Course Syllabus

Course Information

SOC / PA 3381 Field Research Methods
Section 001

Fall 2017

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: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:15 a.m. -12:30 p.m., and by appointment if these times do not fit your schedule

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

None

Course Description

Catalog Description: This course is a research practicum in which students learn how to conduct field research, conduct observations and interviews in the field, write field notes, and use these to analyze data. Readings focus on fieldwork roles and relations, observing and describing, writing field notes, field interviewing, ethical issues, and preliminary data analysis. Practice field observations and interviews are required, along with field notes.

NOTE: The catalog description is not an accurate description of our course. Our course is not a research practicum, or course in guided research that students actually carry out. Students in our course will not conduct actual research. This is what they will do in the course that follows ours in Spring 2018 – SOC/PA 4307 Field Research Practicum. In the follow-up course, students will use the main course product of our course (SOC/PA 3381) – a Research Design – to guide research on individual projects they will carry out.

In this course, students will learn how to conduct field research, including observations of and interviews with human research subjects. They also will learn how to analyze data gathered in the field. Students will learn alternative approaches that are available to field researchers to frame, focus, and carry out their research and analyze their data. Students will create a research design, the main course product. Students will be able to use their design to undertake field research in the follow-up course, SOC/PA 4381 Field Research Practicum.

NOTE: Field research is a form of Qualitative Research. As such, it complements Quantitative Research, just as Quantitative Research complements Qualitative Research. The course begins to
explore their complementarity. It also explores the contribution of Field Research to public policy.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

The course objective is to gain an understanding of field research by studying:

- alternative views of social life that guide field researchers’ research,
- alternative approaches that are available to shape and undertake their research,
- the methods of making observations and interviews in the field,
- procedures of data analysis,

and by creating a Field Research Design.

Required Textbooks and Other Readings


Other readings may be placed on Electronic Reserve in the UTD McDermott Library. The URL for our reserve readings is http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=2165.

The password for E-Reserve is research.

NOTE: I expect you to read all course reading assignments before class. This will help you get more out of class lectures and discussion, and stay on top of Class Exercises, our Exam, and your Research Design.

Assignments and Academic Calendar

- **Research Design.** Students will write a 10-12-page Research Design on a research project I will approve. The Research Design is the major product of our course, pulling together our course readings, your Class Exercises, Mid-Term Exam, and Class Presentations.

- **Class Exercises.** Students will complete a series of Class Exercises that are designed to help you learn our course materials by applying them to your Research Design, and to develop your Research Design. Students will work together on most Class Exercises. For some exercises, students will work individually.

**NOTE:** Students will turn in Class Exercises on the day they are handed out and the class works on them, unless the syllabus calendar indicates an exercise is due at a later date. The dates we will work on the various Class Exercises are indicated in the syllabus calendar below.
Students who do not attend class on days we work on Class Exercises will not get credit for exercises that are missed, unless you have an excused absence per the attendance policy below.

- **Class Presentations.** Students will make two brief Class Presentations on their Research Design, choosing one of the dates set aside for presentations. The goal of the Class Presentations is to help you improve your Research Design by hearing from classmates about your research project and hearing about classmates’ Research Design.

- **Mid-Term Exam.** Students will write a 3-page, take-home Mid-Term Exam. The exam will be short answer and brief essay. Exam questions will be handed out one week before the exam is due. The exam will review course materials that will prepare you to work on your Research Design.

I will provide and go over all instructions. All instructions will be posted on eLearning.

## Course Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>August 22</strong></td>
<td>Orientation to the Course</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August 24</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Field Research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Bailey, Chapter 1 “Introduction to Qualitative Field Research”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class Exercise #1 on August 24th</strong></td>
<td>Choosing a Research Topic</td>
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<td>Read: Bailey, “Selecting a Research Topic,” pages 33-35 from Chapter 3 “Prelude to Qualitative Fieldwork”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August 29 and 31</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Field Research Continued</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Continue Chapter 1 in Bailey.</td>
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<td><strong>Ethical Issues in Qualitative Field Research</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Bailey, Chapter 2 “Ethical Issues in Qualitative Field Research”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class Exercise #2 on August 31st</strong></td>
<td>Prior Work for Qualitative Field Research</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 5 and 7</strong></td>
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Read: Bailey, Chapter 3 “Prelude to Qualitative Field Research”

Class Exercise #3 on September 5th

Due September 5th: Topic for Research Design

September 12 and 14

The Role of Paradigm and Theory in Qualitative Research

Read: Bailey, Chapter 4 “The Infrastructure of Qualitative Field Research”

Class Exercise #4 on September 12th

September 19 and 21

Methodology

Read: Bailey, Chapter 5 “Methodology”

Class Exercise #5 on September 19th

September 26 and 28

Field Observations

Read: Bailey, Chapter 6 “Observations”

Class Exercise #6 (Class Practice Field Observation) on September 28th

On that day, our class will divide into teams and make a practice observation on campus, which is Part 1 of Class Exercise #6.

NOTE: We will meet in our regular classroom on Sept. 28th and leave from there.

NOTE: Class Exercise #6 Part 2 will be due October 3rd.

Class Exercise #7 (Individual Practice Field Observation) handed out September 28th; due October 12th

Hand out Mid-Term Exam questions September 28th; due October 5th

October 3 and 5

Field Interviews

Read: Bailey, Chapter 7 “Interviews”

Class Exercise #8 (Class Practice Interviews) on October 5th
Class Exercise #9 (Individual Practice Interview) handed out October 5th; due October 17th

Due October 3rd: Class Exercise #6 (Class Practice Field Observation Part 2)

Due October 5th: Mid-Term Exam

October 10 and 12

Class Presentations

Due October 12th: Class Exercise #7 (Individual Practice Field Observation)

October 17

Class Presentations

Due October 17th: Class Exercise #9 (Individual Practice Interview)

October 19 and 24

Field Notes

Read: Bailey, Chapter 8 “Field Notes and Leaving the Field”

Class Exercise #10 on October 19th

NOTE: On Saturday October 21st, from noon to 3:30, students who are interested will make a Voluntary Class Field Observation in an Oak Cliff Hispanic Neighborhood.

I will provide details.

October 26 and 31

Coding, Memoing and Description

Read: Bailey, Chapter 9 “Coding, Memoing, and Descriptions”

Class Exercise #11 on October 26th

November 2

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Software: NVivo

NOTE: CLASS WILL MEET IN GR 3.402B (the Computer Lab across the hall from the EPPS Main Office.

Demonstration of NVivo software in coding, memoing, and analysis of field data.

November 7 and 9
Analyzing Data

**Read:** Bailey, Chapter 10 “Typologies, Taxonomies, Visual Representations, and Themes”

**Class Exercise #12 on November 7th**

November 14

Interpreting Data

**Read:** Bailey, Chapter 11 “Storytelling, Critical Events, and Analytic Induction”

**Class Exercise #13 on November 14th**

**Class Exercise #14 on November 14th**

November 16

Evaluation Criteria and Writing the Report

**Read:** Bailey, Chapter 12 “Evaluation Criteria and Final Manuscript”

**November 21 and 23:** NO CLASS: Fall Break/Thanksgiving

November 28

**Class Presentations**

November 30 and December 5

**Class Presentations**

December 12

**Research Design due**

**NOTE:** Students will turn in their Research Proposals in my office (GR 2.532) at 11:00 a.m. during the scheduled Final Exam period.

Grading Policy

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

30%: Research Design
30%: the Class Exercises combined
15%: the two Class Presentations combined
10%: Mid-Term Exam
15%: Attendance

The grading scale follows.

A+ = 97-100
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

Course and Instructor Policies

Attendance is required. Students automatically will be excused from two classes; no documentation is required if students miss only two classes. Students who miss more than two classes 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, and others, please go to the link that follows.

http://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies