

# SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP

**The Commons Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Wednesday, September 14th to Saturday, September 17th**

## FALL 2016 WORKSHOP AGENDA

This agenda for the fall workshop has been designed to help you and other fellows prepare cogent and fundable dissertation research proposals that will build upon your summer research.

### ASSIGNMENTS FOR FALL WORKSHOP

**1. Deadline, Monday, August 29th: Upload your draft dissertation research proposal for your core group**

Upload a draft research proposal for your dissertation 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 your dissertation title and a 150-word abstract of your dissertation project.
- In the subsequent pages, include an 8-10 page double-spaced description of your dissertation project.
- Devote up to one page detailing a reasonable budget you would need to carry out the research project you have described in the proposal, broken down by major categories (e.g., transportation, lodging, equipment, research assistance, etc.).
- 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 as outlined in each section.

**2. August 30<sup>th</sup> through September 11th: Core group proposal 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 *Sunday, 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 *Sunday, September 11th*, 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, Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>:**      **Post your insights to the connections between your summer research and long-term dissertation research plans for your methods group**

Post your reflections on how your summer research has informed your long-term dissertation research plans, and what remaining questions you may have for your methods group in the fall workshop. Please post this to the discussion forum of your methods group's section on the DPDF Workspace.

Please address the following questions in the equivalent of 2 to 3 pages:

- What is the current title and abstract of your dissertation research proposal? (Copy from your uploaded proposal for your core group)
- How have your plans for conducting long-term research evolved since what you proposed in your workbook for the spring workshop, and why?
- What challenges did you experience in conducting your summer research, and how did you work through them?
- What are the important methodological questions which remain for you about how to conduct your long-term research and obtain the information you need to answer your research questions?

4. **Deadline, Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>:**      **Read and reflect on your proposal's comments from your core group peers**

By the start of the workshop (the morning of Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>): 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:

- Compile a 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?

5. **Deadline, Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>:**      **Read your methods group colleagues' discussion forum posts about their summer and long-term research connections**

By the start of the workshop (the morning of Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>), read the responses that your methods group colleagues posted about summer and long-term research connections, and how and why they have modified their plans. During in-session discussions with your methods group, be prepared to offer suggestions about any remaining questions they have posed.

## **WORKSHOP SCHEDULE**

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

**Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**

**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 "review committees" to evaluate for funding two actual proposals that were submitted to a nationally-competitive dissertation fellowship competition. (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 present and discuss with the group how his or her summer research experiences have raised one of more of these issues.

**2 to 5 p.m.: Methods Group Session**

In this session with your methods group, you will continue discussing your summer research, but particularly focus on how your summer experiences informed how you now conceive of conducting your long term dissertation research.

Based on your group members' written assignments for this session (see above), your methods group facilitator will lead a discussion about common themes and help you think through strategies for improving your long-term dissertation research. There may be an opportunity for method or problem centered small group conversations.

**Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>**

**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 the assignment re: reading and reflecting on your proposal's comments.) Each student will have 40 minutes within which to focus the discussion on key issues and to engage their peers and the faculty facilitator in clarifying their critiques and brainstorming approaches to making revisions. 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.

**4 to 5:30 p.m.:**

**Happy Hour for DPDF Participants**

This private happy hour is a great opportunity to mingle with your fellow colleagues and foster new connections!

**Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**

**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 be devoted to honing your approaches to making proposal revisions. Your core group facilitator will lead a group discussion about strategies for moving forward as you revise your draft proposals for departmental committees and/or funding agencies.

During this session, you and your peers will also participate in a writing and review exercise to help you rework your proposal abstract:

- Take 20 minutes to revise the abstract of your proposal based on feedback you have received from your colleagues throughout the fall workshop.
- Exchange your abstracts with another colleague and take 10 minutes to read and write comments or suggestions to strengthen your colleague's abstract. Then, take another 10 minutes to explain and consider each other's feedback. Based on this mini abstract feedback session with your colleague, take another 15 minutes to revise your abstract.

Following this writing and review exercise, you will reconvene with your group and discuss what things you changed or maintained from your previous version and why. Your facilitator will also help you think about how to think about writing your abstract differently for different audiences the short term.