

SUGGESTIONS FROM PAST SENIOR SEMINAR STUDENTS

When Dr. Setzler tells you to back up your work to a Google drive.... do it. I did not follow this instruction, and I had to redo a lot of work when my computer failed.

One piece of advice that I would give future PSC 4099 students is for them to really get started on their senior projects when they are supposed to and not to procrastinate. The students should be reaching out to their professor and mentor to get started on their projects as quickly as possible so that they will not be rushing at the last min. to apply the feedback for their specific projects.

Meet with Dr. Setzler and your thesis advisor often. Be transparent if you are struggling on an assignment or certain portion of the thesis; Dr. Setzler is here to help you every step of the way.

Don't skip class. If you miss class, you will get behind and it's hard to get caught up.

I would advise connecting with your fellow students early. Our current class has a GroupMe that each student is a part of. This has been an incredible resource to have throughout the semester. Asking your colleagues about questions, advice, and tips will make your time in the class far more enjoyable!

Work ahead!

This class is, and meant to be, stressful; there is no avoiding that. However, what I always told myself as I could feel my stress levels rise is two things: one, this is the first time I am doing something like this, and two, before you know it everything will be finished. All this class really requires is for you to manage your time and you will have everything done. Do not procrastinate!

Don't shut down when you get overwhelmed (you will inevitably get overwhelmed at some point); push through. Chances are you chose your thesis topic because it's something you're passionate about, so find ways to fight through the stress and keep the end goal in mind! You can do this!

This class has so many resources for students who may be struggling with SPSS, and they really do work! If you know that you are struggling with SPSS, find a buddy in class who you can work with. Two heads are better than one, and you are less likely to make mistakes.

Make sure you're slowly working at this all semester. Get things done early and take advantage of office hours. If you're working on things slowly, and even if you're behind, Dr. Setzler will work with you to help get it done, and help you understand what you're trying to do. When the project is so big, it's easy to get overwhelmed and let it slide. Use office hours as a way to clarify and clean up your project throughout the semester, and it will be very beneficial to your final project.

It seems big and scary, but if you choose a topic you're genuinely interested in, your advisor can help guide you and make a project that you're proud of come presentation day. (Seriously, use office hours.)

Just get it done and do not be scared to reach out for help. Everyone will be struggling with this project you're not alone. Use your resources and one of the best ones is Dr. Setzler. No one will be upset or mad if you do not understand something because this is completely new for everyone.

Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. You aren't the only person facing the problem that you're facing.

Watch the SPSS videos! They're helpful and can save you when you're struggling.

Don't be afraid or ashamed to do a less complex thesis. I think that there's almost a stigma around doing something more simply. However, even a one-part project can turn out to be very complex after reading the literature on it.

Don't stop working on your literature review after the initial assignment is turned in, even if you're only working on it for 10-15 minutes every day or two. It will save you a lot of cramming and editing later on. It will also make your project a lot better at the end.

This class definitely seems daunting, from hearing only the stories from people who have had a problem with their thesis. However, take it from someone who has run over thirty regression models over the course of her project due to little mistakes - this has been one of the most fulfilling projects I have done here in my college career. Everything done for this project was a topic I picked, and the direction of the project was led by me. In some ways, an internship might be easier, but they definitely do not provide the growth intellectually and professionally that this class does. You just have to keep pushing forward and ask for help when you need it. There is no need to be too proud to ask for help - you're all working toward the same goal.

This class is great for developing your skills and challenging yourself. Don't be afraid of SPSS! The statistics tutors are here to help you too! Change your mindset! I know it sounds obvious, but it is what will make or break your project.

Dr. Setzler's handouts, screencasts, and other resources are your best friends in this class. Make sure that you are constantly revisiting and revising your rough drafts and literature review, especially after you receive feedback. If you wait too long, it won't be as fresh on your mind, and you might get lost.

Be sure that you are interested in your topic because it makes all the long hours of SPSS, researching, and writing worth it! It will be challenging at times, but it will undoubtedly prepare you for a work environment beyond HPU.

Take it a day at a time! Don't be overwhelmed by what's months or weeks ahead. Make a day-by-day plan for how you'll complete the steps you need to.

The first piece of advice I would give to others is that they should not be afraid to ask for help. I know at least for myself that I feel the need to be independent and usually avoid asking for help. But there are times when you are going to be stuck, and that is ok. You will only hurt yourself in the long run if you do not reach out for help as soon as possible. The second piece of advice is to not stress yourself out too much. There were times where I felt incredibly stressed and embarrassed by my results in the course, but stressing yourself out only leads to tunnel vision. Try to find avenues of dealing with the stress appropriately, so it does not affect you and your project negatively.

This class is really not bad at all. If you do a little bit of work every day, you will find that the workload is extremely manageable. Just don't let everything pile up last minute, because that's when people become overwhelmed and feel like the assignments are too much.

Don't be afraid to ask for help rather than staring at a Word document for hours on end, and watch the screencasts! They will definitely bring back memories from Research Methods and are a really great resource, even if you have to watch them over and over again and pause them every other minute to catch up like I did. It's a big project to take on, but it's incredibly worth it in the long run to be able to look back at the start of the semester and see how far you've come.

Stay on top of their due dates and deadlines. This is a really major assignment with a lot of moving parts, so letting it all accumulate until the last minute could be a really disastrous thing.

The workload is best spread out into sections, so it does not become too overwhelming. This course's work is not one that can be done at the last minute, nor is it worth the stress that follows attempting to do so. Use the resources provided to you. Reach out to your professor and thesis advisor with questions for creating your research question and throughout writing your thesis. They want to help you as they understand how challenging writing a thesis for the first time is, but they only can help if you are explaining what you need help with. Furthermore, this goes hand in hand with spreading your work out, so you have the time to ask questions and implement the help you are asking for.

I would advise against missing any classes (as much as this is in your control) because the SPSS portion of the thesis can be complicated and hearing it broken down all over again was invaluable to me. I would have been totally lost if not for those several weeks of refreshing my memory on SPSS.

My advice to future students is to put less time into choosing a project that they are interested in, and put more time into choosing a project that is feasible for the course parameters.

Time management is the most important thing you can take away from this class. Be prepared to put in the hours and stay confident through obstacles you most surely will face.

The best thing you can do for yourself in this class is to decide on a topic that is interesting and simplified. A lot of students have the instinct to do the biggest, most complex topic before finding out that they'll have to simplify everything halfway through the semester. If you can pick a topic early on and stick with it, you'll learn a lot more about that topic, and find yourself to be way less stressed when each assignment is due.

I would tell future students that they are going to make it! There is a point where we all felt like we were in over our heads, but I hit a point where everything just clicked and made much more sense to me, so I was able to be far more productive from then on. With that being said, I recommend that students take time to review their literature and the intro section often while they are amidst the confusion of coding because that is one less thing you will have to worry about during crunch time at the end of the semester.

Don't psych yourself out! It's easy to feel like this is the biggest, most overwhelming project you'll ever do in college, but that's why it's broken up into bite-sized pieces. Also, focus on the stuff you learn that has nothing to do with the thesis. Senior seminar is also about little life lessons and professionalism tips. Take them to heart.

I know it seems like you've been writing lame papers for all of college, so this is your chance to do something cool. But be simple with your big idea. It'll save your sanity, I promise! This class is tiring and it's a lot of hard work, but in the end it is so cool to get to see all of it go into one paper, so just know that it's worth it.

The most important thing is not to let Setzler get to you. The real world sucks, and it's full of people who will eat your lunch; he's just preparing you for that. Your worth is more than this semester and someday you gonna use this class as a fun anecdote over a glass of wine!

Pay attention to the readings and the big assignment on research methods. Although you won't remember all of the details for every process, it is important for establishing a baseline for much of the terminology, as well as getting familiar with SPSS (which will become your best friend in senior seminar).

Identify something you are passionate about. Do not just choose a topic because it seems simple or easy, because you will end up losing motivation over the course of the semester. Instead, choose something that lines up with your values, experiences, or career goals and run with it.

Don't stress. This is very likely the first time you have undertaken a project like this. However, when it's broken down into its component parts, the senior thesis is just a compilation of things you have done throughout your college career. Furthermore, there are faculty and other students willing to guide and mentor you throughout the process.

When Dr. Setzler gives you feedback on the assignments, edit them as soon as you get the feedback so that when it is time to put your final draft thesis together, you will have polished versions of many of the components of your thesis that you can then add into one document.

Be intentional and careful about selecting your project. If you can find a solid amount of existing literature on something, that will help a lot. Also, I would not advise trying to do something super crazy or ambitious as a first research project. Your job is not to re-invent the wheel or create earth-shattering research; your job is to create a strong first research project that is of conference presentation quality. There will be plenty of little things you won't know along the way, which is fine, but everything is made easier if your project is focused and not overly complicated.

Reading the instructions and the example articles will help give you an understanding of what you want and will help clear up the questions you have. The sooner you have a sense of what you're doing, the better you will feel and the less you will procrastinate.

Watch the screencasts and review SPSS early in the course so that you are confident what your project involves and how to do it. Again, the sooner you get what you're doing, the better you feel and the less you will procrastinate.

One of the best things you can do is pick a topic you are interested in learning about. The assignments are tough and time-consuming. You will enjoy working through the class more if you at least like your topic. With that said, it can be difficult to find a topic because the possibilities can seem endless. I encourage you to take the necessary time at the beginning of the semester to lock this down early.

Don't be afraid to meet with Dr. Setzler and your faculty mentor. If they cannot fit you into their schedule one week, they will find a way to get you feedback in some form. Their advice and help will take your project to the next level.

It's okay to not know what is going on at some points in the semester! Try your best to look at the big picture when you aren't feeling the best about your project. One assignment does not necessarily define your course grade or your final thesis. It is a gradual process, and you can make changes as you go. At the end of the day, you will have a project you can be super proud of.

And here is some sage advice from Martin Luther King, although to put things into perspective, he was speaking about more pressing issues than your thesis project! (This is one of Dr. Setzler's favorite quotations, not the least of which because it applies to several critical issues facing humanity and our country at the moment):

We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost

opportunity. The 'tide in the affairs of men' does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late.'