HNRS 3500.002: Thesis Proposal Development
Fall 2019
Thursday, 2:00–4:50, WH 315

Instructor: Dr. Tom Miles
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Office: Sage Hall 310C
Office Hours: M,W,F 11:00–2:30 (Sage Hall first floor); T,Th 1:30–2:00 (Wooten Hall first floor); and by appointment

The purpose of this course is to guide students in the production of a finished draft of a proposal for an undergraduate Honors thesis. The course will be taught using an interdisciplinary approach. Participants in the course will be doing research in many different disciplines and using many different research methods. The course will concentrate on common elements in the research process.

A first task for all students is to identify a mentor, if one has not already been identified. The course instructor can help in this effort. Mentors and students will work closely to develop a proposal that is acceptable in the students major area of study. Class readings and discussions are designed to help students learn the finer points of creating a thesis and to participate in discussions about the research process.

Course Materials
While there is no required book for this class, it is not a bad idea to obtain the style manual for your discipline. The most common citation styles are Chicago, APA, and MLA. Here are the manuals:


Course Objectives

1. Participants will learn to write research proposals, including developing the following specific skills:
   - Identify a feasible research topic and thesis,
   - Review relevant theory and literature,
   - Formulate specific research questions and/or hypotheses,
• Identify appropriate research methods for answering questions or testing hypotheses,
• Identify research limitations of a project,
• Identify ethical and safety risks of a project and take appropriate precautions,
• Develop realistic budgets for research projects,
• Identify potential funding sources for research, and
• Develop realistic timelines for projects.

2. A second major goal is for participants to learn to publish and present research results, including acquiring the following specific skills:

• Develop realistic dissemination plans for research results;
• Develop oral research presentations, using PowerPoint, suitable for presentation at professional meetings, and
• Choose appropriate professional meetings and journals for dissemination.

Course Requirements

Mentoring and Critiques of Classmates, 20% Students will be required, as a part of this seminar class, to present their progress on their proposal most weeks. Other students, as well as the instructor, will make constructive suggestions for the improvement of the work of each student. No work is ever complete. Learning to critically evaluate the work of others will make your own work better. Learning to take constructive criticism from others is vitally important for your professional development; critical evaluation of the work of others is at the core of academic research and is the major way research advances.

Thesis Proposal and Weekly Assignments, 80% The major course requirement is to produce a proposal for a research thesis in Honors and to defend it to the faculty mentor and Honors College faculty. You will work your way through the preparation in a series of discrete assignments that, when combined together, can be polished into a final complete draft. Interim in-class reports will be required along the way to help the participants move through the research process as efficiently as possible. Periodic presentations of ideas to the class and the development of a PowerPoint presentation of final ideas are also required. These presentations will also prepare you for your presentation of your preliminary research at University Scholars Day, as well as presentations with your faculty mentors at professional meetings. It is expected that participants will revise their work until it is A quality.

Canvas A Canvas conference is maintained for this course. Students are responsible for checking Canvas for assignments and notices. You should check Canvas frequently to ensure that you are up to date on all class-related information. All assignments will be submitted via Canvas and grades will be posted there as well.

General Class Expectations
**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum. The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, etc.

**Academic Integrity:** The instructor will adhere to and enforce UNT’s policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the procedures laid out in this policy.

**Accommodations:** If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Office of Disability Accommodation in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate. Full information can be found at www.disability.unt.edu

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in an event of emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at www.my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: ensuring you know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, your instructor will communicate with you through Canvas regarding assignments, exams, field trips, and other items that may be impacted by the closure.

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**Course Outline**

The following represents an approximate calendar of class discussions.

- **Week One** (Week of August 26)
  - Topic: Finding a Research Question, Finding a Mentor, and Goals
  - It is expected that students will be at different places in the process—some will have a firm thesis topic, others will not; some will have selected a thesis mentor already. We will discuss these topics in class.

  *First Appointment: make an appointment with me in the next two weeks to discuss your research topic and mentor.*

- **Week Two** (Week of September 2)
– Topic: Research Question; Formulating a Thesis Statement and Hypotheses
– We will discuss the function and structure of a research proposal. The proposal basically does two things: it states the problem that will be investigated, drawing on what we know from previous research (hence the literature review); and it lays out a plan for doing the research. We will talk about how to make a plan to develop the proposal in this semester and how to overcome problems that might keep us from getting it written.

• **Week Three** (Week of September 9)
  – Topic: Making a plan and identifying sources.
  – The first part of class, we will discuss planning and deadlines and potential stumbling blocks. The second part of class will be a visit from a research librarian on identifying sources for your research and using library databases.

**Assignment 1: Research Topic, Mentor, and Timeline, due September 14.**

• **Week Four** (Week of September 16)
  – Topic: Responsible Conduct of Research/Data Sources.
  – We will discuss when and how to use human subjects in research, what types of data are readily available, and precautions when using other peoples or agency's data.
  – Complete the CITI training. Complete instructions for completing the training and submitting your are provided certification on Canvas.

**Assignment 2: Responsible Conduct of Research Certification, due September 21.**

• **Week Five** (Week of September 23)
  – Topic: Beginning the Literature Review: Research Summaries
  – This week we will discuss sources of literature across disciplines. We will discuss note-taking strategies, what works, and what does not. We will also discuss the reference systems we are using in the class.
  – We will also discuss application process for applying for scholarships, fellowships, NSF REUs, and internships (including NIH), as well as the process of asking for letters of recommendation for such things.

• **Week Six** (Week of September 30)
  – Topic: Citing, Styles, Plagiarism, and Common Mistakes. We will discuss the problems encountered in summarizing research. Bring your Research Summaries to class so we can discuss them.
Assignment 3: Identifying Sources for Beginning the Lit Review, due October 5.

- **Week Seven** (Week of October 7)
  - Topic: Writing the Literature Review
  - We will discuss pulling summaries of literature together into a coherent literature review. We will review the examples of literature posted on Canvas and share examples from TEF that you have identified.

Assignment 4: Research Summaries 1, due October 12.

- **Week Eight** (Week of October 14)
  - We will review of first draft of the literature review and discuss suggestions for revisions in class.
  - We will begin planning the research methodology for your research project. During the next three weeks, you will plan your methodology, working closely with your faculty mentor and course instructor. During the next two weeks, you should meet with your mentor to review your proposed methodology.

- **Week Nine** (Week of October 21)
  - Topic: Methodology and Sources of Data. What kinds of data are appropriate for your paper and where can you go to find them? If not using data, what are other methods you can employ to answer your question? What about experiments? Be prepared with questions and comments.

Assignment 5: Research Summaries 2, due October 26.

- **Week Ten** (Week of October 28)
  - Topic: Creating a Research Portfolio. What are ways to build an effective and impactful research agenda for graduate school, the job market, etc.? We will discuss platforms, websites, and more.

- **Week Eleven** (Week of November 4)
  - Topic: Discussion of methodology thus far and what else needs to be done. Where and when can you present your research: conferences, etc.? We will also discuss the final outline of the thesis proposal and future plans and expectations. Other topics: how to build an effective PowerPoint presentation.

• **Week Twelve** (Week of November 11)
  – Topic: Visual Presentation of Results/Data.

• **Week Thirteen** (Week of November 18)
  – PowerPoint Presentations and feedback.

  *Assignment 7: First Draft Methodology, due November 23.*

• **Week Fourteen** (Week of November 25)
  – PowerPoint Presentations and feedback.

  *No class November 28, Thanksgiving.*

• **Week Fifteen** (Week of December 2)
  – PowerPoint Presentations and feedback.

  *Assignment 8: Presentation Slides, due December 7.*

• **Week Sixteen** (Week of December 9)
  – Finals week. I’ll be in the office for questions.

  *Final Proposal, due December 13.*