

# Sustainable Management Studies 605

## THESIS DEVELOPMENT

Winter, 2019

RCH 209 Tuesdays, 11:30am – 2:20pm

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**Instructor:** Dr. Laszlo Sarkany

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**Office Location:** EV3 4301

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 9am – 11am, or by appointment

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** *The class will meet on Tuesdays from 11:30am – 12:50pm. However, the instructor will remain in class until 2:20pm in order to help students prepare their proposals. Students are also highly encouraged to use this extra time to research their topic(s) of interests, decide on research methods, establish their research questions and finally write up their research proposal.*

### Formal course description:

*“The goal of the course is to ensure that all students will have a completed thesis proposal by the end of term. Each student will make an oral presentation of their proposal to their committee members and other members of SEED. The course will include discussions about how best to frame good research questions, find sources, organize a thesis, conduct ethical research, and communicate results. Students will make regular class presentations throughout the term as their research proposal develops and thus gain skills in written, graphical oral presentation.”*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to provide students weekly opportunities to actively think about their individual research agendas, gain hands-on experience developing these agendas, and communicate their research verbally and in writing - the later in the form of a research proposal - to be submitted to, and approved by, the department at the end of the term. While enrolled in this course – which complements SUSM 603 – students will be engaged in such practical aspect of research as discovering and asking inquisitive research questions, selecting appropriate methods to conduct research, appropriately commenting on their own and others' proposed research questions and methods, and then communicating the proposed research proposals verbally and in writing.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By completing this course, student will have gained insight into:

- Completing a master's thesis, including how to choose a committee, how to design interesting projects, how to choose appropriate methods to conduct the research, how to conduct ethical research, and how to communicate research in the form of a proposal and scholarly articles
- Staring and completing (!) academic writing projects which may be published in scholarly journals
- Submitting a proposal to the Office of Research Ethics

- Developing and, clearly and succinctly communicating one's research proposal in the form of a short presentation

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Activities and Tasks</b>
January 8 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup>	Let's begin...the thinking and writing process!	So, you need to come up with a thesis topic...and you have this unquenchable desire to explain pretty much all of social and physical reality! You are in the right place!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Class discussion about what interests you</li> </ul>
January 15 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup>	Your Research Topic	How to find important, relevant and 'doable' research problems and topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Determining the research process</li> <li>➤ Class discussion about great thesis topics</li> <li>➤ Posting a 300-word description of your tentative research project</li> </ul>
January 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup>	Asking Questions and Selecting Paradigms	Choosing paradigms, theories and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Refine the research questions you posted during week 2</li> <li>➤ Re-post your research question(s) and a short 300-word description</li> </ul>
January 29 <sup>th</sup> and 31 <sup>st</sup>	The Selection and Review of the Relevant Literature	How to conduct a focused literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Post the literature review and the conceptual framework (300-words)</li> </ul>
February 5 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup>	The Structure of the Proposal: What to Include and What not to Include	What does a good proposal look like, and what are its components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prepare for peer roundtable</li> </ul>
February 12 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup>	Administrative Aspects of the Thesis	Choosing a committee, ORE, departmental requirements, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Present preliminary thesis proposal to advisor (question, objectives, rationale, framework)</li> </ul>
<b>February 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>
February 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>	Academic Writing – Tips, Tricks and How to be Efficient and Effective; How to Publish – A Lot!	Publishing your work because 'publish or perish'!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Potential guest speaker from the Writing Center – How to write a lot!</li> </ul>
March 12 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup>	The Thesis Defense Process	Discussion about thesis defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reflections due today! Post</li> </ul>

			observations to the discussion group
March 19 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup>	Critiques by the Collegium: Let's Talk about Each Others' Projects	Group Feedback: Critiquing each others' work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prepare for 'roundtable'</li> <li>➤ Submit proposal for review</li> </ul>
March 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>	'The Elevator Pitch': Explaining your Thesis is 3-minutes max!	'Know thy Audience' – presenting research to non-specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review proposals and provide feedback</li> <li>➤ Develop your 'elevator pitch'</li> </ul>
April 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	TED Thesis-esque Exercise: 'The Elevator Pitch'.	Three-minute presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Slides due March 28<sup>th</sup></li> <li>➤ Written proposal due April 17<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>

## OFFICE HOURS

Please note that above and beyond my regularly scheduled office hours, I will be more than happy to meet anyone by appointment. I will be on campus on Thursdays and Fridays, and so meeting after class is always a possibility. In addition, I am available via email as well as Skype. Please allow a maximum of 48-hour turnaround for email or Skype calls.

## COURSE READINGS

Please find below a list of sources you will find helpful while you are working on the practical aspects of your research project. I would be more than happy to suggest a few more that I found very helpful:

- Bolker, Joan. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*. Holt Paperbacks, 1998.
- Joyner, R.L., Rouse, W.A., Glatthorn, A.A. 2013. *Writing the Winning Thesis or Dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Corwin.
- Oliver, P. 2014. *Writing your Thesis*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. SAGE.
- Silvia, Paul. *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. American Psychological Association, 2007.
- Woodwell, D. 2014. *Research Foundations: How do we know what we know?* SAGE.
- The Thesis Whisperer Blog (I have listened to her live. She offers excellent advice. For example, have you thought about writing an entire article or chapter in 7 days? She has, and has done it!) - <http://thesiswhisperer.com/>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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|------|--|-----|
| I)   | Weekly class contribution and peer feedback:                 | 25% |
| II)  | Thesis Defense Reflection (March 12 <sup>th</sup> )          | 10% |
| III) | 'Three Minute' Thesis presentation: (April 2 <sup>nd</sup> ) | 15% |
| IV)  | Written proposal: (April 17 <sup>th</sup> )                  | 50% |

## **Thesis Defense Reflection – DUE March 12<sup>th</sup>**

Sometime between the beginning of the term and March 1<sup>st</sup>, you will need to attend a Masters' thesis defense (and not a Ph.D. or a 'major research paper' defense) and provide a critical evaluation of what you saw and learned. The upcoming list of defense scheduled is posted on the television screens in the atrium of EV3. I will create a discussion board on LEARN where you will be able to post upcoming defense dates.

After having attended a defense, your task will be to write a 500-word reflection on your experience during the defense. You will need to upload the paper into the Dropbox on LEARN.

The purpose behind attending and later reflecting on the defense is for you to familiarize yourself with the process, and to be able to reflect on it as well.

A few guiding questions to consider as you are attending and reflecting on this process:

- 1) What type of research questions did the student present: qualitative, quantitative, mixed (interpretive)?
- 2) Did the student appear prepared? Did the student appear anxious, relaxed, or indifferent?
- 3) What kind of questions were asked of the student? How did the student answer these questions?
- 4) What types of questions did the committee ask of the student?
- 5) If you could speak to the student, what would you say to them about their defense?

You will either be assigned a '0' for no effort, a '3' for some minimal effort in regards to the thinking and the writing process, or '5' for full effort as reflected in a well-organized, well-structured and well written paper.

## **Weekly Participation (25%)**

It is expected that students participate in all weekly meetings by discussing their own and others' work, and share ideas in a collegial matter. You are all encouraged to participate on a regular basis. Participation in this sense will hinge on the following:

- 1) Attendance at all meetings. Please be punctual by arriving about 5 minutes before 8:30, and staying for the duration of the seminar. During some weeks, we will have to guest speakers presenting and so we will want to make sure that we do not unnecessarily interrupt the presentation.
- 2) Completing all the assigned readings, posting responses on-line and participating in all in-class discussions.
- 3) The quality of your participation. In order to do well in this course, and to provide an enriching intellectual environment for everyone else – including yourself – you need to ensure that your participation reflects significant preparation, a substantial analysis of the ideas, concepts and methods discussed, and offering clear and organized insight during all class discussions.

While providing feedback to colleagues, please keep on mind the following:

- First skim the document, and then go back and provide specific feedback on important points
- Strive to ensure that you fully understand the underlying logic or argument or analysis
- Provide feedback in a respectful and constructive manner.
- Provide positive comments on a document, but also highlight areas that should be improved. Remember that it is in the way in which provide feedback that counts.

## **'Three Minute' Thesis Presentation (15%) – April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The aim of this assignment is to prepare student to think about their research projects in a concise manner, and to communicate the project to a non-specialist audience in a creative and engaging manner. For this assignment we will be following the parameters set out by the official '3MT' competition, originating from the University of Queensland in Australia. More information about the competition can be found via the following

link: [www.uq.edu.au/grad-school](http://www.uq.edu.au/grad-school) The rules of the competition are available at <http://threeminutethesis.org/rules-judging-criteria>

Rules to keep in mind:

- 1) Only one PowerPoint slide is allowed without any animation, creative slide transitions, etc. The slide needs to be introduced at the beginning of the presentation. It needs to be uploaded to LEARN by March 28<sup>th</sup>
- 2) The following are **NOT** to be used:
  - a. Electronic media
  - b. Flash cards
  - c. Props or costumes of any kind
- 3) The following **MUST** be observed:
  - a. The presentation cannot exceed three minutes. For each extra 30 seconds, I will deduct 2% from the grade you receive on the assignment
  - b. The presentation has to be spoken; it cannot be sung, or delivered in the form of a poem
  - c. You will need to present in-front of the entire class
  - d. The presentation begins when you begin speaking or moving at the front of the class

**Written Proposal (50%) - Due April 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm, by EMAIL to the instructor**

The purpose of the proposal is to coherently organize and present your research project, in consultation with your advisor(s). The final version of the proposal will be prepared in consultation with your advisor(s). The course instructor will decide on the final mark for this assignment. Please note that your advisor will need to approve the proposal by signing off on the document between the final grade can be awarded.

A research proposal includes the following:

- Description of the context of the problem the research attempts to address, offering a relevant number of research questions/issues under consideration; a summary of what other scholars have written on the topic; and the overview of the way(s) in which you would like to approach the problem(s) or issue(s). These components must be included in the research proposal, with a longer or shorter literature review, which will be subject to approval by your advisor.
- A discussion about why the proposed research project is important and relevant, for example, for a client, as a general advocacy issue, the research community or some other entity.
- Clearly delineating what steps need to be taken to complete the research, such as data collection from a particular source, the review of the literature on a particular subject of problem, and analyzing a particular debate that deals with a debate
- What outputs – papers, reports, etc. – will be generated after the completion of the project
- A breakdown of when particular stages of the project will be completed. The ‘timeline’, usually appears in the Appendix, and includes such information as the name of the particular task, a description of the task, and completion dates.
- A final document not exceeding 5000 words, NOT including abstracts, appendixes and references.

**Please follow the format for the proposal outlined below:**

**Abstract (300 words)**

- a. Purpose
- b. Design/methodology/approach
- c. Research implications and limitations
- d. Practical/social implications
- e. Originality/value

Or you could think of it like this...

- What is the main purpose of the thesis?
- What is the problem or question that the work addresses?
- Why is it important?
- How will the research be undertaken?
- What are the potential contributions?

INCLUDE A LIST OF **KEYWORDS** AT THE END OF THE ABSTRACT

Note: an abstract does not normally contain citations and should be stand-alone.

**2. Section 1 – Introduction**

- a. Background
- b. Problem statement
- c. Significance of the problem and contributions to this problem through the study
- d. Research question and objectives
- e. Definitions of key terms (where applicable)
- f. Limitations of study

**3. Section 2 – Literature Review**

- a. Review of the theoretical literature
  - i. Review theories
  - ii. Review empirical literature
  - iii. Review grey literature
- b. Present conceptual framework (one that you create from the literature or one from the literature on which you will base your study)

**4. Section 3 – Methods**

- a. Introduction that includes a brief summary of proposed research approach
- b. Brief discussion/description of paradigms/ontological/epistemological considerations
- c. Methods to be used and why
- d. Limitations and boundaries

**5. Section 4 – Expected Results**

- a. Discuss what results you might find and how those findings will contribute to the literature

**6. Section 5 – References**

**7. Section 6 – Appendices**

- a. Table of Methods/Objectives/Outcomes/Contributions
- b. Proposed Timeline