

# **Seminar on Ph.D. Dissertation Design & Research Strategy**

**Professor Manuel Castells**

**Fall 2014**

**Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism**

Comm 599                      ASC 328  
Wednesdays 3:30 p.m. – 6:20 p.m.  
(213) 821-2079

Office Hours by Appointment  
Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

## **Description of the Seminar**

The purpose of this seminar is to serve doctoral students by helping them to design their PhD dissertation and to deal with the methodological and theoretical problems they will face as they proceed in their dissertation research and in the elaboration of their findings. The seminar is addressed to students who are in the process of preparing their dissertation prospectus, as well as students already engaged in different stages of their dissertation work. In principle students should be in their third, fourth or fifth year in the doctoral program, but some exceptions may be considered.

## **Pre-requisites**

PhD standing, no exceptions. Consent of the instructor, after a brief written application explaining the project of the dissertation and what the student expects from the seminar.

Enrolment is limited to 12 students. Communication PhD students have priority. PhD students from other departments and Schools can be accepted within the limits of available enrolment.

## **Requirements**

Active participation in the class. Presentation in the class of the dissertation ideas or findings and analysis in different stages of the dissertation. At the end of the semester, a written document directly related to the dissertation will have to be delivered, be it a draft prospectus, or a methodological note, or a draft chapter of the dissertation.

Grading will be based on the participation in the class, not on the quality of the document as this seminar is a service seminar, not a seminar to evaluate the knowledge generated in the research process.

### **Format of the Seminar**

The seminar will meet weekly in a 3-hour session. It will combine different elements, as follows:

- Presentations by the instructor on methodological issues of social research. The emphasis will not be on specific techniques, but on the logic of social research, as well as on strategies to approach the design and implementation of a dissertation-oriented research project
- Discussion of some examples of good and bad practices of research drawn from the social science literature
- Presentation by one or two faculty members of their own PhD dissertation, disclosing their experience as doctoral students
- The core of the seminar will be a series of presentations of dissertation projects by students in the seminar. The emphasis will be on exposing their difficulties. The instructor and the whole class will engage for one or more sessions in helping to solve the issues that each student has to tackle in advancing her/his dissertation.
- Towards the end of the seminar, there will be some exercises about presenting dissertation work in conferences or job talks, with practical advice from the instructor.
- **Statement for Students with Disabilities:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

- **Statement on Academic Integrity:** USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:  
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.