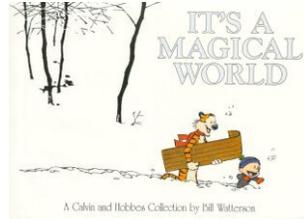


# Psychology 518/718 Thesis/Dissertation

(December 9, 2014)



## **Why One Syllabus for Two Courses?/Objectives of the Two Courses**

Both the thesis and the dissertation require of the student qualitatively similar things:

1. Demonstrated ability to read, understand, abstract, select, and integrate the current (and past) literature pertaining to a focal topic of (common) interest in the science (and sometimes the philosophy) of the discipline of psychology
2. Identification and articulation of a theoretical need in that literature (e.g., a gap in the data that, when filled, could add to the theoretical understanding of the focal topic; an empirically resolvable data-theory conflict; or an empirically resolvable conflict between two theories that purport to account for the same phenomenon).
3. Demonstrated ability to produce a professional quality, literature-based, coherent, concrete, and complete proposal or prospectus acceptable to the thesis or dissertation advisory committee, the departmental faculty, and the brotherhood watchdogs in the graduate office.
4. Ability to carry out an accepted proposal completely and with integrity, and within a mutually agreed upon time frame.
5. Demonstrated ability to produce a professional quality, literature-based, coherent, concrete, and complete thesis or dissertation acceptable to the thesis or dissertation advisory committee, the departmental faculty, and the brotherhood watchdogs in the graduate office.
6. The ability and willingness to take direction and correction appropriately, while at the same time moving toward a collegial (rather than a subordinate) relationship with the thesis or dissertation advisor.
7. The dissertation is sometimes *quantitatively* more complex conceptually or methodologically, and that often means that it has more words in it than does the thesis. In practice, some theses are as good or better (qualitatively) than some dissertations.
8. Oh, yes. You have to fairly independently work out what the Graduate School wants you to do with your document, and do it, quite independently of any help I might be able to offer.

## **Description of Courses from Graduate Catalogue:**

PSY 518 - Thesis  
Hours: Six

This conference course introduces the candidate for the Master of Arts or Master of Science Option I degree to the theories and techniques of educational and psychological research and leads to the completion and acceptance of the thesis.

Note Course is repeated for at least two three-credit hour courses. Graded on a (S) satisfactory or (U) unsatisfactory basis.



PSY 718 - Doctoral Dissertation  
Hours: Twelve

Doctoral dissertations must be acceptable to the student's advisory committee and the Dean for Graduate Studies and Research on a problem in the area of his [sic] specialization. To be acceptable, the dissertation must give evidence that the candidate has pursued a program of research, the results of which reveal superior academic competency and significant contribution to knowledge.

Note Graded on a (S) satisfactory or (U) unsatisfactory basis

♪Note♪

**Required Textbook:**

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual* (6th ed., second printing or later). Washington, DC: Author.



**Grading Procedures:**

Until you have successfully completed your thesis or dissertation, your grade in 518 or 718 will be either an “in-progress” (IP) or an “unsatisfactory” (U). I will assign an IP if you have done even the most limited work on the project, and you have produced the assigned portfolio for your use and my review (see below). I will assign you the grade of U only if you have breached the rules of student conduct for this course and the university in significant or chronic ways (see below). For the semester in which you successfully defend your thesis, I will assign you a grade of S, which will change all previous grades of IP in the thesis or dissertation class to an S.

**Conventions:**

You, the student enrolled in PSY 518 or PSY 718 with Steve Ball as your advisor, will need to abide by the following conventions:

1. We will work out a plan for composing your advisory committee in advance of your contacting *any* potential committee member. In general, I will be the one to invite faculty members to be on your committee, though of course I will not ask someone with whom you have enmity.
2. If you seek to have a person from outside Texas A&M University – Commerce as a member of your advisory committee, we should agree on the choice and work out the particulars in advance of the process. Then you will be responsible for contacting the

person, and then discovering and completing the procedures necessary as required by the graduate school.

3. You are fully responsible for communicating with the graduate school, and ensuring that required documents (e.g., of your scheduled proposal date (dissertation); the successful completion of your proposal, thesis, or dissertation; the documentation that I have reviewed any corrections they have required; and the like) are completed in a timely fashion, signed by department heads, deans, etc., and delivered to the office of the graduate school in a timely fashion. I recommend that you secure a dated signature confirming receipt of any such documents you deliver to them. Save the e-mails to which you have attached any electronic documents you have delivered to the graduate school.
4. We will work out a *planned* schedule of activities with specific deadlines for the series of activities necessary to complete your thesis or dissertation within a time frame that is consistent with your goals and my sense of what is realistic.
5. You are free to miss the deadlines on the scheduled timeline, but you understand that to do so may, and probably will, delay your completion of your thesis or dissertation – and cost you more money.
6. You agree to allow two (2) calendar weeks for the reading of any substantial document you give me (over 3 pages, APA format), and three (3) days for anything shorter. I agree to play by these deadlines, to work to complete my reading more quickly than the deadlines, and, as is reasonable and possible, to accelerate my reading whenever there is a “time crunch,” in the sense that my hurrying may assist you in avoiding a significant material loss (e.g., delayed graduation, failure to get a job, loss of income, etc.).
7. All documents you want me to read should be MS Word documents, in doc or docx format. Send them as e-mail attachments to [academicstevie@yahoo.com](mailto:academicstevie@yahoo.com) and [steve.ball@tamuc.edu](mailto:steve.ball@tamuc.edu) .
8. I will review all such documents using Word change tracking and editing tools, and return a copy to you electronically. You should learn how to read the tracking and editing tools, accepting or rejecting the changes I make, reading and dealing with comments and suggestions, etc.
9. All documents you submit to me should be written according to current APA guidelines (at the end *you* will probably have to modify the document in specified ways to meet graduate school requirements).
10. Other members of your committee may have different requirements for the time they will take to read your materials, and the format in which they wish to receive them. You are responsible for working out those details with them.
11. When (and only when) your advisory committee has reached a consensus that you are ready to propose or defend your final document, you may schedule the meeting with the department and (for dissertations) the graduate school – and not before.
12. For defenses of both kinds of proposals, as well as final theses and dissertations, when your committee gives the okay, you *must* provide an electronic copy of your document to each full-time, tenured, or emeritus member of the faculty of the Department of Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education at least one week in advance of your

defense. (As of this writing, the emeriti faculty members of the faculty are Drs. Glenn Fournet, Paul Johnson, Maximino Plata, Ruth Ann White, and Paul Zelhart.) You must also provide two (2) paper copies of the document two (2) weeks in advance to the office (Binnion 201) to be available to those who want to read it in that format before your defense.

13. Provide an electronic copy of your document to the current president of the department's graduate student organization in counseling and psychology.
14. For dissertation final defenses the graduate school will assign a graduate faculty member from outside the department to attend and monitor the meeting. You should provide that person a *paper copy*, as well as an electronic copy, of your document one (1) week in advance.
15. You are responsible for complying with graduate school deadlines for scheduling, defending, and graduating, including getting appropriately signed documents to their office on time, before and after the defense.
16. A “meta-goal” of the process is that, after your successful defense of your proposal, we will come closer to having a collegial relationship.

### **Research Portfolio:**

Prepare a research portfolio consisting of one (or more as needed) 3-ring binders containing

1. A daily dated log of your activities pertinent to the thesis or dissertation.
2. The front page from each reference you retrieved, have read (at least a part of), and either accepted or rejected during the term, including all information necessary to cite the item completely.
3. A dated and complete copy of every document you have turned in to me during the semester.
4. A complete reference list that is current for your project at the end of the term.

### **Student Conduct:**

Admission and attendance in a college or university form an honor and a privilege. Where tuition and other expenses are subsidized, either by private or public funds, the person has received an additional trust that inherently entails conducting one's affairs as a student within the constraints of civil society. In our work together I will expect you behave in a way that is respectful of others (your committee, the department's staff and faculty, me, etc.), their right to receive (and deliver) elements of a college education, and their identities as unique persons in the world. I expect us all to act toward others as we would like them to act toward us.

I will also expect you not to plagiarize, steal or otherwise procure tests or other class materials that are not supposed to be publicly available (including copyright violations), or cheat on examinations. I will give you an F for any of these actions, and I will make an appreciable effort to have you dismissed from the university.

Here are some other dos and don'ts that will also be a part of our code of conduct in the creation of your thesis or dissertation:

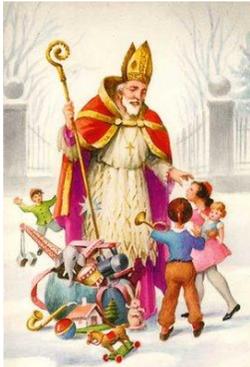
1. Far beyond the particulars of this course, do respect the divine principle of the universe, which seems to be detectable in other people (though of course its source is unknowable).

2. Do remember that this project is about a limited area of empirical content and a tiny part of the fullness of your life; don't forget that there are bigger realities.
3. Don't talk trash in excess.
4. Do take some time off from constant work during the semester. Do remember to reflect on things beyond this project.
5. Do let those who support and have supported your educational efforts know how much you appreciate them sometime during the term.
6. Don't attack the person of another.
7. Maintain appropriate boundaries in relation to your committee and other persons associated with the production of you thesis or dissertation.
8. Don't steal others' work (plagiarism = a grade of U).
9. Don't distort the truth, about your data, its sources, or your colleagues, committee, or anyone else associated with your project.
10. Do be satisfied with where you are in your own professional development. Others may be farther along than you, but don't waste time envying them. Do work to become who you were meant to be.

Section 10 - Faculty are encouraged to include in their course syllabi the following statement: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources and Services, Halladay Student Services Building, Room 303D, (903) 886-5835.

Section 11 - Faculty are required to include in their course syllabi the following statement: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Polices and Procedures, Conduct)

**GUY TEACHING COURSE:**



Steve Ball  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Office & Developmental Cognition Laboratory: Binnion 122 (enter at Binnion 101)  
Phone (In Developmental Cognition Lab – switches to fax after 7 rings, sometimes fewer): 903-886-5586  
Community Counseling & Psychology Clinic: Binnion 101

Office Hours for PSY 518 or 718: by appointment only