INSTRUCTIONS FOR 298 SUPPORT/Writing Group

URBP 298B – SPRING 2018

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Overview

For this activity, you will meet at least every month and preferably every two weeks in groups of 3 or 4 (and not more than 5) students to discuss your progress in 298B. These “meetings” can be held by phone/on-line or in person.

Purpose

The URBP 298 process can involve many unforeseen challenges and unexpected events. As a result, completing URBP 298 successfully requires hard work, creative problem solving, and good time management skills. You can also rely on other people’s assistance, as it takes a “village” to write a good planning report. These URBP 298B support/writing groups are one way to ensure that you will have the good company of a compassionate community when you are discouraged or stuck. The goal of these groups is for members to push each other towards successful completion of the URBP 298 Final Report, and by extension, earning a MUP degree. More specifically, the purpose of the URBP 298 Support Group is to:

1. Receive and provide feedback and support in what can be an isolating experience
2. Exchange ideas about how to solve common and unique problems encountered by group members
3. Hold yourself and others accountable for making progress towards goals and meeting the deadlines
4. Discuss and expand the network of resources that can help group members achieve their goals

Tasks

Students self-select their team members based on various factors such as: 1) similarity of topics; 2) working habits and schedule; 3) similarity of research methods; 4) strengths (e.g. students with strong graphic skills might team up with students with strong writing skills); and/or 5) geographic proximity. Your group should meet at least every month and preferably every other week for a discussion that lasts at least 30 minutes. You can “meet” in person, using a telephone conference call, or using an online meeting option. On or before the four dates specified in the syllabus (Feb. 061; March 06; April 03; and May 01), a group representative should email to the 298 coordinator (serena.alexander@sjsu.edu) a short message noting when the meeting(s) took place and who attended, and then summarizing the conversation. This email should be no longer than a paragraph or short list of bullet points.

The first meeting will likely be your longest. At this meeting, decide together on the number, the dates, and the duration of future meetings, and whether the meetings will be held in person, over the phone, or online. Also, set rules to follow in your meetings (e.g., everyone should attend all meetings except under extreme conditions; the team should stick to agreed-upon time limits for socializing, providing feedback, member check-ins). Then, spend the rest of the first meeting on the following topics:

1. Your Planning Report research questions
2. Potential obstacles you foresee competing your URBP 298 reports

1 February reports will be accepted until February 15, if the students need more time forming an ideal team and organizing their tasks and goals.
3. Type of support you hope to get from the group
4. Tasks you plan to get done on the 298 report before the next group meeting (hint: work from the Schedule of Tasks you included in your Statement of Understanding assignment)

At all following meetings, each person should:
1. Explain the extent to which you met your 298 goals set at the previous meeting
2. Describe problems you encountered since the last support group meeting, whether you resolved these problems, and how you minimized or eliminated them
3. (As needed), ask the group for help identifying strategies to overcome remaining challenges
4. Set out what 298 tasks you plan to complete before the next support group meeting

Feel free to add other items to the list above. Also, though it is not required that you review drafts for each other to offer feedback, some groups may choose to do this, at least to a limited extent. Finally, you may even choose some way to celebrate your successes together as you reach a milestone as a team!

Tip for success: It is your responsibility to ensure that your Support/Writing Group works effectively and efficiently for all team members. The 298 advisers recommend that team members share equally the responsibility of keeping the group on track by rotating leadership. This means that each member will be responsible for facilitating and reporting on a certain number of meetings. For example, if there are four members and you plan to hold sixteen meetings, each member will be responsible for leading four meeting sessions. The leader has three major responsibilities: 1) to facilitate the meeting by starting it on time, keeping the meeting on track, and holding members to agreed-upon time limits; 2) to send a meeting reminder to all team members; and 3) to write a brief summary of the meeting and send it to the advisor.

Grading

This assignment is ungraded.