

Preliminary Proposal for a Qualitative Undergraduate Capstone Project

Objectives:

- To demonstrate understanding of approaches to qualitative research covered this semester
- To select an appropriate text or data as the focus for a research project using one of these approaches
- To develop an appropriate framework for developing a qualitative research project using this text or data
- To create a Preliminary Proposal for a qualitative Capstone project

You should incorporate as much as possible of your prior work in this course, your Theory course, and your electives in developing this research plan. You should build on your earlier three papers in this course in determining a potential Capstone focus in this final paper. Include your earlier learning in developing the Problem/Purpose Statement, Significant Statement, and Theoretical Basis sections. Include the titles of your earlier papers in your Bibliography. Doing so will allow you to recognize the depth and breadth of your learning throughout your Communication Studies curriculum to this point. It will also allow you further develop areas of greatest interest and success and to sharpen your ability to apply your research and critical thinking further and to transfer these as strategies in successful completion of your Capstone project.

Required Paper Elements (business report format; APA for internal citations and bibliography):

Please develop each of these topics in this order; use descriptive headings and sub-headings

- **Descriptive title**
- **Introduction**
- **Problem/ Purpose Statement** (explanation of research topic, question, and purpose)
- **Significance Statement** (explanation of why the research is important within Communication Studies discipline and to human communication competence or understanding generally). What "enduring question" will you address?
- **Theoretical Basis** (identification and explanation of most relevant CN theories or concepts)
- **Methodology** (explanation of topic or data set, qualitative approach(es) and reason for that choice, explanation of procedures and/or processes you will follow. Be certain to quote and properly cite page numbers and material from Lapan, et al. to support your major points. Definitions of technical terms belong here. Discussion of IRB, whether it is required or not and why, belongs in this section.)
- **Sources** (preliminary bibliography and brief literature review, 5 to 7 sources, excluding textbook). Briefly annotate each item as to: What its content / topic is. How it is relevant to your study. What use you will make of the source. Include, but don't count, the textbook in your Bib, citing only the relevant pages or chapters.)
- **Timeline** (detail realistically the time increments likely to develop to each step of research, writing, and presentation; the completion date for the project will be a 15-week semester)

Format:

- Sources must be cited using APA 6th ed. style for bibliographies and internal cites
- Use business report format for the paper itself; for details, see posted "Business Report Format" file
- Use bullet points sparingly, if at all - Never "sub-bullet"
- Be sure to proof-read and spell-check
- Visual cues impact credibility, so appearance and mechanics "count," as do critical thinking, use of scholarly sources, attention to detail, timeliness, and evidence of effort

Roundtable Discussions:

We will hold graded discussions of your Proposal during the two class sessions prior to the due date. You should use these sessions to brainstorm with others as to your method, theories you will build on, your research focus, research questions, and so on. Be prepared to orally present an extended Abstract of your research plan and to critically engage with and respond to others' plans.

Additional details:

See the detailed rubrics that accompany these guidelines for specifics about expectations and evaluation.

Please see the following web sites AND/ OR consult with Dr. Reynard AND/ OR develop ideas and questions into talking points for the graded in-class discussion on Thursday, December 5.

Baltimore County Public Schools: http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/researchcourse/key_elements.html#problemstatement

University of Southern California: This Guide is for Social Sciences research (quantitative approaches) but much of the information will be very useful to developing your proposal for research in Humanities (qualitative approaches). <http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=818072>