

Fall 2009 Online

Department of Political Science, College of Arts & Sciences, Valdosta State University

Instructor: Gerald A. "Jerry" Merwin Jr., Ph.D. <gamerwin@valdosta.edu>

Contact Information: Office Hours: Because this course is online, it is difficult to manage traditional office hours. We will maintain contact through email or an online meeting can be arranged using Wimba Classroom in BlazeVIEW for conferencing.

Office: 106 West Hall Office Telephone: (229) 333-5776 Cellular: (229) 221-2891

Capstone Seminar (3 hours credit)

Course Description:

Graded "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory." The concluding seminar in the DPA program, to be taken during a student's final semester. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of the material presented in their programs of study through a variety of methods. Students will develop and present a professional portfolio in this course. Students are expected to develop and defend the proposal for their final project/organizational analysis.

Required Texts: We will use the same three books we used in the PADM 9050 Program Evaluation Course, because I see this course as a continuation of that course. The Rudestam book listed here is optional. It is likely to be particularly useful for those who plan to do a traditional dissertation for the capstone project.

Rudestam, Kjell Erik, and Rae R. Newton. 2007. [*Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*](#), 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (9781412916790)

Scott, Gregory M. and Stephen M. Garrison. 2008. [*The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*](#), 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice-Hall. (ISBN-13: 9780136029458) (Students can use the 2006 – 5th edition.)

In addition to the texts, a number of readings will be required and will be available online.

Course Objectives/Outcomes:

The Capstone Seminar is designed to serve as both the culmination of your doctoral work and to prepare you for your final project. The course allows both student and faculty members to assess the learning experience provided by the program of study leading to the DPA degree. Part of that assessment will be accomplished through the preparation and presentation of a professional portfolio; part will be through successfully completing two written assignments. In preparation for your final product, each student will identify a suitable topic and select a committee to guide the student's research for the final project. The culmination of the seminar will be the student's defense of her or his final topic proposal before that committee.

Upon successfully completing this course, each student will:

1. demonstrate mastery of a body of knowledge appropriate for a doctoral candidate,
2. analyze his or her level of professional development, and demonstrate how she or he reached this point,
3. transition from being a DPA student to a DPA scholar/practitioner, and
4. move into her or his final project.

Assessment Measures:

All material in this course will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Each item submitted must be of "B" or better quality to receive a grade of satisfactory. Each item may be resubmitted one time. Items to be graded include:

1. Professional Portfolio
 2. Written Assignments (two)
 3. Final Project Proposal (to be graded by the student's committee)
- Specific instructions on the written assignments will be provided online.

ADA: Valdosta State University complies fully with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty). Learn more on the VSU web site at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/access/>. You may also reach them via email at access@valdosta.edu. Also, please discuss this via email with your instructor(s) at the start of each class.

Class Policies

Plagiarism/Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism is prohibited, and may result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course, and in extreme cases suspension or dismissal from the program. All assignments must be the original work of the student. If any items are submitted that are not the original work of the student, a failing grade for the assignment and the course will be given. Please read the information on the PA web site regarding plagiarism. Please let the instructor know if you have any questions and we will discuss the topic further in class or an individual conference can be arranged.

Evaluation: Participants will be evaluated based on their performance of the following requirements with values listed:

Portfolio	20%
Written Assignment #1 Literature Review	20%
Written Assignment #2 Draft Project Proposal	20%
Discussions	10%
Final Project Proposal (Graded by Each Student's Committee)	30%
Total	100%

Incomplete Policy: See the "Request for a Grade of Incomplete" page <<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/RequestforIncomplete.shtml>> on the VSU Academic Affairs site for the policy and procedure to apply for the grade. It is the responsibility of the student to request the Incomplete. The professor is not able to assign the grade otherwise. An incomplete grade (grade I) will only be assigned in cases in which the student had a lengthy illness or an unexpected obligation such as extended military service or jury duty. The grade of I will not be assigned because the student is not satisfied with a low grade. It will only be assigned in cases where the student could not complete a substantial part of the course work due to factors beyond the student's control.

Style Guidelines: Participants should use the ASPA styles. For information on APSA style, see the handout from Dr. Argyle:
<http://www.valdosta.edu/pa/argyle/>

Communication:

- Our preferred method of communication is through the BlazeVIEW email. This self-contained system solves lots of problems in that it does not rely on the vagaries of the Internet and general email.
- I will generally respond to any e-mail within one to two working days. Likewise, I ask that you check your email regularly and respond in a timely manner if a response is requested or warranted.
- If the email communication fails or some emergency comes up it is OK to contact the teacher by telephone. The best number is my cell number: (229) 221-2891 and voice mail is available in case I cannot answer. I will return calls if needed.

Attendance: Although we will not have regular class meetings, we will consider communication through email and the online discussions as our attendance parallel for this class. Participants are expected to stay in touch with the teacher through email and to take part in the online discussions.

Course Outline:

Part One: Beginning the Transition

Unit 1: So You're about to be ABD—Whatever that Means

- A. Rudestam and Newton, Part I.
- B. Scott and Garrison, Part Two
- C. Unit 1 Notes

Unit 2: Your Final Project: Getting Started

- A. Scott and Garrison, Parts Three and Five
- B. Graduate School, Valdosta State University. 2002. Thesis and Dissertation Guide. <http://www.valdosta.edu/gradschool/student_forms.shtml>
- C. Unit 2 Notes

Part Two: Where Am I, and How Did I Get Here?

Unit 3: Preparing the Portfolio

- A. Portfolio Guidelines <<http://www.valdosta.edu/pa/mpa/portfolio/>>
- B. Unit 3 Notes

Unit 4: From Where I'm At to Where I Want to Be

- A. Unit 4 Notes

Part Three: Organizing the Final Project

Unit 5: The Final Project Proposal

- A. Rudestam and Newton, Part II
- B. Unit 5 Notes

Unit 6: Organizing the Final Project Research

- A. Rudestam and Newton, Part II
- B. Unit 6 Notes

Unit 7: Overcoming Barriers

- A. Rudestam and Newton, Part III
 - B. Unit 7 Notes
- Proposal Defense

Schedule & Important Dates

Term Beginning and Ending Dates: August 17 – December 7, 2009

DPA Weekend: August 21-22, 2009

Fall Break: October 19-20, 2009

Thanksgiving Holidays: November 23-27, 2009 University Closed/No Class Meetings

Web Links:

<http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/> (Suggested with some reservations – This site has some good content, but will likely pop some windows with advertising that you might prefer not to see. They also want to sell you some of the content, but ignore that... Just see what they have that is useful and ignore the rest.)

This site provides some guidance