

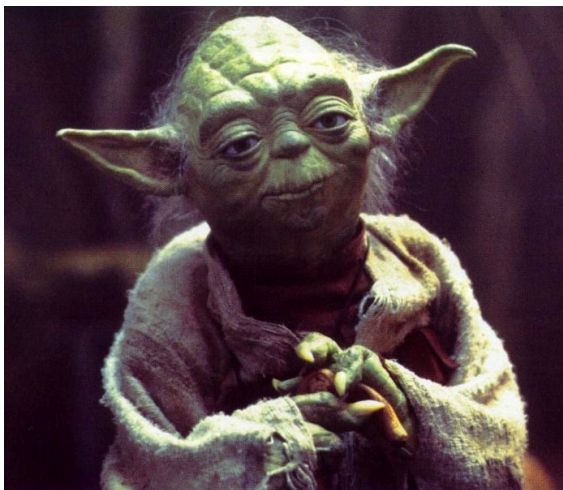
# PPD 710: Research Seminar—Fall 2012

Time: 12:00 to 1:50 pm Wednesday  
Instructor: Lisa Schweitzer  
Associate Professor  
School of Policy, Planning and Development  
Office Hours: Monday from 4 to 6, by appointment

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**Purpose** There are three things that people seldom tell you about the doctoral degree. First, that it's a research degree. Many folks think it's about getting a credential so that you can become a college professor--and that's true. But if you just want to teach classes, you can generally do that with a master's degree. If you want to become--and, perhaps more importantly, stay—a professor, you have to learn to do research.

The second thing that nobody tells you about research: it's much harder than it looks. It's actually remarkably easy to learn to critique research and find holes in other people's arguments. It's easy to read. It's even easy to write sometimes. It's just deceptively hard to read, write, and use evidence well enough to get published in premier journals so that you can get (and, as I said, keep) an academic position. Writing your dissertation and doing original work is both an exhilarating and extremely frustrating thing. While doing research tends to get easier the more you do it (hence, this class), each research project you undertake presents its own difficulties and rewards, and every one teaches you something new.



*Much of the learning is in the doing, young Jedi*

The third thing that nobody explains: Nobody cries for the work that you don't get done—except you. I can't teach you ambition. There are all manner of research conversations happening around you, all the time. It's easier not to join. However, not doing your reading, writing, and research when you are a scholar is like being a violinist who refuses to go on stage or practice his instrument. Being a scholar is not, generally, a 9 to 5 occupation with summers off. It is, by turns, infuriating and exhilarating, exhausting and invigorating; it is a deeply personal avocation. If doing this work and saying what you need to say don't really matter to you all that much, then there are much easier ways to make a living. If learning and ideas matter to you; if the hours you spend alone with books and writing and the hours you spend talking about ideas are the best hours you have, then it makes sense to try to make these your life's work, and the way to learn how to do that is to...start doing it.

*Directly stolen from one of my favorite professors of all time, Paul Ong at UCLA.*

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# Objectives

1. Begin reading, writing, and thinking about research as work
2. Learn to review and critique research.
3. Identify the major scholars with whom and research conversations in which you wish to engage.
4. Think about the major outlets for your research ideas;
5. Immerse yourself in the research culture of the school

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# Requirements and Grading

Grading is on a normal university percentage scale. Like anybody cares about grades at this point.

10 paper reviews research talks, to be handed in during class.....	8 x 100
Publication audience assignment.....	1 x 100
Proposal assignment.....	1 x 100
	<hr/> 1000 pts

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# Assignments and Schedules

[Research paper reviews.](#) We have such an exciting lineup of research papers this fall! Just about every week, we have a speaker coming in. Your job will be to read his or her paper beforehand and provide the speaker with a review. Your job is to be polite, helpful, and critical but supportive. You can learn a lot from doing reviews: you should provide the speaker with feedback on the clarity of a) the writing; b) the research questions/hypotheses; c) the data; d) the method, and e) what the writer could improve in order to make the paper better. Your review should be in a memo no longer than two pages; keep in mind your memo will be shared with the authors, and the memos will be signed, so that you want to be polite and supportive--and clear, just in case the author wants to get back in touch in with you. You can also include a marked-up copy of their paper if you think it will be useful.

**Why do this assignment?** It doesn't matter if the researcher who is speaking talks about your interests; in general, you can learn about the craft of research from a lot of sources. By watching seminar after seminar, you learn how other scholars do their work. You get ideas for new research of your own. You get ideas for clever presentation formats. And you get to know the other scholars in the field. You want all your faculty at USC to know a) who you are; b) what you study (roughly) and c) that you're wonderful. Showing up gets you face time with faculty and your peers (who matter: many of UCLA colleagues would love to work at USC now, and suddenly, the person (me) that they didn't treat very well—or conversely, treated very well—in graduate school is in a position to open or close doors.)

Always go to job talks if you can. **Always.** You don't want the first job talk you attend to be yours.

**Week 1. August 29: Academic audience assignment:** This assignment is designed to help you try to figure out who you want your audience and future colleagues are and where they publish. I will give you a set of separate instructions for how to complete this assignment. **DUE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER 7. You should expect to post your material on Blackboard for group discussion.** We will post these to discussion boards, where you will be expected to discuss your assignment and those of other students, please.

**Why do this assignment?** As you embark on your research career, it's important to think about the scholarly community you hope to join. This is a step towards thinking about your community and what journals or publications they use to communicate their findings. Those are the places that you, too, should be thinking about publishing in.

**Week 2: September 5: Research Presentation from Professor Gary Painter (Price School), discussed by Professor Chris Redfearn (Price School)**

**Week 3 September 12: Research Presentation from Fynn Prager, discussed by Professor JR DeShazo of UCLA's Luskin School**

**Week 4: September 19: Metrans Seminar, Steve Ritchie (optional attendance) ....and Proposal Assignment**

Your job in this assignment will be to read and dissect a successful research proposal. It can be for a grant, a book, or a dissertation. I want you to dissect it and outline its various parts. From this, you should be able to see the skeleton of a research design and a research plan. **DUE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER 30. You should expect to post your material on Blackboard for group discussion.**

**Why do this assignment?** You will need to write a proposal for your dissertation. It's easier to do that if you know what goes into a proposal. There are no adjectives sufficiently strong in the English language to convey how important it is to write clear research proposals. If you go into research without a plan for what you are going to do and why—and perhaps more importantly, when you know you have accomplished what you set out to do—you will get lost in the many directions and eddies that any topic presents. That is a recipe for never finishing anything. You don't want that.

*Week 5: September 26: Research Presentations from Professors Mark Philips and Richard Green, discussant TBD*

*Week 6: October 3: Research Presentation from Professor Lisa Schweitzer (Price School), discussed by Terry Cooper (tentative)*

*Week 7: October 10: PhD ACSP Panel Discussion, PhD Students, moderated by Professor Marlon Boarnet (Price School)*

*Week 8: October 17: Research Presentation from Professor Darius Lackadawalla, discussant TBD*

*Week 9: October 24th: Metrans Seminar, Marlon Boarnet (attendance optional)*

*Week 10: October 31st: PhD APPAM Panel Discussion, moderated by Professor Gary Painter*

*Week 11: November 7th: Research Presentation from Professor Deborah Natoli, discussant TBD*

*Week 12: November 14th: TBD*

*Week 13: November 21st: Thanksgiving*

*Week 14: November 28th: TBD*

*Week 15: November 28th: Course wrap up*