

MDWF 584

Thesis Project

Student Syllabus

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Syllabus: MDWF 584

Thesis Project

CREDITS: 7 (seven).

PRE-REQUISITE: PROD 511

COURSE PURPOSE & OVERVIEW:

The student will complete a thesis project during this course. The student will interact on a regular basis with their Thesis Advisory Committee. An oral defense of the thesis project will be completed.

SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the completion of this course, the students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills in the following areas:

1. Complete a substantial project related to midwifery
2. Write a scholarly background paper regarding their project
3. Effective presentation of project through the oral defense process

TEXTS & SUPPLIES:

Text(s) for this course:

None required.

Supplies for this course:

None required

GRADING:

This is a Pass/Fail course. You must complete your thesis course with a “Pass” grade in order to get your Master’s Degree.

MANA CORE COMPETENCIES:

Core competencies reflect the fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviors expected of an entry-level midwife. Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA) has developed a list of midwifery core competencies. The following core competencies are introduced/taught/or tested in this course

- Competencies will vary depending on thesis project

NARM VERIFICATION FORM

The following NARM Skills are introduced/taught/or tested in this course:

- Skills will vary depending on thesis project

CANADIAN COMPETENCIES

Canadian Competencies reflect the skills and knowledge expected of an entry-level midwife practicing in Canada. The following competencies are introduced/taught/tested in this course:

- Skills will vary depending on thesis project

WITHDRAWAL/ REFUNDS:

An official withdrawal from MCU courses **requires a written request**. Please see the student catalog for a full description of the Refund Policy.

RECORD KEEPING:

MCU suggests that you keep a file of all final grade notices, transcripts and communications to and from the college.

HONOR CODE:

A high sense of personal honor and integrity is imperative in the completion of courses from the Midwives College of Utah. Since the assignments are intended to prepare you for examinations, they should be completed without cheating, plagiarizing, or knowingly giving false information. Although students can work in a study group, you must complete your own work. The syllabus should not be copied or given to other people without permission from the Midwives College of Utah. Distance education students must take examinations through a proctor who must certify that the exam was completed without the assistance of books, notes, or any other outside help unless otherwise stated on the exam. The exam itself must not be copied in any way. The responses on submitted work must be your own. If proof of academic misconduct is established, you will be given a failing grade and dismissed from the program.

DISCLAIMER:

MCU does not take responsibility for the outcome of any activities suggested in this course or in any other MCU course. The students remain completely responsible for the consequences of their own behavior in regards to how they choose to implement the information contained herein.



MDWF 584

Thesis Project

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

Student Name:

Date Assignments Sent:

Email Address:

I am sending the following items with this submission (please check those that apply):

- Project Background Paper
- Project Component (Please specify which component(s) are included)
-
-
-

Complete the Student Evaluation Form at the end of this course.

How many hours do you estimate this session's assignments took you to complete? ____ Hrs.

How many hours do you estimate this course took you to complete? _____ Hrs.

Syllabus: MDWF 584

Thesis Project

Section 1. The Thesis Process

I. Introduction

You have completed PROD 511 and are ready to carry out the project planned and approved in your prospectus. The form *MDWF 584 Components* that you submitted in PROD 511 is the official checklist of the required components for your thesis project.

The purpose of this syllabus is to provide information on the remaining steps you need to take for successful completion of your thesis. As listed in the PROD 511 syllabus, the steps to creating a thesis are:

1. Idea generation and narrowing
2. Background research
3. Thesis Advisory Committee selected and commitment forms submitted
4. Submit idea(s) to PROD 511 instructor for suggestions and approval to proceed. Discuss ideas with Thesis Advisory Committee.
5. Write prospectus
6. Submit prospectus to Course Instructor.
7. Prospectus approved by Thesis Advisory Committee
8. Begin thesis research, consulting with Thesis Advisory Committee regularly
9. Finish research and evaluate findings
10. Discuss findings with primary advisor, may need to revise plans for thesis and mode of thesis
11. Begin writing thesis
12. Review draft(s) with Thesis Advisory Committee and revise
13. Submit thesis for defense
14. Oral defense of the thesis
15. Revise thesis based on defense
16. Final submission of thesis

Steps 1-7 were completed in PROD 511. This syllabus covers steps 8-16. Some of the steps fit a traditional written thesis better than a project. Don't get too concerned about this—the differences will be outlined below.

II. Thesis Research (Steps 8-10)

The prospectus you completed in PROD 511 is a plan for your project. It also serves as the beginning of the background paper required as one component of your project. Your **literature review** should be fairly complete at this point. You should add to it as you discover additional pertinent literature. Your focus at this point will be the **methods** section. Your methodology details how you are going to carry out your project. If you have doubts about your proposed methodology now is the time to clear those up. Use your Thesis Advisory Committee as a resource. You should be communicating with them on a regular basis.

Once you've clarified your methodology you are ready to begin the implementation of your project. For most students, this will be the part of the thesis project that requires the most time. If you find certain aspects of your planned project are not working for some reason you need to communicate with your Primary Advisor and the Graduate Dean regarding the problems. It's

important to remember that the requirements for your project were decided upon in PROD 511. If you want to change these you need to make sure you and your committee are in agreement. Keep records of these communications.

Helpful Hints:

- ✓ Set checkpoints
- ✓ Work consistently. Don't let long periods of time lapse with no work on your thesis.
- ✓ Communicate regularly with your committee
- ✓ Document any changes to the approved thesis project plan

III. Writing the Background Paper (Step 11)

Your prospectus provides the backbone of your background paper. For a thesis project, the written background paper is only one component of the required submissions. Unlike a written thesis, your research does not need to be original. However, the background paper should be a scholarly work and is to be written in a formal style.

The **required** sections of the final thesis background paper are described below. Each section begins on a new page. Follow APA guidelines for the formatting of headings, tables, figures, etc. The length of your background paper will have been decided upon in PROD 511.

- **Cover Page:** See Appendix A for a sample cover page. Your cover page **MUST** include the information shown on the example.
- **Authorization to Submit Master's Thesis Page:** This page is included in the final copy of your thesis directly after the cover page. After your thesis project is completed, the Graduate Dean obtains signatures from all members of your committee and inserts the page into your manuscript. You need to include this page in your Table of Contents (see Appendix A for an example).
- **Abstract:** The purpose of the abstract is to present a succinct summary of your thesis project. Researchers and other potential readers use the abstract to determine the relevance of your thesis to their interests. If you're unfamiliar with writing an abstract, tips are readily available online. The abstract should not exceed 150 words. You will write it after you've completed your project. It should summarize the purpose, the methods, the results, and the conclusion of your project. No cited material is included in the abstract. Language should be concise and as many keywords as possible should be used (keywords provide good retrieval of your document in the electronic environment).
- **Acknowledgements:** This section is **OPTIONAL**. You can include a short acknowledgements section thanking those instrumental to the success of your thesis.
- **Table of Contents:** See Appendix A for a sample Table of Contents. You should provide a page number for each section and subsection. For example, if your literature review is organized into thematic sections, provide a page number for each heading.
- **List of Figures:** List page numbers of any figures.
- **List of Tables:** List page numbers of any tables.
- **Definition of Terms and List of Abbreviations:** This section is **OPTIONAL**. This is a

helpful section if your thesis includes terms and abbreviations that would be unfamiliar to anybody not intimately associated with your specific topic.

- **Introduction:** This section describes your project. You should describe as succinctly as possible the major components of the project and why it is important. Your introduction should grab the reader's attention and make them care about the rest of your thesis. The wording should be strong. You should spend some time "wordsmithing" this section.
- **Purpose:** This section details the purpose for doing your project. You will have already alluded to the purpose in your introduction but in this section you will state it in a more formal manner.

Example:

Problem statement: Volunteers comprise the majority of the staffing at the maternity clinic in Bali. There is a high turnover and training procedures are inconsistent.

Solution: This project will establish written training procedures and forms that can be effectively implemented with volunteers.

- **Literature Review:** This section will vary in length depending on how large a body of literature exists pertinent to your topic. Although you are not expected to cite every piece of existing literature relevant on your topic, you do not want to miss any seminal works or neglect any aspects of your thesis topic. The EBSCO Research Database under the Student Menu on the MCU website is an excellent source of material for your literature review. The databases in EBSCO contain citations, abstracts, and some full-text, much of which is scholarly and evidence-based.

You may be tempted to include only background material that supports your ideas. However, one mark of unbiased writing is to include ideas that contradict or do not support your own. This shows respect for the reader's intelligence and will ensure that your own conclusions are much more persuasive.

This section should not merely be a listing of the research with some description added but rather an analysis of why the studies and ideas cited are important to the work you are proposing. As you prepare the literature review it might help to assume the reader of your work will be uninformed. Your literature review serves as an overview to the topic, giving readers enough background knowledge that they can evaluate the remainder of your work.

The literature review should be well organized. A common method of organizing the review is to use thematic headings to divide the review into sections that cover all the different aspects of your research.

The literature review may seem more suited to the traditional written thesis. However, it can be equally important to the thesis project. Your literature review should uncover any similar endeavors and analyze successes as well as problems. If you aren't finding literature that relates to your specific project you need to "think outside the box." For example, if you are developing informational materials relating to certain aspects of childbirth for women in third-world countries you may not find anything specific to your topic. You would then broaden your literature review to developing informational materials in general for third-world countries (parameters might be: lack of education, low income, language barriers, etc.).

- **Methods and Procedures:** The methodology section outlines the steps you will take to implement your project. The methods section should be detailed enough that the reader could undertake a similar project.
- **Findings (Can also be titled: Results):** In this section you present a factual statement of the results of your project. You should present the positive as well as the negative. For example, if you started a post-partum discussion group and attendance decreases dramatically after the first session this is a significant finding. In this section you will not offer any interpretations; you will simply present the results.
- **Discussion:** In this section you can add your own interpretations. The discussion section should start with a few sentences that summarize the most important results. Referencing literature that validates your interpretations can strengthen your argument. Subheadings can be used to organize the section into logical segments. Some questions that might help you develop the discussion section are:
 1. Are there relationships or trends among the results?
 2. Are there patterns in the results? Are there exceptions to these patterns?
 3. How does my work agree or disagree with previous work?
 4. How do my results apply to my original research question(s)?
 5. What are the likely causes underlying patterns?
 6. Can any predictions be made?
 7. What are the implications of my findings to other unanswered questions?
 8. Why are my results significant? How do they contribute to new knowledge?
- **Conclusions (Can also be titled: Conclusions and Recommendations):** The conclusion should be fairly short (one to three paragraphs). One way to write a conclusion is to pose the question to yourself, “What would I want a reader to remember about this paper a year from now?” You should restate your research question and summarize the conclusions you reached by carrying out your study. You should also summarize new observations or insights that resulted from your study. It is good to place your research into a broader context in the conclusion. Conclusions often end with recommendations for future work.
- **References:** Your references must be in proper APA format. You should include any source that you have used as background for your background paper.
- **Appendices:** Appendices contain supplementary material or explanatory data too lengthy or detailed to be included in the text or not immediately essential to the reader's understanding of the text. You want your background paper to read smoothly, yet at the same time you want all the material to be available to the reader. Examples of appropriate appendices are: tables that are longer than one page; survey, interview, focus group, etc. questionnaires and responses; consent forms used; copies of applicable documents, forms, etc.

Helpful Hints:

- ✓ Do not editorialize.
- ✓ Keep the reader's background in mind.
- ✓ Clarity, clarity, clarity--it's impossible to be too clear!

IV. Submit and Revise Drafts (Step 12)

You will submit each draft of your background paper and other required project components to the Graduate Dean who is responsible for distributing the drafts to other committee members and determining the criteria by which each draft will be evaluated. The number of drafts will depend upon your committee's expectations and your quality of work.

V. Submit Thesis Project for Defense (Step 13)

The Graduate Dean will send you a communication authorizing you to schedule the Oral Defense of Thesis. Submit the form *Request for Oral Defense* (available under *Graduate Students* link on the MCU homepage: <http://www.midwifery.edu/>) to the MCU Administrative Assistant. Use the MCU messaging system and attach the form. It will be at least two weeks from the date you submit the form until the oral defense (see form *Request for Oral Defense* for more details).

VI. Oral Defense and Revisions (Steps 14 and 15)

On the scheduled date of the Oral Defense, the student meets with all members of the Advisory Committee, the Graduate Dean, and the MCU President through web conferencing or an approved alternative method (such as conducting the Oral Defense at an MCU conference). Other MCU students and faculty will receive an invitation to attend but will be required to RSVP. The student may request that an invitation be sent to any additional people they would like to attend. The web conference will be **initiated** and **recorded** by the MCU office staff.

During the defense, the Graduate Dean will act as the moderator. The defense begins with a 15-20 minute description of the thesis work by the student. This presentation should be practiced, as it is considered formal. *GoToMeeting* web conferencing is the system currently being used by MCU. MCU office staff can assist you in preparing your materials and becoming comfortable with the *GoToMeeting* interface. A PowerPoint presentation is an effective way to do your presentation; however, you may suggest other alternatives. The presentation is followed by formal and extensive questioning (focus questions) by each committee member. The moderator will then open the floor up to questions from the audience. The entire process should last from 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Prior to the defense, the Graduate Dean will ask each committee member to submit two focus questions related to the thesis. The Primary Advisor will select a minimum of three of these questions to be asked at the defense. The student will not have prior knowledge of the focus questions. The presentation of a focus question may take up to one minute. The student may take up to five minutes to answer each question. Each committee member will have a chance to ask one follow-up question. The response to each of these should not take more than three minutes. After the focus questions are completed, the moderator will allow questions from the audience.

The student and guests are then excused, and the committee, the Graduate Dean, and the MCU President will have a brief discussion. Within **one week** of the Oral Defense, each member of the Advisory Committee, the Graduate Dean, and the MCU President will prepare and submit written commentary on the students' performance, and send to the Graduate Dean by email. The form *Evaluation of Oral Defense* (available under *Graduate Students* link on the MCU homepage: <http://www.midwifery.edu/>) should be used. The commentary will include a grade of "Pass" or "Fail". The Graduate Dean will determine the final grade, drawing consensus from all the comments received. When differences of opinion occur on a Committee with regard to the grade, determination of the final decision falls upon the Graduate Dean.

Upon successful completion (a “Pass” grade) of the Oral Defense, the Graduate Dean will provide the student and the committee with a Summary Statement of the comments. The Graduate Dean will also send the student written directions for correcting and completing any remaining segments of the required thesis project components. The directions should clearly state what is expected of the graduate student prior to final approval of the thesis. A timeline should be included stating when the final corrected items are due.

If the student does not receive a passing grade on the Oral Defense, the process will need to be repeated after the student completes corrective actions assigned by the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean will work with the committee members and the MCU President to determine and assign corrective actions (further reading, rework of the project, etc.) for the student. The student will need to complete the corrective actions and successfully pass the Oral Defense before being authorized to complete the manuscript leading to final approval.

VII. Final Submission of Thesis (Step 16)

After all corrections requested by the Graduate Dean have been made, the student submits the final draft of all thesis project components to the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean collects signatures for the *Authorization to Submit Master’s Thesis* page. The page is inserted into the background paper after the Cover Page. A copy of the completed background paper and any other applicable components is sent to the student and the MCU office to be included in the Thesis Library.

The Graduate Dean assigns the final course grade.

Section 2. The Thesis Advisory Committee

I. Working With Your Committee

Your Thesis Advisory Committee is integral to the success of your thesis work at MCU. Your thesis work is basically self-directed; yet at the same time, you need your committee to be involved. The dynamics of each committee will be different. The relationship each student establishes with her committee will be different. Some tips for successful communication with your Thesis Advisory Committee are:

- Use the MCU messaging system unless you have an advisor that is not MCU faculty.
- Treat this as a professional relationship. Your communications (including email) should be professional. Grammar and punctuation in your written correspondence should be professional.
- Develop a consistent format for communication. For example, a memo format works well for formal communication such as submitting a draft of your thesis.
- When timelines are appropriate then give one. For example, if you submit a draft of your thesis, it is entirely appropriate to ask for comments to be returned within two weeks.
- You will probably develop a preferred method of communication with each advisor. Don’t get “stuck” in one mode. You may find the relationship with some advisors is more productive via telephone conversations and with others by email.
- If you don’t work on your thesis for an extended period of time you should still keep in touch with your committee. You want them to remain “invested” in your research. If too much time passes and they don’t hear from you they may lose interest. Have the courtesy to let them know if you are taking a break from your thesis work.
- There may be times when you need to have a “real time” conference with your entire committee. Contact the MCU office for help in setting up a web conference.
- Be proactive. Your thesis advisors are interested in your work. They are committed to

the midwifery profession. They want you to succeed. However, they are busy people and the thesis process is long. Ultimately, you're in charge.

II. Problems During the Thesis Process

Unfortunately, problems may arise during the thesis process. A thesis advisor may not be able to continue due to unforeseen circumstances, an advisor may consistently be late in corresponding, etc. If the problems cannot be satisfactorily resolved you should contact the Graduate Dean.

Once a semester, the Graduate Office will be sending you an evaluation form for your advisors. Please take the time to fill these out. Graduate advisory work is a serious responsibility and the Graduate Office needs to hear about both the outstanding work that the advisors are doing and any problems encountered. Thoughtful evaluations by students will help to make the thesis process better. MCU is committed to assisting you in your thesis work but we need your feedback.

CHECKLIST OF THESIS TASKS		
Description	Responsibility	Completed
Submit draft of background paper and other project materials to Graduate Dean	Student	
Send draft to committee members	Graduate Dean	
Return draft and comments to student	Graduate Dean	
Note: There is not a set number for draft revisions. It will depend on the quality of your work and the expectations of your committee. You should expect to go through the above three steps several times.		
Instruct student (in writing) to prepare for Oral Defense	Graduate Dean	
Submit <i>Request for Oral Defense</i> to MCU Administrative Assistant	Student	
Schedule Oral Defense with committee members, Graduate Dean, and MCU President	MCU Administrative Assistant	
Attend Oral Defense	Student; all members of Thesis Advisory Committee; Graduate Dean; MCU President	
Send <i>Evaluation of Oral Defense</i> to Graduate Dean	All members of Thesis Advisory Committee; MCU President	
Send student Summary Sheet of commentary and detailed instructions of any necessary revisions to background paper and other project materials.	Graduate Dean	
Submit final revised copy of thesis materials to Graduate Dean	Student	
Send <i>Authorization to Submit Master's Thesis</i> to all committee members for signature	Graduate Dean	
Graduate Office signs off on <i>Authorization to Submit Master's Thesis</i> after all other signatures gathered	Graduate Dean	
Send final copy of thesis materials to MCU office and student	Graduate Dean	
Complete course evaluation	Student	
Assign final course grade	Graduate Dean	
OTHER:		
Complete evaluation (received from Graduate Dean) of committee members each semester enrolled in thesis class.	Student	

APPENDIX A

Example of: Cover Page for Background Paper

Example of: Authorization to Submit Master's Thesis

Example of: Table of Contents for Background Paper

Postpartum Depression:
Facilitating a Support Group

A Thesis
Presented in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Midwifery
in the
College of Graduate Studies
Midwifery College of Utah

By
Jane Doe

May 2008

Primary Advisor: Susan Doe

Authorization to Submit Master’s Thesis

This thesis of Jane Doe, submitted for the degree of Master of Science of Midwifery and titled “A Comparative Analysis of Postpartum Depression in Homebirths and Hospital Births,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Primary Advisor _____ Date _____

Committee Members _____ Date _____

_____ Date _____

Final Approval and Acceptance by the College of Graduate Studies

_____ Date _____
Karen Hertel, Dean

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