Course Syllabus

Course Information

EPPS 7V81 Qualitative Research Practicum                    Section 001

Spring 2018

Professor Contact Information

Bobby C. Alexander, Ph.D.

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PLEASE use regular UTD e-mail instead of eLearning to reach me. Thank you.

Office: GR 2.532

Office Hours:  2:30-4 p.m. Mondays, and by appointment if this time does not fit your schedule

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

None

Course Description

This course builds upon EPPS 6346 Qualitative Research Methods, specifically the Research Design students created in Qualitative Research Methods as they use their Research Design to conduct interviews, focus groups, and/or observations in the field. Students who already have a Research Design from another course or research project are welcome to use it.

NOTE: If you did not take EPPS 6346 Qualitative Research Methods in a previous semester, or do not have a Research Design, I will help you develop your Research Design.

Students are encouraged to conduct research related to their qualitative or mixed methods dissertation or Master thesis.

The instructor will provide individual, hands-on guidance and supervision as students gather data in the field, analyze, and interpret them.
The instructor also will guide and supervise individual students in completing their IRB application to UTD’s Office of Research to conduct research involving human subjects.

The course introduces students to NVivo, one of the popular Qualitative Data Analysis software suits, as they analyze and interpret their data. Students will learn the software by applying it to their own research data.

Students can expect to complete a significant part of collecting and analyzing their data during the semester.

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**Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

The first course objective is to use qualitative research, specifically one of its main approaches – Case Study, Grounded Theory, Phenomenology, Narrative, Content Analysis, and Ethnography – and one or more of its main methods – interviews, focus groups, field observations, historical documents – to collect data in the field, analyze, and interpret them.

The second objective is to do so toward the completion of a significant piece of research related to students’ dissertation, Master thesis, or other research projects.

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**Required Textbooks and Other Readings**

For those who have not taken EPPS 6346 or an equivalent course, I recommend two books: 1) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, which discusses the five main qualitative approaches (Chapter 4), by John W. Creswell (Sage), and 2) *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research* (Pine Forge Press), by Carol A. Bailey, especially Chapters 6 and 7 on field observations and field interviews. I will post on e-Learning readings by Creswell and Bailey from the course syllabus for EPPS 6346. For students using Content Analysis, the first two sources in the following paragraph contain readings on this approach.

I also recommend chapters from the following books on qualitative research and a publication by the National Science Foundation (NSF), which I use in EPPS 6346 Qualitative Research Methods: 1) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, by Uwe Flick, Editor (Sage Publications), 2) *Social Research Methods*, by Alan Bryman (Oxford University Press), and 3) NSF “Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research.” You will find additional readings on the different qualitative approaches listed in Creswell on page 11.

To help us think about the policy relevance of our research projects, and in order to address the section of the Written Report on the relevance of your research project to public policy, I recommend you read the short excerpt from Charles Wheelan’s introduction to public policy I have placed on Electronic Reserve in the McDermott Library. The URL for our course webpage is: [http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=2242](http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=2242). The password for the EReserve reading is **policy**.
Assignments and Academic Calendar

• **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application/Research Design.** Before any of us can begin her or his research project, each of us is required by UTD’s Office of Research to submit an IRB Application to conduct research involving human subjects. The IRB application essentially is an abbreviated Research Design.

Students who have completed EPPS 6346 or an equivalent course already will use the Research Design they created in that course to help them complete the IRB Application. For students who do not have a Research Design, I will work with you individually to develop your Research Design. You will do so using the instructions for the Research Design from EPPS 6346.

I will read drafts of your IRB Application before you submit it to help you communicate your research plans clearly and fully.

• **Written Report.** The main course product is the Written Report. You will write a 15-to-20-page report discussing your Research Problem, Research Purpose, Research Question, Methods, Theory, and other research design elements (your Research Design), data analysis and interpretation of your data, and their relevance to public policy.

• **Small Group Discussion.** Students will divide up into small groups and discuss and critique one another’s Research Design and Research Process. The goal of group discussion and the critiques is to help one another improve our Research Designs and Research Process.

• **Class Presentations.** Students will make two informal, short Class Presentations on their progress in gathering data in the field through their interviews, focus groups, observations, and or historical documents, and in analyzing and interpreting their data.

I will provide and go over all instructions. All instructions will be posted on e-Learning.

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January 8

**Orientation to the Course, and**

**Organization of Research Projects and IRB Application**

UTD’s Office of Research requires all of us to complete online training in research involving human subjects through the link below and receive a certificate of completion before submitting an IRB application. Students who have taken EPPS 6346 Qualitative Research Methods under me already have completed the training and can submit their certificate of completion you submitted for that course with your IRB Application. If you have not completed the training, please do so on your own. Print your certificate of completion and have it ready to submit with your IRB Application.
The upcoming University Holiday (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day) should be observed, but it places a certain hardship on us by slowing down getting my approval of our draft IRB applications prior to submitting them.

I propose that those of us who have a Research Design in hand give me a hard copy of your draft IRB Application on Tuesday, January 16th or later that week in order for me to work with you individually should any changes need to be made before you submit your application. You can slide your draft under my office door if I’m not in when you come by. Ideally, you will be able to do this by the end of the week of January 15th or early during the week of January 22nd.

Once I have approved your draft, you can submit it to the Office of Research. You can expect a staff member in that office to approve your IRB Application or request revisions within one week. This timetable will put our going into the field around the end of January.

For those of us who have not completed a Research Design, you likely will need longer to create the elements of the design required in the IRB Application. I propose that you give me your draft application when you have finished it and that we work individually to get it ready to submit.

January 15 NO CLASS: University Holiday: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 22

Work on IRB Application and Research Design

Self-Assessment on IRB Application and Research Design

Small Group Discussion #1

Share draft IRB applications or completed applications in small groups.

Critique one another’s statement of the Research Problem and Research Question, Interview Questions, and strategies to gain access/permission.

Individual Work with Me

January 29

Follow Up with IRB Application

Preparing to Go into the Field: Issues and Concerns

Small Group Discussion #2
Individual Work with Me

February 5
First Class Presentation

February 12
Self-Assessment following Entry into the Field and Adjustments to Research Design
First Class Presentation continued

February 19
Self-Assessment following Entry into the Field and Adjustments to Research Design continued
Small Group Discussion #3

Individual Work with Me

February 26
Introduction to NVivo
Small Group Discussion #4

Individual Work with Me

March 5
Work on Applying NVivo to Our Initial Field Data
Small Group Discussion #5

Individual Work with Me

March 12  NO CLASS:  Spring Break

March 19
Work on Data Analysis
Small Group Discussion #6
Individual Work with Me

March 26

Work on Data Analysis continued

Small Group Discussion #7

Individual Work with Me

April 2

Self-Assessment of Field Data and Data Analysis

Writing the Research Report

Small Group Discussion #8

Individual Work with Me

April 9

Self-Assessment of Writing the Research Report

Small Group Discussion #9

Individual Work with Me

April 16

Second Class Presentation

April 23

Second Class Presentation continued

April 30

Written Report due

Note: Students will turn in their Research Designs in my office (GR 2.532) at 4 p.m. during the scheduled final exam period.
Grading Policy

The percentage distribution for each of the graded assignments, attendance, and class participation (total equals 100%) for the course grade follows.

30%: Written Report
15%: IRB Application/Research Design
20%: the two Class Presentations
20%: Small Group Discussions combined
15%: Attendance and Class Participation

The grading scale follows.

A   = 94-96
A-  = 90-93
B+  = 87-89
B   = 84-86
B-  = 80-83
C+  = 77-79
C   = 74-76
C-  = 70-73
D+  = 67-69
D   = 64-66
D-  = 60-63
F   = 59 and below

Additional Course and Instructor Policies

Attendance is required. Students automatically will be excused from one class; no documentation is required if students miss only one class. Students who miss more than one class will be excused if they have a legitimate reason (for example, being out sick) and provide documentation.

The intent of this policy is to help students perform well on assignments by keeping up with lectures and discussion.

Students must submit hard copies of all assignments on the due dates. Electronic submissions will not be accepted, unless the student has a legitimate reason for being absent from class to turn in assignments. Late papers will not be accepted without my prior approval, with the exception of emergencies.

This requirement is intended to help students turn in their work on time and to promote fairness among students who submit their work on time.
University Policies

To view university policies on Student Conduct, Grade Appeals, Disability Services, Religious Holy Days, Campus Carry, Resources to Help You Succeed, and others, please go to the link that follows. http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies