UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

TEXTS *and*
TECHNOLOGY *Ph.D.*
COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

Fall 2016 Workshop Series
Dissertation/Prospectus
November 1, 2016

UCF Policies:
http://www.graduatecatalog.ucf.edu/content/policies.aspx?id=5696#Dissertation_Requirements
- An original and substantial research study designed, conducted, and reported by the student with the guidance of the Dissertation Committee.
  - o Must include a common theme with an introduction and literature review, details of the study, and results and conclusions.
  - o It's expected to represent a significant contribution to the discipline.
- Committee has a minimum of four members who are approved members of the Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Scholars.
  - o One member must be from either outside the student's department at UCF (or college, if a college-wide program) or outside the university.
- The dissertation defense is an oral presentation and defense of the written dissertation describing the student's research.
  - o Students must demonstrate that they are able to conduct and report original independent research that contributes substantially to the discipline.
  - o PRO TIP: Attend other people's defenses. They're public!

Texts and Technology Policies: http://tandt.cah.ucf.edu/files/tt_handbook16-17.pdf (pp. 31-42)

Overview
- Students choose their dissertation adviser and committee from among the faculty in the Texts and Technology PhD program
  - o After they have completed approximately 27 credit hours toward the degree or the first year-and-a-half of course work.
  - o All dissertation committee members, including outside readers, must hold a PhD or another relevant terminal degree.
- Students are required to submit and defend a written dissertation proposal during the first year in dissertation.
- Explain and defend a significant original contribution to the field of Texts and Technology.
  - o It may theoretical, historical, or programmatic but must meet academic standards of rigor, scholarship, relevance, and excellence.
- Depending on a student's program or development, the Dissertation Chair and committee may, or may not be, the same members as the Candidacy Examination Chair and committee.

Prospectus

- After completion of the Candidacy Examination, doctoral candidates prepare a prospectus, a proposal for the dissertation project.
    - The prospectus is required to be submitted to the student's Dissertation Committee within one year of beginning ENC 7980 Dissertation.
    - Generally 20-30 pages.
- Purpose: Propose original and independent research under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee.
    - Delineate a theoretically informed framework to guide the study that will make significant and substantive contributions to the body of knowledge in the field.
- A satisfactory prospectus contains five basic components: a research question; a statement of theoretical context including a short literature review; a research design; a working bibliography; and a proposed timetable for completion of the project.
    - The Research Question: the central question or puzzle that is to be addressed in the Dissertation; what the core of the Dissertation will be.
    - Statement of Theoretical Context: a well-focused summary of
        - Current debate(s) in your chosen subfield.
        - Specific contribution(s) your Dissertation will make to the subfield.
    - Research Design: What specifically do you intend to do? Are you planning to do library work, field work, and/or quantitative analysis or statistical modeling?
    - Working Bibliography, Timeline: Self-explanatory, and essential.
- Defending the Prospectus
    - After submitting, the student schedules a time to discuss the prospectus with the entire committee face-to-face.

Strategies and Advice
- Your dissertation is not your life's work. It is not your only chance to find out everything there is to know about your topic. It is proof of concept that you can be a scholar and make a contribution.
- The best dissertation is a done dissertation.
- Don't get stuck on little things. Make a note to yourself and come back to it.
- Set doable goals and reward yourself.
- Take care of yourself. Eat. Exercise. Talk to real, live humans.
- Keep a hard copy, a cloud copy, an external hard drive copy. No joke.
- Build a writing and/or support group (they aren't the same so you may need one of each)

Resources
- http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31450&p=199968
    - Every major digital research manager system with information on how to choose and learn how to use the software.
- https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1514-managing-a-dissertation-and-a-classroom
    - "Use your best energy of the day for your writing and research. Grading your students' work probably doesn't require every one of your brain cells."
- http://karakey.com/phdadvice/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Top-10-Dissertation-Writing-Tips.pdf
    - "If your goal is 80,000 words, a modest 200 words per day (about four paragraphs of average length), will give you a rough to intermediate dissertation in 400 days of actual writing."

- o "Every now and then, just write for 15 minutes straight"
  - o "Record yourself saying what it is you wish to express or argue"
- https://chroniclevitae.com/news/370-the-no-fail-secret-to-writing-a-dissertation
  - o Research, writing, and editing are separate tasks. Don't try to do all of them at once.
- http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/dissertation.pdf
  - o Get to where you can distill your arguments into a single sentence
  - o "In addition to collecting data or quotations, look at how other scholars (or even journalists) handle your topic. How do they structure and frame their arguments? What key phrases do they use?

College of Graduate Studies Workshops

Fall 2016 Thesis and Dissertation Forum: 12/5/16. Register by 11/20, see other page

"Citation Management Workshop" featuring EndNote and RefWorks:
https://www.students.graduate.ucf.edu/PathwaysDescriptions2/#CitationManagement

Time Management: Strategies for Personal and Academic Success:
https://www.students.graduate.ucf.edu/PathwaysDescriptions2/#StrategiesforPersonaland
AcademicSuccess

Strategies for Graduate Students to Manage Stress:
https://www.students.graduate.ucf.edu/PathwaysDescriptions2/#Strategies

UCF Resources for Student Wellness

SDES Wellness and Health Promotion Services: http://whps.sdes.ucf.edu/services
This website lists all of the services available for students to maintain wellness during their studies. Services that may be useful during the dissertation include a map and location times for the "relaxation station," opportunities for wellness coaching, biofeedback relaxation training program, and a workshop on stress management.

Counseling and Psychological Services: http://caps.sdes.ucf.edu/
UCF's Counseling and Psychological Services are here to help if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed. You can schedule an individual appointment or attend group sessions such as "From Stress to Success" and introductions to mindfulness-based therapies. On their "About" page, they specifically list "academic difficulties," "stress and anxiety," and "procrastination / work blocks / lack of motivation" as areas in which they help students.