

**Spring 2015**  
**CIRP 5346/URPA 5344 Qualitative Research Methods**

Dr. Enid Arvidson  
Wednesday 6-8:50 p.m.  
University Hall 04  
University of Texas at Arlington

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**Spring 2015 Office Hours (scheduling an appointment is best)** ..... Tuesday 3:00-5:00 p.m.

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**Spring 2015 Office Hours**.....by appointment

**☞ Course description and objectives**

This course differentiates between theories, vis a vis techniques, of knowledge production relevant to urban affairs and planning. The beginning of the course outlines some of the basic debates on the philosophy, sociology, and economics of knowledge production. It then surveys several particular qualitative techniques of knowledge production. The course provides students with hands-on opportunities to practice different techniques and to apply techniques to their professional report, thesis, or dissertation research.

**☞ Student learning outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students should have familiarity both with epistemological debates about knowledge production as well as with specific qualitative techniques of knowledge production used in urban affairs and planning.

**☞ Required textbooks and other course materials**

The following book is available from the UTA bookstore:

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. 2011. *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage. ISBN: 9781412974172

All readings listed in the syllabus that are not in the Denzin and Lincoln book are available for download from the course Blackboard site. For some weeks, there is a lot of assigned reading (exceeding the typical 100 pages/week) — students are not necessarily expected to read everything assigned, but the point of the listed readings is to provide students' exposure to some of the classic essays, as well as essays from the textbook, on the weekly topic.

**☞ Course requirements and descriptions of major assignments and exams with due dates**

Grades are based on the following four (five for Ph.D. students) requirements (see the Grading Policy section of this syllabus for how course grade is calculated):

**1. Attendance and participation:** This course is a seminar. Students are required to attend class, read the assigned readings prior to the class in which they are discussed, and make quality contributions to in-class discussion. Each week two students will be assigned to lead the discussion by summarizing the readings and also making some cogent and provocative remarks about them. (10% of course grade)

**2. Research exercises:** After the midterm exam, there are practice exercises in which each student practices a particular qualitative technique and then presents their experiences to the class. See sign up sheet (posted to Blackboard) for **due date** (20% of course grade)

**3. Critical summary (Ph.D. students only):** Doctoral students are required to conduct a library database search for five refereed academic journal articles that use qualitative research methods all on the same topic — topic is of your choice. (One strategy to follow in tracking down articles on a topic is, once you have found one or two good articles, to check their reference list for other related articles.) Students are to write an Annotated Bibliography of all five journal articles (see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/> for more information about writing an annotated bibliography). Then, students are to select one of the articles to read in depth and write a double-spaced, ±3 page critical summary of it. In your paper, use the first paragraph or two to summarize the methodological gist of the paper, identifying the epistemological position of the paper, the paradigm within which the author is working, the research question, the data used, the stated research methods, and the conclusions drawn. In crafting this summary, do not plagiarize (see below for a discussion of plagiarism). In the remainder of your paper, through your own critical reading of the article, identify the following. You **MUST** draw on, and cite, assigned readings from class as you write about the following.

- what is the voice or positionality of the author (what voice does the author use? what is the subject position of the author/where is the author in the paper, and how do you know?);
- how does the author claim authority in presenting the argument? what power/knowledge plays does the author use?;
- what qualitative techniques are used in collecting and analyzing data? What is the “data” that is collected?
- how does the author constitute, and relate to, the objects of research?
- what is the point of the research? what are the researcher’s goals?

In writing your critical summary, be sure *not* to give your opinion about the article but rather use the epistemological and methodological discussions from the course readings and discussions to critically evaluate the article. Your paper and bibliography should be formatted according to one of the formatting styles listed below. Critical summaries are **due April 29**. (Part of the 30% for exercises + participation)

**4. Midterm exam:** A take-home midterm covers material up to that point in the course. The take-home midterm is picked up in class on February 25, and **due no later than 8:50 p.m. on March 4**. Please submit printed copies only (no e-copies of the exam are accepted). (35% of course grade)

**5. Term paper and term paper proposal:**

**a. Term paper proposal:** All students are required to submit a memo outlining their final term paper. The memo must include a research question conducive to qualitative analysis; an outline of the qualitative technique you propose to use to answer your research question including what “data” you propose to use; statement of the researcher’s (your) voice or positionality, and how you constitute or relate to your “data” and objects of research; and an initial bibliography. Among other sources, be sure to use your textbook for bibliographical sources, including chapters not assigned for class. The memo is **due February 25**. (Credit for the memo will be included in the credit for the final term paper)

**b. Term paper:** All students are required to research and write a final term paper in which you develop and carry out a qualitative research project designed to answer a research question on a topic of your choice. The question may turn into your thesis or dissertation project or it may just be practice. The paper must include description of: i) the research question, relevant background information about the research question, and framing paradigm, ii) researcher’s voice or subject position, iii) description of your qualitative technique, the kinds of “data” used, how (and when) the data were collected, etc., iv) how you constitute or relate to your “data”, v) your analysis of your data and your initial findings/conclusions related to your research question.

The focus of the paper is a discussion, application, and critical evaluation of your chosen qualitative technique. Be sure to discuss the technique you are using, why you chose that technique, what it elucidates as well as what it obscures about your topic. You **MUST** draw on, and cite, assigned readings from class in your paper.

Papers should be roughly 15 double-spaced pages, including a bibliography, in 10-12 point font with 1-inch margins all around. Your paper and bibliography must conform to one of the formatting styles listed below. You are also required to make a short in-class presentation summarizing your term paper. In-class presentations begin **April 29** and conclude **May 6**. Term papers are **due May 6**. (35% of course grade)

#### NOTES:

a. Written assignments and presentations for this class must be of professional quality. This means *carefully editing and proof-reading* all written work for typing, stylistic, spelling, and grammatical errors, and for clarity of thought. These things *will* affect your grade. If you have questions about style, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*. Your bibliographical references must conform to the format listed in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, or be consistent with some other bibliographic style (such as American Psychological Association, or Modern Languages Association). If you would like help with a paper draft, any UTA student can use the UTA Writing Center which can be reached at <http://www.uta.edu/owl/> or 272-2601. The UTA Library also sponsors a number of tutorials and guides to help with research: <http://library.uta.edu/how-to>

b. Plagiarism in research is not only unethical but is prohibited by UTA (see <http://www.uta.edu/conduct/academic-integrity/index.php>). Novice researchers sometimes plagiarize because they often do not know how and when it is appropriate to cite the work of another researcher. The most common examples of plagiarism include:

- word for word copying of sentences or paragraphs without clearly citing the source
- closely paraphrasing sentences or paragraphs without clearly citing the source
- using another person's ideas, work, data, or research without appropriate acknowledgment or citation of the source

There are many useful websites and books that provide more information about plagiarism. It is also advised to take the UTA Library's tutorial on plagiarism, <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/>. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course.

### ☞ Course grading policy

Attendance and participation:	10%
Research exercises and in-class presentation:	20%
Critical summary (doctoral students only):	part of the above 30%
Midterm exam:	35%
Term paper (including proposal) and in-class presentation:	35%

Letter grades on the midterm, critical summaries (Ph.D. students), and term research paper are based on the rubric described in the Paper Grading Rubric section of this syllabus. An "A" on the term paper means a paper that is suitable for submission to a student-run peer-reviewed journal (such as UCLA's student-run journal, Critical Planning — more info, see: <http://gsa.asucla.ucla.edu/services/publications/critical-planning>) and/or for a nationally-competitive award for Best Student Paper (such as ACSP's Edward McClure Award — more info, see: <http://www.acsp.org/awards/edward-mcclure-award>).

### ☞ Calendar

<b>January 21</b>	<b>Introduction — discussion of course objectives and requirements</b>
<b>January 28</b>	<b>Overview of Qualitative Research and Methodology</b>

#### Readings:

Denzin and Lincoln, "Preface" and ch. 1 "Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research," pp. ix-xvi and pp. 1-19.

F. Erickson, "A history of qualitative inquiry in social and educational research," ch. 3 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 43-59.

J. Creswell. 2003. "A framework for design," ch. 1 in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., pp. 3-26. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

#### **February 4      What Is Knowledge? The History and Sociology of Knowledge**

Guest speaker: Alyson Stearns, Regulatory Services Specialist, UTA

Readings (the first two readings, marked by \*, are background for the guest speaker; the remainder are on tonight's topic):

\*National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.

\*UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB) Training Modules,  
<http://www.uta.edu/ra/oric/human/criteriaforapproval.htm>

Y. Lincoln, S. Lynham, and E. Guba, "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited," ch. 6 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 97-128.

T. S. Kuhn. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, selections from "A role for history," "The route to normal science," "The nature and necessity of scientific revolutions," "Revolution as changes of world view," and "The invisibility of revolutions," pp. 1-13; 92-98; 111-113; 136-138. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

J. Sprague. 2005. *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, ch. 2 "Seeing through science: epistemologies," pp. 31-52. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

R. Rorty. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, "Introduction," pp. 3-9. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

#### **February 11      Postmodern, Post-Structuralist, and Marxist Epistemologies**

Readings:

E. Adams-St. Pierre, "Post qualitative research," ch. 37 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 611-625.

M. Foucault. 1977. *Power/Knowledge*, ch. 5 "Two Lectures," pp. 78-108. New York: Pantheon.

S. Resnick and R. Wolff. 2006. *New Departures in Marxian Theory*, ch. 1 "Marxist epistemology," pp. 31-72. New York: Routledge. PLEASE READ ONLY pp. 31-41 AND pp. 61-72.

W. Lewis. 2009. "Louis Althusser." — PLEASE READ SECTION 3 ONLY pp. 9-17 — In E.N. Zaita, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/althusser/>

#### **February 18      Feminist, Ethnic, and Postcolonial Epistemologies**

## Readings:

- V. Olesen, "Feminist qualitative research in the millennium's first decade: developments, challenges, prospects," ch.7 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 129-146.
- S. Bordo. 1987. *The Flight to Objectivity*, ch. 6 "The Cartesian masculinization of thought and the seventeenth-century flight from the feminine," pp. 97-118. Albany: SUNY Press.
- G. C. Spivak. 1988. "Can the subaltern speak?" In C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 271-313.
- A. Jaggar. 1989. "Love and knowledge: emotion in feminist epistemology." *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 32(2): 151-176.
- J. Sprague and D. Kobrynowicz. 2006. "A feminist epistemology." In J.S. Chafetz, ed., *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, New York: Springer, pp. 25-43.
- J. Butler. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, "Introduction," pp. 1-23. New York: Routledge.
- C.B. Dillard and C. Okpaloaka, "The sacred and spiritual nature of endarkened transnational feminist praxis in qualitative research," ch. 8 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 147-162.

**February 25      The Politics and Economics of Knowledge**  
**Pick up take-home midterm exam**  
**Term paper memo due**

## Readings:

- M. Levin and D. Greenwood, "Revitalizing universities by reinventing the social sciences: *bildung* and action research," ch. 2 in Denzin and Lincoln, p.. 27-42.
- D. McCloskey. 1991. "The arrogance of economic theorists." *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, 41(7): 11-12.
- N. Curtis. 2013. "Thought bubble: neoliberalism and the politics of knowledge." *New Formations*, 80/81: 73-88.
- H. Giroux. 2002. "Neoliberalism, corporate culture, and the promise of higher education: the university as a democratic public sphere." *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4): 425-463.
- S. Finley, "Critical arts-based inquiry," ch. 26 in Denzin and Lincoln, p. 435-450.

**March 4              Take-Home Midterm Due by 8:50 p.m. Please submit printed copies only (no e-copies)**

**March 11            Spring Break**

**March 18            Interviews and Focus Groups**

## Readings:

- A. Bryman and E. Bell. 2011. *Business Research Methods*, ch. 15 "Interviewing in qualitative research," pp. 312-333. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- I. Siedman. 2006. *Interviewing and Qualitative Research*, chs. 7-8, "Interviewing as a relationship," and "Analyzing, interpreting, and sharing interview material," pp. 95-131.
- G. Pratt. 2009. "Interviews and interviewing." In D. Gregory, et al, eds., *Dictionary of Human Geography 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, p. 393-94.
- G. Kamberelis and G. Dimitraidis, "Focus groups: contingent articulations of pedagogy, politics and inquiry," ch.33 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 545-561.
- J. Cameron. 2005. "Focussing on the focus group." In I. Hay, ed., *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- G. Pratt. 2009. "Focus groups." In D. Gregory, et al, eds., *Dictionary of Human Geography 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, p. 258.

**March 25                    Ethnography/Participant Observation and Participatory Action Research**  
Presentations of last week's practice exercise

Readings:

- T. Spry, "Performative autoethnography: critical embodiments and possibilities," ch. 30 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 497-511.
- S.M. Gatson, "The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography," ch. 31 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 513-527.
- B. Tedlock, "Braiding narrative ethnography with memoir and creative nonfiction," ch. 19 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 331-339.
- G. Guest, E. Namey, and M. Mitchell. 2013. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*, ch. 3 "Participant observation," pp. 75-112. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- H. Miner. 1956. "Body ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist*, 58(3): 503-507.
- M. Brydon-Miller, et al, "Jazz and the Banyan Tree: roots and riffs on participatory action research," ch. 23 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 387-400.
- S. Kindon, R. Pain, and M. Kesby. 2009. "Participatory action research." In R. Kitchen and N. Thrift, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, pp. 90-95. New York: Elsevier.
- R. Pain, G. Whitman, and D. Milledge. 2011. *Participatory Action Research Toolkit*. Durham, U.K.: Durham University Department of Geography.

**April 1                    Textual/Document Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Oral History**  
Presentations of last week's practice exercise

Readings:

- S.E. Chase, "Narrative inquiry: still a field in the making," ch. 25 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 421-434.
- R.J. Pelias, "Writing into position: strategies for composition and evaluation," ch. 40 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 659-668.
- S. Lockyer. 2008. "Textual analysis." In L. Given, ed., *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 865-66. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- L. Prior. 2008. "Document analysis." In L. Given, ed., *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 230-31. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- A. Peräkylä and J. Ruusuvuori, "Analyzing talk and text," ch. 32 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 529-533.
- J. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium, "The constructionist analytics of interpretative practice," ch. 20 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 341-357.
- J. Potter. 2008. "Discourse analysis." In L. Given, ed., *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 217-220. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- L. Shopes, "Oral history," ch. 27 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 451-465.
- J. Chaitin. 2008. "Oral history." In L. Given, ed., *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 583-85. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

**April 8**                      **Case Study and Grounded Theory**  
Presentations of last week's practice exercise

Readings:

- K. Charmaz, "Grounded theory methods in social justice research," ch. 21 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 359-380.
- J. Corbin and A. Strauss. 1990. "Grounded theory research: procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria." *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1): 3-21.
- B. Flyvbjerg, "Case study," ch. 17 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 301-316.
- J. Platt. 1992. "'Case Study' in American methodological thought." *Current Sociology*, 40(1): 17-48.
- R. Stake. 2008. "Qualitative case studies." In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds., *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp. 118-149. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

**April 15**                      **Qualitative GIS**  
Presentations of last week's practice exercise

Readings:

- M. Kwan. 2002. "Is GIS for women? Reflections on the critical discourse in the 1990s." *Gender, Place and Culture*, 9(3): 271-279.

- M. Pavlovskaya. 2006. "Theorizing with GIS: a tool for critical geographies?" *Environment and Planning A*, 38(11): 2003-2020.
- E. Talen. 2000 "Bottom-up GIS: A new tool for individual and group expression in participatory planning." *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 66(3): 279-94.
- J. Davidson and S. di Gregorio, "Qualitative research and technology: in the midst of a revolution," ch. 38 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 627-643.

**April 22                    The State of Qualitative Methods: Is Qualitative Research Scientific? Does Epistemology Matter?**

Presentations of last week's practice exercise

Readings:

- J.E.M. Sale, L.H. Lohfeld, and K. Brazil. 2002. "Revisiting the quantitative-qualitative debate: implications for mixed-methods research." *Quality and Quantity*, 36: 43-53.
- A. Bryman. 1984. "The debate about quantitative and qualitative research: a question of method or epistemology?" *The British Journal of Sociology*, 35(1): 75-92.
- J. Preissle, "Qualitative futures: where we might go from where we've been," ch. 42 in Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 685-698.

**April 29                    In-Class Presentations begin  
Doctoral students' critical summary due**

**May 6                        Last day of class. In-class Presentations conclude  
Final research papers due by 8:50 p.m.**



## ☞ Required Stuff for the Syllabus

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Records and Registration: [http://www.uta.edu/aao/recordsandregistration/content/student\\_services/add\\_drop\\_procedures.aspx](http://www.uta.edu/aao/recordsandregistration/content/student_services/add_drop_procedures.aspx).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at <http://www.uta.edu/disability>, or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law "Title IX" such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/titleIX>.

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code, stated here <http://www.uta.edu/conduct/>:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/resources>

# PAPER GRADING RUBRIC

PAPER GRADING RUBRIC					
	The A Paper	The B Paper	The C Paper	The D Paper	The F Paper
Ideas	Excels in responding to assignment. Interesting, demonstrates sophistication of thought. Central idea/thesis is clearly communicated, worth developing; limited enough to be manageable. Paper recognizes some complexity of its thesis: may acknowledge its contradictions, qualifications, or limits and follow out their logical implications. Understands and critically evaluates its sources, appropriately	A solid paper, responding appropriately to assignment. Clearly states a thesis/central idea, but may have minor lapses in development. Begins to acknowledge the complexity of central idea and the possibility of other points of view. Shows careful reading of sources, but may not evaluate them critically. Attempts to define terms, not always successfully.	Adequate but weaker and less effective, possibly responding less well to assignment. Presents central idea in general terms, often depending on platitudes or clichés. Usually does not acknowledge other views. Shows basic comprehension of sources, perhaps with lapses in understanding. If it defines terms, often depends on dictionary definitions.	Does not have a clear central idea or does not respond appropriately to the assignment. Thesis may be too vague or obvious to be developed effectively. Paper may misunderstand sources.	Does not respond to the assignment, lacks a thesis or central idea, and may neglect to use sources where necessary.
Organization & coherence	Uses a logical structure appropriate to paper's subject, purpose, audience, thesis, and disciplinary field. Sophisticated transitional sentences often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations. It guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.	Shows a logical progression of ideas and uses fairly sophisticated transitional devices; e.g., may move from least to more important idea. Some logical links may be faulty, but each paragraph clearly relates to paper's central idea.	May list ideas or arrange them randomly rather than using any evident logical structure. May use transitions, but they are likely to be sequential (first, second, third) rather than logic-based. While each paragraph may relate to central idea, logic is not always clear. Paragraphs have topic sentences but may be overly general, and arrangement of sentences within paragraphs may lack coherence.	May have random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences or main ideas, or may be too general or too specific to be effective. Paragraphs may not all relate to paper's thesis.	No appreciable organization; lacks transitions and coherence
Support	Uses evidence appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient evidence and explanation to convince.	Begins to offer reasons to support its points, perhaps using varied kinds of evidence. Begins to interpret the evidence and explain connections between evidence and main ideas. Its examples bear some relevance.	Often uses generalizations to support its points. May use examples, but they may be obvious or not relevant. Often depends on unsupported opinion or personal experience, or assumes that evidence speaks for itself and needs no application to the point being discussed. Often has lapses in logic.	Depends on clichés or overgeneralizations for support, or offers little evidence of any kind. May be personal narrative rather than essay, or summary rather than analysis.	Uses irrelevant details or lacks supporting evidence entirely. May be unduly brief.
Style	Chooses words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity. Sentence style fits paper's audience and purpose. Sentences are varied, yet clearly structured and carefully focused, not long and rambling.	Generally uses words accurately and effectively, but may sometimes be too general. Sentences generally clear, well structured, and focused, though some may be awkward or ineffective.	Uses relatively vague and general words, may use some inappropriate language. Sentence structure generally correct, but sentences may be wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing.	May be too vague and abstract, or very personal and specific. Usually contains several awkward or ungrammatical sentences; sentence structure is simple or monotonous.	Usually contains many awkward sentences, misuses words, employs inappropriate language.

(continued)	The A Paper	The B Paper	The C Paper	The D Paper	The F Paper
<b>Mechanics</b>	Almost entirely free of spelling punctuation, and grammatical errors.	May contain a few errors, which may annoy the reader but not impede understanding.	Usually contains several mechanical errors, which may temporarily confuse the reader but not impede the overall understanding.	Usually contains either many mechanical errors or a few important errors that block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts.	Usually contains so many mechanical errors that it is impossible for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence.
<b>Citation &amp; bibliographic practices</b>	Consistent, appropriate use of quotations and para- phrasing, with no hint of plagiarism. Uniform and appropriate handling of in-text citations (or footnotes). Well-organized reference list or bibliography with appropriate, consistent style.	Occasional, minor lapses in use of quotations and paraphrasing, with no hint of plagiarism. Minor inconsistency or inappropriate handling of citations. Reference list or bibliography has minor problems with organization or style.	More frequent minor lapses in use of quotations and paraphrasing, with no hint of plagiarism. Some minor inconsistency or mishandling of citations. Reference list or bibliography has more serious organizational or style problems.	Crude use of quotations or paraphrasing, perhaps with serious inconsistency or mishandling of citations. Plagiarism (including unintentional plagiarism) may be strongly suspected. Reference list or bibliography may have serious problems in organization or style.	Grievously defective use of quotations or paraphrasing or serious mishandling of citations. Plagiarism (even if unintentional) can be demonstrated. Reference list or bibliography deeply defective in organization or style.
Original rubric provided by UTA's Office of Instructional Assessment (12-2010)					