San José State University
College of Social Sciences / Environmental Studies
ENVS 297, Research and Proposal Development, Spring 2022

Instructor:	Will Russell
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Office Hours:	Monday 1:30-2:30, or by apt.
Class Days/Time:	Monday 10:30-1:15
Classroom:	Hugh Gillis Hall 221
GWAR	This course is designed to satisfy the GWAR (Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement)
Prerequisites:	Graduate Standing in Environmental Studies or consent of instructor

Course Format

The Spring 2022 ENVS 297 course format will be taught online via Zoom until February 14 2022 in accordance with University Policies, and then will revert to the in-person format, unless directed otherwise by the University.

This 3-unit, graded, course is organized as a graduate seminar, and requires that students be active participants in all aspects of the learning process including preparation of study materials and participation in discussions. Submission of assignments, review of documents, and literature samples will be made online via Canvas.

Catalog Description

Students develop their thesis topic through extensive literature research. The product will be a draft thesis proposal to be circulated among potential committee members. This course satisfies the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). As such, course prerequisite requires graduate standing in Environmental Studies or consent from the instructor.

Course Goals

The purpose of this course is to (1) give graduate students an opportunity to develop their thesis/project proposal under close faculty supervision, (2) provide graduate students with

an opportunity to work with and receive constructive criticism from their peers through the various stages of proposal development, and (3) give graduate students an opportunity to formally defend their complete draft proposal before their peers. The ultimate goal is for each student to produce a proposal that is 100% complete and officially signed off by the thesis committee/project chair before the end of the semester

Course Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:
• Understand and describe the components and structure of a well-developed research proposal
• Develop research questions
• Formulate an appropriate theoretical framework for your topic
• Synthesize and apply a range of literature toward developing your research proposal
• Identify and document the appropriate research methods for unpacking your research question(s)
• Complete a well-developed research proposal

Required Texts/Readings

The SJSU Graduate studies Thesis and Dissertation Guide and SJSU Thesis Guidelines.

Weekly reading assignments taken from the academic literature, and determined by class members

Format, Citations, and Referencing
Use the thesis formatting instructions above, and a consistent and approved style guide for citations and references throughout your proposal such as *Chicago*, *APA*, journal format (i.e. *International Journal of Wildland Fire*).

Course Requirements and Assignments

The primary assignment for this course is a complete thesis proposal approved by your full thesis committee. We will be working through each step in the proposal writing process together in class and will address individual sections of the proposal through separate assignments and exercises. Because this course is based on one main goal (**completion of a signed thesis proposal**) your grade in the class will be task oriented. If you are able to complete your proposal and get it signed by your thesis committee chair within the timeframe of the semester you will automatically receive an A+, if you are not able to get your proposal signed your grade will be based on points earned. Points will be earned through successful completion of the following assignments:

Personal Introduction

For this assignment upload a brief biographical introduction (200-300 words maximum). Be sure to include your thesis topic and the names of your thesis committee members.

Thesis Proposal Elements– Prior to the submission of the complete thesis proposal, the following sections will be reviewed as separate documents (fig. 1). See syllabus for due dates for each section – not necessarily in the same order as below.

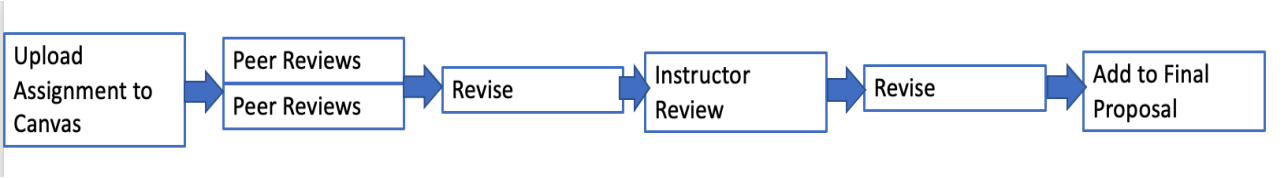

Figure 1. Thesis proposal element assignments flowchart.

Front Pages

For this section be sure to format the following according to thesis guidelines: Title Page (title is no more than 80 characters, including spaces and punctuation), Thesis Committee Page, Abstract (one double spaced page maximum), Table of Contents, List of Figures (if appropriate), List of Tables (if appropriate). Use place holders for materials under construction. Abstract will be turned in a separate style.

Abstract

The abstract is an executive summary of the thesis proposal, and should be no more than ½ - ¾ double spaced pages in length. Include one or two sentences summarizing the following elements: motivation and scope, related research, problem statement, objectives - questions/hypotheses, and methods. This will be a work in progress as your thesis proposal is still under construction.

Motivation and Scope

In this section you will build the groundwork for the rest of your thesis proposal. Begin by addressing the question, what environmental problem will your thesis be addressing (think big picture)? Next, consider what lens you will be looking at this problem through (social science, life science, physical science, etc.). Finally, you will need to develop the broad logic leading to your specific choice of research questions (2-5 pages).

Related Research

In this section you will summarize the body of literature that relates to your thesis topic (10-15 pages, with at least 30-45 primary references). Organize this section like an academic essay - from the general to specific. Begin by describing the theoretical framework that you are using to address your thesis topic. Follow with detailed descriptive information pertinent to your specific topic. Use subheadings to reflect internal organization may include subsections. You may use your final paper from ENVS-250 as part of this, if appropriate. All references should be peer-reviewed academic journal research papers or other primary sources in your field. Internet-only sources should be avoided unless absolutely necessary**.**

Problem Statement

In this section you will present a concise statement (< 3 pages) of the central problem leading to your specific research objectives, questions, and hypothesis.

Research Questions/Objectives and Hypotheses

In this section you should clearly state the central, and specific, objectives or questions that your project will address, and 3 to 5 specific testable predictions (active or null/statistical hypotheses). The portion of the proposal should be one page or less.

Methods

The bulk of this section should be completed in ENVS-200. Be sure to include methods related research, a description of your sample frame (where, or who), and a complete and repeatable detailed description of how the project will be completed, including data gathering and analysis (5-10 pages).

Budget, Timeline, and Curriculum Vitae

These additional sections are required for your thesis proposal, but not your final thesis (2 to 3 pages). The budget should include all projected costs directly related to completing your thesis project. The timeline should address each step in the process from this point forward to the publication of your thesis research. The Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a detailed academic resume. Unlike a standard resume, the CV is not limited in length, and should include all pertinent experience (volunteer, work, academic), honors, and achievements. Use tables and figures where appropriate.

<u>Peer reviews</u>

A minimum of two peer reviews, determined by the instructor, will be required for each major assignment. Peer reviews should be detailed and comprehensive addressing all elements of the assignment and outlining the strengths and weakness. Be sure to address writing, format, and the overall flow of the document. You job as a peer reviewer is to help your colleague to improve their manuscript, so dive deep and provide constructive criticism!

<u>Article Presentation</u>

You will present at least one peer reviewed journal article directly related to your thesis/project topic during class time. Choose an article that you find interesting enough that you will be able to lead a lengthy discussion focused on it. Email a high-quality digital copy of the full article to the instructor one week before you present. The article will be made available on Canvas. Presentations should include a summary of the article, a critique, and a discussion (approximately 20-30 minutes total). Come prepared with a list of discussion topics/questions to create dialog in class.

<u>Annotated Bibliography</u>

Each student will develop an annotated bibliography in three phases during the semester. Each phase will consist of an additional 10 annotations, with a final bibliography of 30

annotations completed by mid-semester. All references should be peer-reviewed academic journal research papers or other primary sources in your field. Internet-only sources should be avoided unless absolutely necessary**.** References should be listed in alphabetical order with a brief annotation for each based on the relevance of the citation to your research.

Proposal Presentations

Each student will present their thesis research proposal to the class including all aspects of their proposal **including their proposed methods**. You should plan on 15 minutes for your presentation and 15 minutes for critique. The presentations should be professional in style and quality, and will be presented on Zoom using the screensharing option.

Proposal Signature

For the highest mark in this class a complete thesis proposal approved by the Thesis Chair must be received by the final day of class. Please check with your thesis adviser regarding their schedule, and when they will need to receive your complete thesis in order to read the proposal and give you comments, and potentially approval by the end of the semester.

Full Proposal (minimum of 3000 words)

Front Pages (Carefully follow instructions, including pagination, from graduate studies guidelines).

- Title Page (title is no more than 80 characters, including spaces and punctuation)
- Thesis Committee Page
- Abstract (one double spaced page maximum)
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures (if appropriate)
- List of Tables (if appropriate)

Introduction – Including the following:

- Motivation/Scope
- Related Research
- Problem Statement
- Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

Methods

- Study Site/Sample Frame – where, what, and whom?
- Study Design – organized by research objective(s) & hypotheses
- Data Collection – organized by research objective(s) & hypotheses
- Data Analysis – organized by research objective(s) & hypotheses

Literature Cited

- Including a minimum of 40 primary references cited with consistent format.

Class Participation

Attendance

You are required to attend every class meeting unless you are ill or have an emergency. If you need to miss class for either of these reasons e-mail me as promptly as possible especially if you are expected to present that week.

Peer Reviews

Participation in the review of fellow students is an essential part of this course and is required. Reviews are expected to be critical, substantive, and productive.

Participation in discussions

Participation does not mean being verbose. In many cases allowing or encouraging others to speak is more valuable to the group dynamic. Providing the group your insights in an engaging and respectful manner is appreciated. Statements are always more interesting if they are backed up by logic and evidence.

Presentations

As a presenter it is your job to make your subject informative and entertaining. Please be professional and creative!

Respect and decorum

All class participants will behave in a manner that provides a positive and comfortable learning environment for everybody.

Thesis Committee Etiquette

Always maintain a professional demeanor when consulting with your thesis advisor and thesis committee members. These are the people that can help you the most. To encourage a positive relationship, be respectful of their time and busy schedules. Before submitting either your thesis or thesis proposal to any other thesis committee members **consult with your thesis advisor**. Always give your thesis advisor the first opportunity to review your work before you send it to anybody else connected to the thesis process.

Grading Information

Values of assignments

Assignments	% of Grade
Personal Introduction	2
Thesis Proposal Elements	
Front Pages	3
Abstract	5
Motivation and Scope	5
Related Research	5
Problem Statement	5
Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses	5
Budget, Timeline, and CV	5

Methods	5
Peer reviews	10
Annotated Bibliography	10
Article Presentations	10
Proposal Defense	10
Final Proposal	20
Total	100

Grading Rubric

Level of Completion	**Grade**
Complete proposal signed by Thesis Adviser	A+
> 90 points	A
88-90	B+
80-87 points	B
< 80 points	No Pass

Grading Policy

No late work will be accepted. All assignments must be uploaded to Canvas by the due date. There will be a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism in this class. Any act of plagiarism will result in a report to the Academic Integrity Office and a failing grade in this class. If you do not know what plagiarism is, please review the University policies below. If you are still unclear, please speak to the instructor.

Class Protocol

All class participants will behave in a manner that provides a positive and comfortable learning environment for everybody. All use of cell phones and smart phones during class time is strictly prohibited. Computers may be used during class time at the instructor's discretion exclusively for tasks directly related to class activities. Students should be in class prepared to work at the beginning of each class session. Disruption of the class by students arriving late will not be tolerated. Failure to meet the expectations of classroom protocol will result in a loss of participation points.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 *(http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf)*, relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/".

Course Schedule

This outline is subject to change. Attend class regularly to stay current. Readings for class meetings are to be completed *before* you come to class.

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
1/31	Introductions Thesis Topic and Committee	*Article TBA* *Thesis and Dissertation Guide* and *SJSU Thesis Guidelines*	Personal Introduction
2/7	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Annotated Bibliography (10 annotations)
2/14	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Motivation and Scope
2/21	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Annotated Bibliography (20 annotations) *Motivation and Scope (final)*
2/28	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Front Pages
3/7	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Annotated Bibliography (30 annotations) *Front Pages (final)*
3/14	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Literature Review
3/21	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Problem Statement *Literature Review (final)*
3/28	Spring Recess		
4/4	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Curriculum Vitae, Budget, Timeline *Problem Statement (final)*
4/11	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Objectives, Questions, and/or Hypotheses *Curriculum Vitae, Budget, Timeline (final)*
4/18	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Methods *Objectives, Questions, and/or Hypotheses (final)*
4/25	Peer Reviews Article Presentations	*Article TBA*	Abstract *Methods (final)*
5/2	Research Proposal Defenses		*Abstract (final)*

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
5/9	Research Proposal Defenses		
5/16	Research Proposal Defenses		Full Proposals Due