

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP

**The Commons Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Wednesday, September 16th to Saturday, September 19th**

FALL 2015 WORKSHOP AGENDA

This agenda is for the second of two workshops that have been designed to help you and other fellows prepare cogent and fundable dissertation research proposals.

The fall workshop is intended to help you both work through your summer research experiences and build on them as you work to refine your dissertation research proposals.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Deadline, Monday, August 31st: Upload your draft dissertation proposal

Upload your draft proposal to the peer review platform within your core group's section on the DPDF Workspace. (Instructions on how to use the peer review platform can be found in the Resources and Documents section of the Workspace.)

Prepare your draft proposal with the following structure:

- Page 1: Include a 150-word abstract of your dissertation project.
- In the subsequent pages, include an 8-10 page double-spaced description of your dissertation project.
- At the end of the document, include a 1-2 page bibliography of the most relevant works to your dissertation project.

You will want to review the spring workshop workbook not only to gather content for your proposal, but also to refamiliarize yourself with the core elements of a proposal.

2. September 1st through September 14th: Core group commenting period

To ensure that all proposals receive a close review, you will comment on your colleagues' proposals within the peer review portal in two stages:

- By *Friday, September 4th*, read and provide comments on the proposal of the same colleague for whom you served as the commentator in the spring workshop.
- By *Monday, September 14th*, read all other proposals in your core group (including posted comments) and make additional constructive comments as you see fit. We also encourage you to express agreement, disagreement, or suggest clarifications of comments already posted.

Some questions to consider when reviewing and commenting on your colleagues' proposals:

- Does the proposal succinctly introduce the topic and specific research questions or problems?
- Does the proposal provide sufficient context for an academic reader unfamiliar with the topic, region, or author's discipline?
- How well does the proposal describe how the dissertation seeks to draw from and contribute to existing literature on the topic?
- How well does the proposal describe and justify the sources and methods of investigation to undertake this research?
- Does the proposal include information about how the researcher will analyze the evidence he/she will gather in order to answer the research question(s) posed?
- Does the proposal offer a convincing description of the researcher's qualifications to undertake this project successfully (including relevant summer research experiences)?

3. Deadline, Thursday, September 17th: Reading and reflecting on your proposal's comments

By the start of the workshop (the morning of Thursday, September 17th): Read through and carefully consider all the comments on your own proposal.

Prepare some notes for your core group's discussion of your project on the following topics:

- Present a brief summary of the comments on your proposal.
- What critiques did you find particularly valuable? What ones, if any, did you find troublesome?
- Where are points of conflicting/differing comments that you'd like help working through?
- What do you find to be the clearest and strongest parts of your proposal as it currently stands, and where in your proposal do you think you still need the most work?

4. Deadline, Thursday, September 17th: Thinking through your past and future dissertation research plans

The goal of this assignment is to help you consider how your summer research experiences have informed and will continue to inform your plans for conducting your long-term dissertation research.

Prepare some notes for a discussion with your methods group on the following:

- How have your plans for conducting long-term research developed between the spring and fall workshops?
- How have your summer research experiences reaffirmed or changed these plans? Have any other factors influenced these changes?
- What challenges did you experience in conducting your summer research, and how did you work through them?
- Have you had to refine or rethink your original research question(s) based on your preliminary research this summer? If so, why, and how has it changed?
- What questions remain for you about how to conduct your long-term research and obtain the information you need to answer your research questions?

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Note: Please refer to the workshop's Schedule of Events for a list of all event and session locations.

Wednesday, September 16th

6 to 7:30 p.m.: Welcome Back Reception

Thursday, September 17th

9 to 11 a.m.: Plenary Session on Dissertation Research Funding

In this session, DPDF staff, in conjunction with some of the faculty facilitators, will discuss the genre of proposal writing for research funding. Topics such as the following will be discussed:

- the importance of meeting funders' requirements and addressing their expectations
- writing for disciplinary versus interdisciplinary audiences
- finding an appropriate tone and style
- ways to write about your pre-dissertation research as preparation for long-term research
- best practices for preparing a research budget
- pulling back the curtain on funder review processes

In the second part of the plenary, fellows will break out into small groups to form a review committee and evaluate the merits of two actual proposals that were submitted to a nationally-competitive dissertation fellowship. (These proposals and background about the funding program will have been posted on the DPDF Workspace prior to the workshop.)

11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Core Group Session #1:

We will ask that you present your thoughts about your summer research experiences including and beyond what you described in your mid-summer research updates. As your updates suggested, your experiences encompassed small triumphs and exciting new insights, as well as unexpected roadblocks and some frustrating setbacks. In this session, we will use your experiences to discuss four broad categories of research issues reflected in your updates:

1. **Subjectivity:** How did research challenge your sense of self, authenticity, anxiety, social comfort, and concerns about what you might give back to those you study?
2. **Access:** How did you negotiate with scholars, archivists, government officials, and the subjects of your research to persuade them of the importance and legitimacy of your work and obtain their cooperation?
3. **Focus:** How did you keep the project centered on your questions and moving forward in a viable and realistic manner but still make sure it would be interesting to you and others?
4. **Flexibility:** How did and will you in future research adapt to possible but uncertain opportunities and potentially foreseeable and unexpected obstacles?

Each student will have up to 10 minutes to discuss how his or her summer research experiences have intersected with one of more of these categories.

2 to 5 p.m.: Methods Group Session

In this session, you will regroup with your methods group colleagues to continue discussing your summer research. However, we will shift the conversation to address how your summer research has informed how you now conceive of conducting your long term dissertation research. You have been asked to prepare notes in response to questions posed in Assignment 4 (“Thinking through your past and future dissertation research plans”).

Each fellow will have 15 to 20 minutes to present responses to the questions posed in Assignment 4 and gather feedback from peers and the faculty facilitator.

Friday, September 18th

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.: Core Group Session #2:

Clarifying Proposal Critiques and Identifying Strategies for Revisions

Beginning in this session, you and your peers will work through the comments you received on your draft proposals through the online peer-review portal. Discussion of each proposal is meant to be more of a conversation with your peers in seeking clarification of their comments and guidance about next steps, as opposed to a presentation-response format.

To frame the conversation, you have been asked to prepare notes based on the feedback you have received. (See Assignment 3: “Reading and reflecting on your proposal’s comments.”) Each student will be allotted 40 minutes to present their initial reactions to the critiques (as per Assignment 3) and engage their peers and the faculty facilitator in discussion. Four fellows’ proposals will be discussed in this session.

**1 to 4 p.m.: Core Group Session #3:
Discussion of Challenges and Strategies**

The remaining four fellows’ proposals and comments will be discussed in the same manner as in the previous session.

Saturday, September 19th

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.:

Core Group Session #4:

Beginning Revisions and Strategizing Next Steps after DPDF

This final session of the workshop will consist of a series of in-session writing exercises to help you strategize next steps and initiate the revision process.

- First, you will be asked to take 20 minutes to revise the abstract of your proposal, followed by a group discussion about what things you changed or maintained from your previous version, and why.
- In a second writing exercise, you will be asked to spend 20 minutes creating a to-do list for revising your research proposal, broadly conceived. In placing an item on that list, also include what you need to do to complete that task.
 - *Example* Task: Develop stronger link between literature review section and major research question.
How to accomplish: Reorganize literature review section to emphasize how my work contributes to the three thematic areas that I noted in my intro.
- In a third writing exercise, you will be asked to spend 20 minutes developing a timeline for this academic year with regard to your proposal development as best you can. You will want to include timeframes for items on your to-do list as well as any prospectus and/or funding-related deadlines.
 - *Examples* By September 30th: Reorganize literature review section around themes.
October 11th: Email draft of SSRC IDRf proposal to my advisor for feedback.