

**Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts**  
**901.2 Dissertation Seminar I, Part 2: Methods / Developing Research**

**Course Number:** 901.1  
**Course Name:** Dissertation Seminar I, Part 1: Pre-Dissertation Seminar  
**Dates:** June 5-15, 2022  
**Format:** In-residence (Spannocchia Castle) and online  
**Instructors:** Profs. Dejan Lukic, Simonetta Moro  
**Visiting Faculty:** Prof. David Webb  
**TA:** N/A  
**Credits:** 1 Credit

**Course Number:** 901.2  
**Course Name:** Dissertation Seminar I, Part 2: Methods/Developing Research  
**Dates:** September 19 - December 10, 2022  
**Format:** Online  
**Instructors:** Prof. Dejan Lukic (Sept 19-Oct 23); Prof. Simonetta Moro (Oct 23-Dec 10) and Prof. Silvia Mazzini (Sept 19-Dec 10)  
**Credits:** 4 Credits

## SYLLABUS

### Dissertation Seminar I, Part 2: Methods/Developing Research Fall 2022

#### Course Description:

Dissertation Seminar I, Part 2 continues the conversation begun at the Dissertation Residency and Pre-Dissertation seminar, where professors Dejan Lukic and Simonetta Moro led discussion about the unfolding tensions and overlaps between formalism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, in relation to theories of knowledge, subjectivity, form, and the way ‘meaning’ happens in the work of art. The Pre-Dissertation seminar also introduced a discussion on methodologies and approaches to thinking, looking at and writing about art. These studies together prepared the ground for a more extended discussion on methods in the fall semester.

This seminar’s goal is twofold: on the one hand, it is intended to help students develop a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual and methodological debates that define contemporary aesthetic theory. On the other hand, it aims to help students develop their independent research into a roadmap for the dissertation, to be completed by the end of the spring semester next year in the form of a ‘Written Exam’ and corollary documents to be presented at the Qualifying Exams.

Two pillars of IDSVA’s methodology bookend the discussion: **‘formulating the question’** and **‘intertextuality.’** These will be explored through class discussions and the contributions that students will bring in relation to their own individual research.

Students will develop independent research toward their dissertation topics, starting with a review of the initial statement produced before the start of the semester (Dissertation Scaffolding, 901.1) and getting the chance to refocus on their initial proposals in class discussions. The main goal will be for students to develop a thesis statement, outline, written exam/Introduction, and bibliography, which will guide their research projects throughout the third year.

This is a year-long course in two parts (Fall and Spring semesters). **It is recommended that in the fall semester students focus on the research of scholarship related to their topic, and the formulation of a question and thesis statement.** More detailed expected outcomes are specified below.

Within the larger scope of the IDSVA curriculum, the Dissertation Seminar courses I and II (Fall and Spring semesters) may be considered an extension of the Independent Studies and the quasi-Independent Studies previously undertaken. However, while the IS aimed at honing particular scholarly interests as well as cultivating research skills and scholarly writing skills, the Dissertation Seminar courses are designed to help students further advance a suitable topic and argument for their dissertations, and stabilize a list of fifteen titles that will guide the Preliminary Oral Exam, while also establishing a broader bibliography of books to be explored in the process of research.

Now is the time, in anticipation of the oral exam and the dissertation, to look back and assess the debates to which the curriculum has introduced you. What are the theoretical causes and consequences of the major disputes in aesthetics today, how have they evolved, and what are the methodological and conceptual implications of these disagreements for the work ahead of you? A central goal of this seminar

will be to help you develop a clearer, more rigorous understanding of where you stand (and why) in these controversies so that you can better demonstrate your readiness to participate in them. The aim is to help you negotiate the transition from understanding others' theoretical positions to articulating your own independent contributions to debates that will matter to your future work.

### Learning Objectives:

Main goals for Dissertation Seminar I, Part 2 are:

- To prepare students for the process of initiating a long-term, large-scale research project.
- To stress the importance of organization and step-by-step planning.
- To have students gain an understanding of different philosophical perspectives and the ways in which they interact with each other.
- To help students realize how to implement these insights in their own philosophical orientations which are exemplified in their dissertation projects.
- To sharpen the methodologies students learned in the previous years, and understand how to use a combination of them in their own projects.

By the end of the Fall course each student will have produced:

1. **Overview** (1-3 pp.), including: 1) topic, 2) thesis statement, 3) main points in support of argument; 4) methodological approach (with specific references to key texts). This can be based on a further development of the “scaffolding.”
2. **First half of the written exam** (ca. 12-15 pp.), consisting of an Introduction to your proposed dissertation project (see Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, Chapter 4: “The Work Plan and the Index Cards,” especially pp. 107-115 for a good explanation of what the Introduction is supposed to do at this stage). Please use the “Introduction Template” to structure your written exam and fill out the sections.
3. **Bibliography** intended to act as a roadmap for ongoing dissertation research (12-15 titles). Of these titles, at least half will be annotated this semester.<sup>1</sup> Books and essays from the course of study should be part of your bibliography; in fact, you should make sure that roughly half the texts in your list come from the core seminars list. You will read and annotate the remaining titles in your bibliography in the spring semester.
4. **Draft of Detailed Outline** of Dissertation, to be completed in the Spring (see p. 5 of this syllabus and Eco’s Chapter 4 already mentioned for extra guidance).

Due date for the final submission of the above documents is **Dec. 12, 2022.**

These documents will provide a starting point for subsequent revisions and research development in the second semester of the third year, leading to the Written Exam that will be presented in the Oral Exam in the summer. The Introduction and related documents will be completed in the spring semester, in the Dissertation Seminar II course.

### Course Requirements:

In the video conferences, students will present their current state of the dissertation in order to receive feedback. Each student will get the chance to present their work-in-progress in the course of this semester,

---

<sup>1</sup> For basic information about annotated bibliography see:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/common\\_writing\\_assignments/annotated\\_bibliographies/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html)

For more general writing guidelines see: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

and to engage in discussions on topics of common interest. These presentations should not be viewed as limited to each specific case, but as a way to provide guidance to the whole class on the basis of common problems that may arise in the process of writing the dissertation.

By the time class starts, you should have submitted your initial topic proposal (see scaffolding template distributed prior to semester start). You will have a chance to rework this statement by the time your Overview is due on week 4.

**Open Class Forum:** due to the workshop nature of the seminar, Open Class Forum (OCF) will be dedicated to a) posting the most recent draft of the dissertation documents, b) posing questions of common interest, and c) for peer reviewing and feedback exchange. This is an opportunity to use the powerful research resource known as ‘your cohort.’

In the following Video Conference, each of the selected students will give a 5-minute presentation on their recent postings, framing the ideas and avenues of inquiry with which they are most concerned. Presentations should be “seminar-style” – not formal conference presentations, but more informal, conversational presentations of research directions. Each presentation will be followed by a discussion with the entire class. Conferences will be scheduled in two sections per VC week of two-hour slots to allow enough discussion time (class will be divided in two groups). Please allow for some extra time at the end of the session.

Prior to our meeting on **week 4** (week of October 10), each student will submit a 3-5 page overview / scaffolding (including a Thesis Statement) of their intended dissertation project, in the Discussion section of the course. A First Draft of the Introduction Template (6 pp.) will be due on week 6.

A revised overview, detailed outline, first half of the Introduction (12-15 pp), and (partly) annotated bibliography should be submitted to Assignments in Canvas by **December 12**. By “first half” we mean filling in various sections on the Introduction Template as much as possible. These will then be expanded in the Spring semester to a 25-page written exam.

Submitted documents must be titled according to the following format:

**Familynname, Givenname\_901.2\_assignmentname\_ymmdd**  
(e.g., Jones, Sally\_901.2\_bibliography\_181208).

Please use a Times New Roman or serif font, point 12, double-spaced, leaving a 1” margin on top and bottom, and 1” on right and left sides. No other fonts or formats are acceptable. Make sure all your documents (including drafts) are editable: files should have a word .doc or .docx extension - no .pdf will be accepted. Clearly mark your name, seminar and assignment on the front page of your document, and number your pages.

Please use MLA style in your papers, including drafts.

### **Assessment:**

Grades will be determined by assessment of contributions to discussions on Seminar Video Conferences and Individual Calls with Prof. Lukic and Prof. Moro (25%); OCF contributions (15%); and Written assignments (Overview, Detailed Outline, First ½ Introduction, and Bibliography) (60%).

Late submissions will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances and not without prior agreement with Prof. Lukic, Prof. Moro or Prof. Mazzini. Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis in response

to special circumstances, and may be subject to grade reduction.

### Submission Guidelines:

- 1) Overview/Scaffolding of your dissertation project: about 3 pp. or approx. 1000 words, describing:
  - a) Topic of your paper.
  - b) Thesis statement / argument\* (approx. 300 words – see below).
  - c) Three (or more) main points in support of your argument: who are the key thinkers contributing to your argument? What are the key ideas you will engage, and based on which specific texts?
  - d) What methodology(-ies) will you employ, and why? Please make specific references to key thinkers and texts.

- \*1) Thesis statement: approximately 300 words, describing:
  - a) The ideas, works, thinkers, history, you plan to engage.
  - b) The problematic of your dissertation research: what questions will you answer?  
What differences of opinion will you negotiate?
  - c) The approach you plan to take in order to address your problem.
  - d) The existing work on this or similar subjects (this may be succinctly summarized and developed in the chapter)

Please use the “**Dissertation Scaffolding**” template as a reference (see Canvas, 901.2/“Files”)

- 2) Detailed Outline of dissertation (projected; you will be able to change it and complete it by the end of next semester)
  - a) 3 -5 pages
  - b) Formatted like this document, with chapters, sections, and sub-sections. The outline should contain:
    - i) 5 – 6 chapters
      - (1) Each chapter broken into a minimum of three manageable sections, with an anticipated number of pages for each section (be realistic).
        - (a) Questions and prospective issues for each section should be dealt within sub-sections.
- 3) First half of Introduction (Written Exam)
  - a) 12-15 pages (or approx. 3700 words), introducing your topic, argument and main points of evidence (you may revisit your initial outline for this part), with specific reference to existing literature in the field and gaps in the current scholarship.

Please follow the step-by-step approach outlined in the IDSVA Writing Guide, and see Umberto Eco’s chapter 4 in *How to Write a Thesis* on the importance of preliminary introduction, TOC, etc. Please use the “**Introduction Template**” to structure your paper (see Canvas, 901.2/“Files”).

- 4) Bibliography
  - a) Twelve to fifteen titles specific to your dissertation research, for which you will be responsible at the Preliminary Oral Examination. **At least half of these titles should come from the Course of Study reading list.**
    - i) You will read the first 6 or 7 of these titles this semester, and the remaining 6 or 7 next semester in Dissertation Preparation II: Work Planning, Sustainable Research, and First Chapters.
    - ii) Group of essays may be bundled and counted as one of your fifteen titles, provided the total page count is equal to a book-length text (approx. 150 pages or more).
    - iii) The 6 or 7 titles you read this semester should be annotated (see link at p. 3, n. 1, for guidance

on annotation).

## Required Texts:

Please order listed edition:

**Eco, Umberto.** *How to Write a Thesis*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015. (ISBN-10: 0262527138).  
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262527132/how-to-write-a-thesis/>

Note: **other texts or excerpts of texts will be introduced in the course of the semester as examples to consider for class discussion. We will make them available as PDF**, and save them in the Files section on Canvas.

## Course Schedule

Specific Readings are listed below by week. PDFs will be shared in Canvas “Files”.

Note: for Professor Mazzini, selected sessions will be held on Saturday instead of Sunday.

### Part I: Preliminary Research

Prof. Lukic; Prof. Silvia Mazzini

#### **Week 1: Sep 19-25 – OCF: Post latest scaffolding statements by 9/25**

Read: Pages from U. Eco; examples of introductions from previous selected IDSVA dissertations

#### **Week 2: Sep 26-Oct 2 – VC 1 “What is a thesis?” Discussion on U. Eco selected passages + “Introduction Template” + “Scaffolding”**

(Section Lukic): Thursday, Sep 29, 6-8pm ET (student presentations: RG, RD, MiH)

(Section Mazzini): Sunday, Oct 2, 2-4 pm ET (student presentations: MH, AS, KB, HC)

#### **Week 3: Oct 3-Oct 9 – VC 2**

(Section Lukic): Thursday, Oct 6, 6-8pm ET (student presentations: NC, CB, BC, AM)

(Section Mazzini): Sunday, Oct 9, 2-4 pm ET (student presentations: MN, TD, NMM, SA, KB)

#### **Week 4: Oct 10-16 – Calls (Mazzini/Lukic)**

**3-5 pp Overview in ‘Discussions’ by 10/10**

#### **Week 5: Oct 17-23 – OCF: First draft of Introduction Template (6 pp) in ‘Discussions’ by 10/23**

### Part II: Developing Research

Prof. Simonetta Moro; Prof. Silvia Mazzini

#### **Week 6: Oct 24-30 – VC 3 Discussion of U. Eco and student presentations**

(Section Moro): Thursday, Oct 27, 6-8pm ET (student presentations: RG, RD, MiH, AS)

(Section Mazzini): **Saturday**, Oct 29, 2-4 pm ET (student presentations: MH, KB, HC, KB)

#### **Week 7: FALL BREAK Oct 31-Nov 6\***

*\*EDT in the U.S. ends Nov. 6 (clocks are turned back 1 hour at 2 am)*

**Week 8: Nov 7-13 – VC 4 U. Eco (Ch. 3&4)**

(Section Moro): Thursday, Nov 10, 6-8pm ET (student presentations: NC, CB, BC, AM)

(Section Mazzini): Sunday, Nov 13, 2-4 pm ET (student presentations: MN, TD, NMM, SA)

**4-5 new pp Introduction in ‘Discussions’ by 11/13**

**Week 9: Nov 14-20 – Calls**

**Week 10: Nov 21-27\*: OCF: 4-5 new pp Introduction in ‘Discussions’ by 11/27**

(\*Thanksgiving Holiday, 11/24-26)

**Week 11: Nov 28 - Dec 4 – VC 5 U. Eco (Ch. 5); Open discussion / examples**

(Section Moro): Thursday, Dec 1, 6-8 pm ET

(Section Mazzini): **Saturday**, Dec 3, 2-4 pm ET

**Week 12: Dec 5-10**

Writing Period

**Final documents, including 12-15 pp of Introduction, Outline, etc. due on Monday, 12/12  
 (“Assignments” in Canvas)**