



SOC 3381: FIELD RESEARCH METHODS

Updated 1/21/2025

INSTRUCTOR
DR. BRENDA GAMBOL

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COURSE
EPPS 6346
JAN 21 - MAY 9, 2025
In-Person Course
TU 4-6:45p
AD 3.216

PROF. G's OFFICE HOURS
TU/WED 12-1p
Please email to schedule.
GR 3.520

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to the theoretical, ethical, and practical aspects of qualitative research methods. During the semester, the class will discuss qualitative methods in sociology broadly, including (but not limited to) ethnography, content analysis, and community engaged research. Issues of subjectivity, reflexivity, and power will be central in our understanding of sociological research methods. Related to these issues are the intersecting social locations and identities of researchers and participants. In addition, we will consider the implications for research design, data collection, analysis and the content and form of findings.

The goals for students include:

- Follow a rigorous research study schedule;
- Complete data collection in a timely manner;
- Conduct interviews and observations;
- Write field notes that are descriptive and “thick”;
- Analyze data to identify themes and create codes;
- Synthesize data for findings;
- Find meaning in the data as per the relevant literature;
- Work effectively and collaboratively with a research team;
- Offer helpful feedback on peer work;
- Present findings and discuss their implications on relevant bodies of literature;
- Become an active and engaged member in a professional setting (i.e. classroom).

Important Note About Syllabus: Professor Gambol’s syllabus is a **LIVE** document. Thus, Professor Gambol reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Any changes will be made directly on the google doc. Students should ALWAYS access the syllabus via the link provided.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up by Annette Lareau

Qualitative Research for the Social Sciences by Marilyn Lichtman.

*You will need online versions; we'll be using Perusall this semester.

GRADING

Course Breakdown

20% Research Data

30% Research Write-Ups

10% Reading Annotations

15% Final Presentation and Script

10% All Other Assignments (Including Student-Led Discussion)

10% Quality of Engagement and Contribution

Grading Scale

A: 90-92.9 (-); 93-97.9; 98-100 (+)

B: 80-82.9 (-); 83-87.9; 88-88.9 (+)

C: 80-82.9 (-); 83-87.9; 88-88.9 (+)

D: 60-62.9 (-); 63-67.9; 68-69.9 (+)

Research Data: In groups of no more than 4 students, you will conduct a project on immigration and legality. We will specifically examine immigrants who — as well as the children of immigrants whose parents—are or have been on a visa. Each student in the group will conduct 3 interviews and provide transcripts. One of these interviews will be with a close friend or family member whom you will be able to observe on at least 4 different occasions (at least 1 hour each). (From here, I will refer to the person you observe as “Friend.”) You will write field notes for these observations.

Research Write-Ups: You will write about your data, findings, and analysis in 3 separate works. One will be written individually — you will produce a 2 page, double-spaced description of your “Friend” interviews and observations. The other two will be written as a group — Findings and Meanings Essay. In the Findings Essay (4-5 pages double-spaced), your group will explain and analyze at least 2 findings from your study and provide data. In the Meanings Essay (4-5 pages double-spaced), your group will explain what your findings mean vis-a-vis the literature.

Perusall Annotations: Reading annotations are due the Sunday before class. Comments are accepted up until the morning of a class day. Your bottom 3 scores will be dropped. Textbook readings can be dense. I strongly recommend using the end of the chapter questions — called “Key Discussion Issues” - as a framework when reading. (You do not need to know every single detail. Concepts are more important.) Click on the “Perusall” link on the left side menu of our eLearning page to access assignments.

The reading schedule can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A_BYdZSWN_V_B5-pgW_KQrxOntTq2zhNXCjRVXpUO8/edit?usp=sharing

Deadlines for Perusall assignments for the first two weeks will be extended to Tuesday, February 2, 2025.

Assignments:

The schedule for assignments can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A_BYdZSWN_V_B5-pgW_KQrxOntTq2zhNXCjRVXpUO8/edit?usp=sharing

The reading schedule is subject to change - I will revise according to the progress and needs of the class. Students will be given at least a week-notice of changes.

All assignments are due before the start of class unless otherwise stated.

Beginning of Class Assignments: At the beginning of class, you will be given an assignment that is to be completed on eLearning. YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO ACCESS AND COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT. One of the purposes of these assignments is to record your in-class attendance.

CITI Certificate: Complete the CITI training for Social-Behavior-Educational research. You begin here: <https://www.citiprogram.org/members/index.cfm?pageID=51&institutionID=2506&update=1#view> (If you have a certificate that is current—that is, it hasn't expired—you do not have to take the course again. Simply upload your certificate to eLearning.)

Student-Led Discussion: At the start of the semester, students will sign up to lead an in-class discussion on the required reading of their choice. To lead the class discussion, students will need to briefly summarize the author's main arguments, methods, and conceptual/theoretical frameworks as well as raise three substantive issues, critiques, or comparisons with prior reading/lectures related to methodology, presentation of findings, or use of qualitative data to make original arguments. For more on this, scroll to the bottom of the document or click [here](#).

Positionality Statement: Drawing on the positionality readings, craft a statement that discusses your particular socio-historical position and how it may affect you as a researcher.

Drafts: You will be asked to complete drafts of your final presentation.

"On-Demand" Assignments: You may be asked to complete additional assignments in and outside of class. Assignments are based on the needs of the class. These assignments are crucial - many of them will be meant to move you further along in the research process.

Final Presentation and Script: You will work in teams of no more than 4 members. You will present your findings and conclusions from the research study (no more than 20 minutes). You should have the following

sections in your presentation: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature Review; (3) Methods; (4) Findings; (5) Discussion; (6) Conclusion. You are to prepare a script.

Engagement and Contribution: You will be awarded a grade from 0-10. Top scores will be awarded to students who attend all class meetings, engage and contribute to class discussions, turn all assignments on time, and respond to peer and instructor feedback and apply what feedback is helpful in their work. A key element to your engagement and contribution score is your progress in class and growth in reading and writing.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Absences: Attendance will be taken but does not factor in your grade per se. Frequent absences and tardies will result in a low engagement and contribution score and will subject you to removal from your research group. If you miss more than two classes or are non-communicative with group members, you will be dropped from your group and will need to complete the research study and assignments on your own.

Late Work/Make-Up: I will accept late work. However, how often your work is late and the quality of your late work will impact your engagement and contribution score. "Beginning of the class" assignments are exceptions to this policy. You must be present to access and complete these assignments.

Academic Honesty: As stated by UTD, "Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, failure to contribute to a collaborative project and sabotage...Students who fail to conform to the established standards of conduct are subject to one more or of the disciplinary sanctions listed in the UT Dallas *Handbook of Operating Procedures...*" (for more on this, visit <https://conduct.utdallas.edu/faculty/academic/>).

Plagiarized assignments will receive an automatic failing grade. That means any work that you turn in that you claim as yours and it's not will be considered plagiarized.

FYI: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (e.g. ChatGBT and Grammarly) is PROHIBITED in this course. I consider its use plagiarism. Any detection of AI in your work will be considered academic dishonesty. Students utilizing AI will be subject to disciplinary actions as per UTD policies.

OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES

- If you arrive more than 20 minutes late, do not come into the classroom. If you do, I will mark you down 1% from your total course grade.
- I revise the syllabus throughout the semester to meet student needs.
- As your instructor, I will not:
 - Record seminar sessions.
 - Give students extra points on their average to maintain or boost their current GPA.
 - Create extra credit when asked to do so at the end of the semester.

- Give students a rundown of what happened in class when they were absent. (They can contact a classmate for that.)
- **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF.** Beyond academics, I stress the importance of taking care of yourself. One way to do this is to seek counseling if need be (which I have done countless times!). UTD offers FREE services for those who want it. You can schedule an appointment --- or even chat! --- with a mental health professional. Visit the Student Counseling Center's site for more info: <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/>

LEADING CLASS DISCUSSION

Prepare a presentation (around 10 minutes) that covers the following:

1. Tell us your name, title of the reading, who the author is. (If it is an article, please also state where the piece was published and when it was published. You do not need to do this if you are assigned to a textbook reading.)

2. Explain the reading.

FOR A TEXTBOOK READING: Succinctly walk us through the author's main points.

FOR SCHOLARLY WORK: Succinctly walk us through the author's main arguments.

3. "SIGNIFICANIZE."

FOR A TEXTBOOK READING: Explain the significance of the main points of the chapter. It may help to draw on concepts we've already discussed in class (e.g. reflexivity, positionality)

FOR SCHOLARLY WORK: Explain the significance and the importance of the arguments on the relevant body of knowledge.

4. In your conclusion, raise 3-4 compelling, open-ended questions or prompts to your peers. What you raise should not be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."