal timeline, and committee list              | Nov 27     |

This class will be run as a workshop, and we will talk about each person's work each week, as in the small groups for the 285 qualitative methods series. The order of topics covered might not be the order that makes the most sense for you, but you will need to think through all of them.

During this class, and the proposal development process in general, it will be helpful to meet with your advisor regularly. In addition, each week we assign at least one example of the proposal section we'll be covering from a sample dissertation proposal, available on the CLE site.

### **Requirements:**

The course will meet five times during the spring quarter for 2 hours each session. The seminar will meet every other **Wednesday at 436 14th Street, downtown Oakland, in Suite 500 from 5-7 pm** (we will meet in another location on November 16<sup>th</sup>). *This is a collaborative seminar*, so input from everyone is necessary for students to get the full benefit of this seminar. Feel free to contact Lily at any time with questions, concerns, or feedback.

### **Assignments:**

Course assignments will be due the **Sunday (three days) before class**, which will allow time to read and provide feedback on your submissions. The goal of these assignments is to help you plan your dissertation proposal, define a project of manageable scope, and complete a working outline to guide your next steps. By the end of the course, you should have an outline, tentative timeline, and writing schedule to complete your dissertation proposal. Completion of the course will prepare you to write and defend your dissertation proposal by Spring 2017.

Please upload all of your assignments to CLE by the due date. ***Please submit all course assignments to that week's Discussion Board on the CLE site.*** Lily will read and comment on your assignments and return this feedback via email. Be sure to check the site regularly.

Assignments include meeting with your advisor and/or dissertation chair. Feel free to meet with your advisors/chairs when it is right for you and as often as you need. For some, this may mean meeting well before this class starts while for others this might be something you work out a few weeks into the quarter. Please note that we will be discussing how to choose a chair and committee members in the class as well.

**Course Assignments (due Sunday before class) and Reading:**

| Due Date | Assignment  |
|----------|---|
| Oct 2    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read one full sample dissertation proposal from the CLE site.</li> <li>• <b>Meet with your advisor to discuss a chair</b> for your dissertation committee and potential dissertation topics (if you haven't already). Ask the person to be your dissertation chair (if different from your current advisor) and plan to meet with this person to define the potential scope of your dissertation, and possible committee members. If you're having trouble with this, feel free to bring it up at this session or email Lily to discuss it privately.</li> <li>• Create a <b>visual or conceptual map</b> of your project, focusing on what empirical and theoretical areas you want to study, draw on, and contribute to. If it works for you, use the <b>situational map</b> format. If this doesn't fit your workstyle, make a rough outline or just jot ideas down as you brainstorm. Consider these questions: What empirical areas interest you? How do theorists engage your areas of interest? Who is talking about them? With whom are they in conversation? What kinds of discussions or debates do they take up or extend? You might think in terms of individual theorists here, and you might also think in terms of theoretical fields. What debates or conversations are people having in this field? Are there things you think people aren't discussing? <b>We will go over these together in class, so please upload a PDF or image of your visual or conceptual map to CLE, and bring a hard copy with you to share.</b></li> </ul> |
| Oct 16   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the methods section from a sample dissertation proposal (one you haven't read yet).</li> <li>• Write a one-page <b>research design brainstorm</b>. This can be narrative, or in bullet point form. Questions to ask yourself include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who do you want to talk with and/or collect data from?</li> <li>○ Qualitative and/or quantitative data collection?</li> <li>○ Are you doing interviews? Observations?</li> <li>○ Who will you talk to / gather data from first?</li> <li>○ Where (and if more than one location, how many and why)?</li> <li>○ When (include a rough timeline)?</li> <li>○ How will you gain entrée?</li> <li>○ Will you need funding to do this project?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bonus (not required): draft (a part of) your methods section!</li> </ul>  |
| Oct 30   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the research questions and aims from a sample dissertation proposal (one you haven't read yet).</li> <li>• Read short articles on research questions and aims posted on CLE site</li> <li>• <b>Draft your research questions and aims</b>. Consider your research questions: What phenomena do you want to ask questions about? What is the main question or topic you are interested in? What are some of the secondary questions? What literature will you draw on and contribute to?</li> </ul>  |

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|----------------------|--|
|                      | <p>In qualitative research, aims are often considered to be your major objectives of study, while research questions can be multiple and are often nested under specific aims.</p>   |
| <p><b>Nov 13</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read article by J. Dumit</b> about modes of reading</li> <li>• <b>Write an inventory of your existing writing:</b> Use this exercise as a way to inventory the academic writing you already have done, and to think about how you might leverage it in an existing or new way in your literature review. You should also use this as a time to identify any course readings that you might use or items you have read recently that you might want to include. Compile a list of readings and existing writing you have ready to go and resources you still need to find. We encourage you to think broadly about resources: materials, people, etc.</li> <li>• Working with your advisor, formulate an outline of some of the topics and literature relevant to your dissertation proposal. <b>Write a rough outline</b> of the sections – whether you want 3 sections, or a different structure, and whether you want one substantive or empirical section along with theoretical sections. One sample structure is to write out headings for 3 sections, with 3 questions per section that you’ll be addressing. Include at least 3 references you would draw on for each section.</li> <li>• Bonus (not required, but helpful): skim the literature review sections of recent dissertation proposals (submitted after the TAE requirement was changed – see the ‘current format’ subfolder on the CLE site), and begin to draft your literature review!</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Nov 27</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Write an outline for your dissertation proposal.</b> This should include sub-sections as needed, and any appendices you anticipate (such as additional literature reviews, IRB application, interview guides, etc.). See the first pages of sample dissertation proposals for examples. Consult with your advisor on their expectations.</li> <li>• Create a <b>rough timeline</b> for completing and defending your dissertation proposal. Indicate each section, when you will work on it and when it will be completed. Include time to get feedback from committee members. Deadlines should be specific enough to keep you on track (for some people this is a specific date, for others something more general like ‘winter quarter’).</li> <li>• <b>List your committee:</b> If you have not done so already, brainstorm committee members. Keep in mind that you need one person outside of the SBS department to serve on the committee, and most advisors recommend that you also have a member from outside of UCSF. Note that your reading list and outline will likely not be finalized until you have met with all of your committee members. Different chairs will handle committee processes differently, so be sure to discuss this with your chair.</li> <li>• Bonus (not required): draft your introduction, contributions, and any other remaining sections!</li> </ul>  |