

DEPARTMENT OF GERONTOLOGY
College of Health and Human Services
San Diego State University

GERO 499
(SPECIAL STUDY)
Fall 2008

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DESCRIPTION:

With the aging of the population in the United States, agencies and organizations will be increasingly called upon to provide services for older adults and their families. This course will examine the extent to which service providers in San Diego County are prepared to meet the service delivery needs of older adults and their families. Specifically, the course will examine the service capacity abilities of agencies and organizations serving older adults in San Diego County by accumulating data on the following topics: (a) gerontology education backgrounds of staff; (b) staff development opportunities and incentives to pursue gerontology coursework, certificate, or degrees; and (c) agency or organization knowledge of gerontology educational opportunities available at the University.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Increase student awareness and knowledge regarding agency and organization readiness to serve an increasingly older population through interviewing and surveying administrators and human resource personnel that serve older adults.
2. Enhance students' abilities to orally communicate the importance of educational training for staff of agencies and organizations that serve older adults by reviewing student progress with information dissemination about coursework and degree opportunities in the field of gerontology and discussing strategies for improving oral communication skills.

CLASS PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

There are two ways to complete GERO 499.

- 1. Interviews OR**
- 2. Research paper**

Interviews

1) Interviews and Surveys with Administrators and Human Resource Personnel

The class will consist of interviewing and surveying administrators and human resource personnel in agencies and organizations serving older adults regarding the educational training of staff members. Topics that will be explored include: number of staff with certificate, baccalaureate, or master's degrees in gerontology; existing or future staff development opportunities to earn degrees or certificates in gerontology; career ladder opportunities with a degree in gerontology; and awareness of educational gerontology opportunities available at the University.

Students will be required to make contact with 8-9 agencies/organizations during the course of the semester.

2) Meetings to Discuss Progress with Interviews and Surveys

Every three weeks, students and the instructor have the option to meet for a 90-minute class session to discuss student progress with the interviews and surveys, findings from the interviews and surveys, and address communication process questions and other issues. Students are expected to have completed 2-3 new interviews and surveys for each class meeting and be prepared to discuss their progress with the assignment. The dates on which these class meetings will take place will be determined.

Meeting 1: Date: 1/16/08	first meeting
Meeting 2: Date: 1/30/08	outline/identify agencies/questions
Meeting 3: Date: 2/13/08	literature review
Meeting 4: Date: 4/16/08	interviews completed
Meeting 5: Date: 5/14/08	analysis and final draft

3) Paper

By 5/14/08, students will submit an 8-page paper, typed, double-spaced, plus appendices to the instructor.

The 8-page paper should contain and address the following sections and items:

- a. Introduction and Brief Description of Interviewees and Agencies or Organizations
- b. Educational Training of Staff: What type of educational training in gerontology had staff at each agency or organization received? What percentage of staff at each agency or organization, have a Bachelor's Degree, Certificate, or Master's Degree in Gerontology?

- c. Staff Development Incentives: Does the agency or organization offer incentives (e.g., time off to pursue gerontology course/certificate/degree, payment of courses) for staff development? What types of incentives are offered?
- d. Career Ladder Opportunities: What career ladder opportunities are available within each agency or organization to staff with a certificate or degree in gerontology?
- e. Agency or Organization Knowledge of Gerontology Opportunities at the University: Was the interviewee aware of the Certificate, Bachelor's, and Master's Programs in Gerontology at the University? If YES, what did they know about? If NO, what did you share? Did you revisit the agency or organization to discuss any of the Gerontology Programs? If YES, describe the visit.
- f. Student Knowledge Gained: What did you learn about the agency or organization's capacities to meet the service deliver needs of an aging population? Comment on the agency or organization's overall educational background and opportunities for staff development and career advancement.
- g. Recommendations for Increasing Agencies or Organizations Awareness and Capacities: Provide 3 recommendations regarding how agencies or organizations could improve the number of staff with gerontology certificates or degrees. That is, what linkages could be made between agencies or organizations and universities, to encourage further education among staff? Outline specific steps for agencies or organizations and universities.

The following are to be typed contents of the Appendices of the Paper:

- Appendix A: Full Agency or Organization and Interviewee Contact Information
- Appendix B: Copy of Interview Questions and Surveys Completed
- Appendix C: Agency Questions about Project
- Appendix D: Agency Materials (if applicable)

Grading Criteria for Papers:

- (A) Overall organization
- (B) Depth of information covered
- (C) Completeness of information
- (D) Clarity of expression
- (E) Grammar and mechanics

EVALUATION

The standard university grading scale will be used. Students will be graded on the following:

Interviews and Surveys	(30%)	30 points
Class Meetings	(10%)	10 points
Paper	(60%)	60 points

Research Paper

The research paper will delineate the following: 1) the research problem you tackled and your research question(s). If this was an exploratory study then substantiate why this area is of interest; 2) what the literature says about the problem you studied---we want to know how what you studied relates to the field of Gerontology;

Inform your advisor about the topic that you want to research. You will be also offered individualized help via email.

1 Introduction & Review of Literature

What was the problem you addressed and your central research question (or questions) related to this problem? What was the significance of this undertaking, namely what gap/s, or what aspect of the literature supported undertaking this research?

2 Conclusion

What did your analysis show? What were the essential limitations of your study both with regard to the methodology you used, or would have used? This corresponds to Chapter V: Discussion, Limitations, Conclusions, and Recommendations of a thesis. Also in the section you will include the significance of the study and its conclusions, based on the data and the results. It is very important to describe the limitations of the study and the implication for future research. You will be evaluated for being CRITICAL.

3. References

List the publications used. Use only academic journals, newspapers or popular magazines are not allowed. The journals must be peer-reviewed, where other academicians review the paper before it is published.

General guidelines to be used in developing the scholarly research paper:

a Cover Page 1 page

Title of Study

Degree

Date

Your Name

b Abstract 1 paragraph

An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper. It should provide a considerable amount of information succinctly. Specifically, the abstract should describe:

- a. The problem under investigation
- b. Expected findings, implications, and conclusion

The introduction should include a problem statement that clearly presents the gerontology problem or issue to be addressed in the proposed study and the rationale for proposing the study. Specifically, the introduction should contain the following components:

- a. The problem statement and rationale
- b. Nominal definitions of important terms and concepts
- c. Relevance of the study to gerontology
- d. Research question(s)

Problem:

Begin with a description of the problem. Include a brief statement about what you plan to do in your study. Clearly describe the gerontology problem you plan to address in your proposal. You may be vague about how you will address the problem at this stage-but indicate that you intend to make the problem better or different. Define your key terms.

Significance:

This section should include the incidence/prevalence, consequences of the problem (emotional, psychological, fiscal impact), and how your research may add to the knowledge to positively affect the problem. First, you need to document the occurrence or prevalence of the specific problem and then justify the need and importance of studying it. How can research contribute to a better understanding of the problem? Discuss why this problem is relevant to you, as a gerontologist, to your agency, to the profession and to society in general? (e.g. why is it worth studying now?)

The purpose of the literature review is to present and exhibit knowledge about the topic, including what has or has not been addressed previously, what limitations exist in the larger knowledgebase, what limitations exist in previous studies, and how the proposed study will add to knowledge in this area. (This is different than addressing the problem. Knowledge gained from the study can be used to address the problem. You will need to substantiate the question “WHY are you planning to do this work?” It is not enough to show that it has not been done before, or that you are interested in the topic. You have to provide evidence that this interest has broader implications.

In short, the literature review offers a presentation of the background of the problem and includes both a theoretical and empirical examination and critique of the existing knowledge. The review of others’ work should be comprehensive, but succinct, including information that is directly relevant to the study you will propose. Emphasis should be given to studies that justify the statement of the problem, research question, and hypothesis, and that support the selection of important study variables.

The review should close with a summary of the existing knowledge and gaps, and point out explicitly what is needed to fill these gaps. Your proposed study should address

some, if not all, of these gaps. If it does not address all the gaps, a clear explanation as to why should be offered.

A comprehensive review of the literature is crucial to the research process as it will determine the methods that you use to design and implement your study.

The Literature Review section of your proposal should include/address at least the following:

1. What is known about the topic from empirical research (organized around themes). Establish the relationship between the literature and problem statement. This section should include information about your specific topic--the etiology (causes), the relationship with other variables of interest and the interventions that have been used to alleviate the problem and other topics related to your specific proposal. Synthesize- do not just list prior studies. Group articles under broad themes and provide an overview.
2. What is not known and why (i.e., knowledge gaps and limitations of previous studies)
3. How your proposed study will respond to existing gaps and limitations (make a contribution to the knowledgebase)

III Conclusion and References/Citations

At least 15 citations should be used for this Capstone Paper. Citations should be provided in APA format. See the faculty advisor on any of these terms. Use recent citations (after 1999) when possible, as dated citations may not be relevant to your current topic.

EVALUATION

The standard university grading scale will be used. Students will be graded on the following:

Class Meetings	(10%) 10 points
Paper	(90%) 90 points