Course Syllabus

Course Information           SOC 3381 Field Research Methods           Section 001

Spring 2015

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 4:00 –4:45 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

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. Fieldwork and extensive field notes are required.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

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

- the methodological requirements of field research,
- two main approaches to field research—observation and interviews,
- strategies of data analysis for each approach, and
- the role of theory in field research.

Required Textbooks and Other Readings

The course has one required text: *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research, 2nd edition*, by Carol A. Bailey, published by Pine Forge Press (Sage Publications), 2007, which is available at the UTD
Assignments and Academic Calendar

- Exam. Students will write a 4-to-5-page take-home Mid-Term Exam. The exam will be short answer and essay. Exam questions will be handed out one week before the exams are due.

- Class Exercises. Students will participate in Class Exercises, which will be written and turned in for a grade. The exercises are designed to help students complete the Mid-Term Exam and the Research Proposal (below). Students must be present in order to receive credit for Class Exercises, with the exception of students who absence is excused. See the policy on excused absences below.

- Field Exercises. Students also will complete exercises in the field undertaking the steps in field research needed to further their understanding of field research.

- Research Proposal. Students will write a 5-7-page Research Proposal. Students will choose a research topic approved by the Instructor.

- Class Presentation. Students will make a Class Presentation on their Research Proposals.

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

January 13

Orientation to the Course

January 15

Choosing a Research Topic

Read: Bailey, “Selecting a Research Topic,” pages 33-35 from Chapter 3 “Prelude to Qualitative Fieldwork”

Instructions for Choosing a Research Topic handed out January 15th

January 20 and 22

Introduction to Qualitative Field Research

Read: Bailey, Chapter 1 “Introduction to Qualitative Field Research”

Class Exercise #1
Instructions for Research Proposal handed out January 20th

January 27 and 29

Ethical Issues in Qualitative Field Research

Read: Bailey, Chapter 2 “Ethical Issues in Qualitative Field Research”

Class Exercise #2

Proposed Topic for Research Proposal due January 29th

February 3 and 5

Prior Work for Qualitative Field Research

Read: Bailey, Chapter 3 “Prelude to Qualitative Field Research”

Class Exercise #3

February 10 and 12

The Role of Paradigm and Theory in Qualitative Research

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

Class Exercise #4

February 17 and 19

Methodology

Read: Bailey, Chapter 5 “Methodology”

Class Exercise #5

February 24 and 26

Observations

Read: Bailey, Chapter 6 “Observations”

Field Exercise Observation #1 (class observation) February 26th

The class will make practice observations on campus in teams. Meet in our regular classroom, and we will leave from there.

Field Exercise Observation #2 (observation on your own) handed out February 26th; due March 24th

Mid-Term Exam handed out February 24th
TO BE RESCHEDULED owing to bad weather!!! Saturday, February 28th
Voluntary Field Observation in Hispanic Oak Cliff

The Instructor will provide details.

March 3 and 5

Interviews

Read: Bailey, Chapter 7 “Interviews”

Mid-Term Exam due March 3rd

Field Exercise Observation #1 (class observation) due March 5th

Field Exercise Interview #3 (class interviews) March 5th

We will practice interviews with one another in class and turn in the assignment at the end of class.

Field Exercise Interview #4 (interview on your own) handed out March 5th; due March 26th

March 10 and 12

Field Notes

Read: Bailey, Chapter 8 “Field Notes”

Class Exercise #6

March 17 and 19 No Class: Spring Break

March 24 and 26

Coding, Memoing and Description

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

MARCH 24TH CLASS WILL MEET IN GR 3.402B (across the hall from the main office of EPPS).

Thomas Spencer, a Ph.D. student in PA, will give a demonstration of use of NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Software in coding, memoing, and analysis of field data.

Mr. Spencer will hand out Tip Sheets for basic functions of the software we will learn.

Class Exercise #7

Field Exercise Observation #2 (observation on your own) due March 24th
Field Exercise Interview #4 (interview on your own) due March 26th

March 31 and April 2

Analyzing Data

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

Class Exercise #8

April 7 and 9

Interpreting Data

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

Class Exercise #9

April 14 and 16

Evaluation Criteria and Writing the Report

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

Class Exercise #10

April 21 and 23

Class Presentations

April 28 and 30

Class Presentations

May 5

Research Proposal due

Note: Students will turn in their Research Proposals in the Instructor’s office (GR 2.532) at 2:30 p.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.

20%: Mid-Term Exam
25%: Class Exercises combined
25%: Field Exercises combined
20%: Research Proposal
10%: Attendance

The grading scale follows.

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\begin{align*}
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 \text{ and below}
\end{align*}
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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 the prior approval of the instructor, 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