

FNH 7000 Directed Individual Study

Course Description:

FNH 7000 is an independent study course completed by students' pursuing a **non-thesis track** in the Master of Science program. The course is designed to allow students the opportunity to put into practice some of the skills learned in the program. To this end, students are asked to brainstorm independent project ideas of interest to them professionally or personally. Then, in conjunction with their advisor, they will "shape" the project. Students then complete the project, submitting a final product at the end of the semester. The course instructor will act as a facilitator to assist students with any problems encountered during completion of the project.

Course Offerings:

FNH 7000 is offered during Summer (Full) and Fall semesters. In order to remain on track for graduation, it is important that students schedule course work appropriately. FNH 7000 is generally taken in either the last semester in the program or when all Core courses have been successfully completed.

Important Considerations:

Since this course counts for three (3 credits), projects must be of sufficient length and scope to warrant this credit. Projects must incorporate at least some of the skills developed in the Core courses (FNH 8513, 8523, 8553, 8613, 8653) of the program. There is no standard length or format since projects are individual in nature and vary considerably from student to student. Part of the process of "shaping" the project is to assure that it will be sufficient if completed in a thorough and comprehensive manner. Students should contact their advisor the semester before registering for FNH 7000 in order to begin the process of considering what their project and final submission will entail.

Registration Procedures:

FNH 7000 requires a different registration process than other courses in the program. Since FNH 7000 project topics and requirements vary according to student needs and interests, each student is considered to be his or her own "section" when enrolling for the class. Also, a descriptive project title (30 characters and spaces or less) is required for enrollment in the course.

Students can register for FNH 7000 upon receiving approval for their project topic and title from their advisor. To register for FNH 7000, contact Marian Montgomery at mmontgomery@aoce.msstate.edu or 662.325.8029 and request a registration form for FNH 7000. A form will be emailed or faxed to the student for completion.

This form should then be faxed (662.325.8728) or scanned and emailed to Dr. Mike Hall (MHall@fsnhp.msstate.edu) for Summer term, and Dr. Barry Hunt (bhunt@fsnhp.msstate.edu) for Fall semester, for final approval signatures and processing.

Project Instructions

For this summer's FNH 7000, I will require students to present the final project in a manuscript format. You will either analyze data that you have access to (or an existing public access database) or conduct a meta-analysis.

I may consider projects outside of these two study designs, but that will be a case-by-case decision.

Meta-Analysis

What is a meta-analysis?

Basically, a meta-analysis is a synthesis of existing published research results to derive a secondary objective. What??? You perform a literature review of research around a certain topic, and you enter all the results into a single database. You then analyze that database to answer newly developed research questions not covered in the original articles.

So you develop a concept of a study area, target population and what research questions you hope to address. Then you begin your search for published articles.

How do I start?

First, you need to get an idea of what type of research studies exist in the literature about your selected topic. You begin by reading the titles of articles and access the abstracts of the one's that potentially address the area you are interested in.

Ok, I have a large collection of articles, what next?

Decide which studies you want to include based on the quality of research reported in them. Decide the study parameters early on, preferably before the analysis. Coming up with a selection protocol will be very helpful. For example, delimiting the articles to a certain date range can be the initial criteria. Specifying which databases you will be utilizing (i.e. Pubmed, Argicola, ERIC, PsychINFO are examples of electronic databases), gives the reader an idea of the scope of your analysis. Defining keywords that you use to search for articles is essential. If you exclude articles, define the methods you use to do that.

Once you have selected the articles to be used to address your research questions, begin entering data into a database. A general format to start with would be to include the following: author and year, study population, research design, independent and dependent variables, measurement tools, and outcomes. Your particular database may have further headings depending on your study.

Analyzing Data?

For purposes of this class, there will be two options for analyzing data. Option one is to summarize the conclusions of all included studies in your meta-analysis and to use this summary to address your research questions.

Option two is for students who are comfortable with statistics and involves using the quantitative results from each of the selected to studies. The quantitative studies will be subjected to statistical procedures and require the use of a statistical software package (SPSS, SAS, MIX, etc.).

Writing up your meta-analysis

You will need to select a suitable journal and download the author guidelines. You will submit the journal information, author guidelines, and proposed meta-analysis at the beginning of the FNH 7000 course. Once you receive approval from the instructor, you may begin your study. The study will be written up according to the author guidelines of your selected journal.