

**The University of Texas at Austin
School of Social Work
SSW 395K**

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Course

Course Number:	SW 395K	Instructor:	Noël Busch-Armendariz, PhD, LMSW, MPA
Unique Number:	63745	Office Number:	SSW 3.212EA
Semester:	Spring 2013	Office Phone:	512.471-3198 (office)
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Meeting Time:	Tuesdays	Office Hours:	Tuesdays 3 – 4:30 pm and by appointment
Place:	12 noon – 3 pm SSW 2.134		

I. Course Description

The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate knowledge of the substantive issues, key research questions, theory, empirical evidence, and implications related to a specific area of interest to the student. As such, the exam is an extension of the work that students have conducted during the previous year and a half in the doctoral program. The knowledge gained and summarized for papers from coursework may be useful in defining the scope and content of this exam.

The comprehensive exam is a collaborative process between the student and her/his comprehensive exam committee chair and participation by two other social work faculty members. The paper is meant to assist in building a solid foundation for an extended body of academic work. The topic must be broad enough to give the student a firm foundation in an area of study that can sustain a long-term research agenda, i.e., the comprehensive exam is not intended to be background merely for a single research project such as the dissertation. It aims to include the background and knowledge base of a larger area of focus that will provide the context for the student's dissertation. On the other hand, the topic cannot be so broad that it loses meaning as an identifiable body of work.

The course is a seminar and designed to provide on-going support and feedback concerning the process of developing the area of focus and the various components of the comprehensive exam paper. It has been designed to maximize progress on the paper. Unlike other courses in the doctoral sequence, this course focuses more on the process of developing this document than on the mastery of content from lectures and readings. As such, the writing assignments that are to be completed should support the objectives of the comprehensive paper. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the various

sections leading to the final document and the various writing assignments are meant to facilitate this process.

II. Course Objectives

At the beginning of this course, students should identify the chair of her/his comprehensive examination and identified two additional social work faculty members to serve on the exam committee. The chair should agree to provide guidance during this course and throughout the process. By the end of the class, students are expected to develop a first-draft of the comprehensive exam paper that is complete with all areas in the paper outline.

III. Methods of Instruction

This course focuses the development of an individual comprehensive exam paper. The methods of instruction will be seminar that may include class discussions guest speakers, independent thinking and writing, and student presentations. New reading materials will be related to the student's topic area and focused on her/his paper. Substantive readings will be directed by the student, the chair of the comprehensive exam committee, others that the student views as necessary for additional consultation. Course readings will be directed by the course instructor.

Class time will be an opportunity to synthesize readings, ask questions, seek guidance and receive feedback, and offer critique and suggestions to peers.

IV. Textbooks

Students will select of text to best fit learning and research design needs. Students may choose from the following list or may propose another text. If you select a book not on this list, please email the instructor the citation.

Krathwohl, D. & Smith, N. (2005). How to prepare a dissertation proposal: Suggestions for students in education and the social and behavioral sciences. Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, NY.

Roberts, C. (2010). The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation. Corwin A SAGE Company: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Rudestam, K. E. & Newton, R. R. (2007). Surviving your dissertation (3rd edition). SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Turabian, K. L. (2003). A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers (7th edition). The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL.

V. Class Policies

All written assignments are to be typed in double space.

1. Attendance
Students are expected to attend class sessions and participate in seminar-type, interactive discussions between students and professor. Regular attendance to class meetings and contribution to thoughtful discussions will be considered in assigning the final grade. This course is taken for CREDIT/NO CREDIT. Students should notify the professor if they are going to be absent.
2. Assignments.
Please submit assignments by e-mail. The professor will send a reply email when the paper is received; if you do not receive a reply please contact the professor immediately. Generally late assignments will not be accepted, but the instructor may exercise discretion.
3. Special Accommodations for Students with a Disability.
The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. Please notify the professor of any special accommodations that you may need prior to the end of the second week of class.
4. Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty
Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs>).
5. Safety
As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practice related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.
6. Feedback
Student feedback about the course and learning needs is welcome. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback during office hours, by phone, by e-mail, and by appointment.
7. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>

8. **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made.

Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

§ Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building.

Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building. § If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class. § In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions. § Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

VI. Course Requirements and Grading

CREDIT = meets the requirements of written assignments, attendance and participation, and demonstrates evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

Course Requirements

1. Writing assignments for various sections of comprehensive exam paper
Writing assignments will be required to facilitate development of the comprehensive exam paper. Each of the sections of the comprehensive exam paper will be submitted to the instructor. Each section will be read by instructor with feedback; however, it should be understood that this feedback is only meant as a guide as the student will rely on chair and committee members to guide the substantive content. Feedback will focus on readability, focus, logic of argument, and understandability.
2. Student presentations and Peer Feedback
Students will present their ideas in class both informally and formally. These discussions will assist students in further developing their thinking about their comprehensive examination focus. Feedback from peers and the instructor will include suggestions about content, clarity of logic, inclusiveness/exclusiveness of topics, etc. Formal presentations may include a PowerPoint presentation.
3. Participation in class discussion
The student will be evaluated on overall engagement, participation, and involvement they demonstrate during class discussions.

VII. Class Schedule

Date	Class Discussion & Focus	Course assignments
Jan. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and overview • Discuss objectives of the Comprehensive Paper and Oral Exam • Handout of suggested outline 	
Jan. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO FORMAL CLASS—meet with your chair 	<p>Read <i>all</i> chapters in your text that have to do with process, getting started, & preparation, etc.</p> <p>Identify and meet with chair and possible committee members</p>
Jan. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss statement and significance of the area of interest and its significance to social work • Updates on chair and committee development • Discuss outlines – issues, process, challenges, solutions • Possible guest speaker 	<p>Prepare an outline for your comprehensive examination with working title & submit to instructor</p>
Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key concepts and definitions • Identify other relevant issues • Informal student presentations • Possible guest speaker 	<p>Read <i>all</i> chapters/sections that focus on writing the introduction & theoretical concepts</p>
Feb. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal student presentations 	<p>Summarize problem statement & key concepts of your topic in 2 - 5 pages and submit to instructor</p>
Feb. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO FORMAL CLASS—meet with instructor individually and meet with your chair 	<p>Read <i>all</i> chapters/sections that focus on writing a literature review</p>

Date	Class Discussion & Focus	Course assignments
Feb. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the empirical evidence • Includes synthesis of current state of knowledge • Handouts of examples for organizing tables • Discuss how to write this section – Organization strategies, specific topics to address, synthesis • Informal student presentations (literature review) 	Summarize the current knowledge (literature) using table with relevant variables and annotated bibliography and submit to instructor
Mar. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review theories, theoretical frameworks • Informal student presentations 	Read <i>all</i> chapters/sections that focus on theoretical frameworks, theories, hypothesis, models, etc.
Mar. 12	SPRING BREAK	
Mar. 19	NO FORMAL CLASS—meet with your chair and committee members	Draft parts 1 – 4 of the comprehensive paper (introduction, key concepts, literature review, theoretical framework or theories)
Mar. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal student presentations 	Revise 1 – 4 of the comprehensive paper and submit to instructor
April 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss methodological challenges Critique research designs, sampling, data collection methods used in area of interest 	Read <i>all</i> chapters/sections on methodology & implications/conclusions
April 9	NO FORMAL CLASS—meet with instructor and chair	Draft methodological and implications sections of your examination to
April 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for the oral examination 	Revise & submit methodological and implications sections of your examination to instructor
April 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student presentations (formal) 	<p>Read <i>all</i> chapters/sections about the oral defense</p> <p>Prepare and Submit PowerPoint for Oral Defense</p>
April 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student presentations (formal) 	Prepare and Submit PowerPoint for Oral Defense
		Final draft of comprehensive examination due on May 13 th COB