

**LARC 5380**

**RESEARCH METHODS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

**FALL 2015**

**Wednesdays, Noon-2:50 p.m.**

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**Office hours by appointment (often after class)**

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**OBJECTIVES:**

- \*To develop techniques and skills in formulating research approaches to landscape architecture;
- \*To understand the characteristics of qualitative, quantitative and descriptive research techniques; and,
- \*To demonstrate applications of these techniques and skills in academic and non-academic practice.

**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:**

At the conclusion of this class, students will be able:

- \*To prepare a scholarly proposal or publishable paper in pursuit of a master's degree in landscape architecture;
- \*To write a thesis proposal; and,
- \*To apply appropriate research techniques to the practice of landscape architecture, public and private.

**NEED:**

Design and planning rely upon input, message exchange, negotiations, information management, and in the age of performative landscapes knowledge-generation or research. How to select, synthesize and use information critical to designing space for environmental quality and human use is the applied objective of this course.

Historically, the design professions have placed little emphasis on measuring client input, even though the design professions are required to assess individual or group participation in the development of a design program. This void underscores the need for scientifically acceptable approaches to research. In addition, design decisions are often made based on intuitive, seat-of-the-pants observations, which make aims and outcomes difficult to understand, difficult to measure, difficult to explain, unadaptable from project-to-project, and disrespected in scientific circles.

This situation explains why the design professions have lagged behind other academic fields in the generation of new knowledge. In fact, in the United States, design practitioners rather than educators, have been at the forefront of design innovations and knowledge generation, with few exceptions.

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As we at UT Arlington (and landscape architecture worldwide) reach for higher achievement in academic practice, it is essential that we inject scientific rigor into our curricula. Our universities expect it and accreditation demands it. That is why this course is in the curriculum, and that is why the standard here switched from design theses to research theses when the Program became exclusively a MLA Program. (We will discuss the differences in these formats as the semester unfolds.)

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this course is to develop among graduate students in landscape architecture the techniques and intellectual skills necessary to complete an original, academically acceptable research thesis. While preparing a student to undertake thesis research, the course also helps students to critically review the knowledge base of landscape architecture. Therefore, the skills and techniques taught in this course not only are useful in academic practice but also in public and private practice. That's part of the reason why the course's shibboleth is "... to think theoretically and act practically."

**EMPHASIS:**

The emphasis of the course is on qualitative data collection and analysis, because of the particular suitability this method has to the design and planning fields. The importance of quantitative and descriptive techniques also is underscored with a cursory introduction of certain requirements for objectively using these techniques. Knowing when to use one or the other methods, or both, is emphasized.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The course is taught largely as a seminar, meaning that an emphasis is placed on student preparation for each upcoming class. There is a great deal of outside reading required. Therefore, student preparation is measured by the student's ability and willingness to discuss assigned and unassigned readings, the student's ability to challenge the class (including the instructors) with solid, well-grounded critical thought, and by the student's attendance. **(Any unexcused absence will result in loss of one letter grade for the course.)** In addition, student performance is measured by the student's incorporation of things learned or noted on previous exercises into subsequent discussions or exercises. In other words, don't forget what you learned last week!

**EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

The reason that **attendance is absolutely necessary** is because each class builds upon those that precede it. The student will be expected to come to class prepared, with thinking caps on, and current in your reading and writing assignments. **Participation in class is a good measure of preparedness and it is twenty-five percent of your grade.**

In addition to reading assignments in the texts, journals and other publications, you will be given numerous hand-outs over the course of the semester. You are urged to read these immediately in order to best relate them to the previous or upcoming class.

The primary writing assignment is the preparation of a thesis proposal worthy of publication as a scientific paper. At a minimum, this proposal includes an introduction, literature review, research methods section, and a conclusion. Other sections or models will be discussed later. Each student will present a cogent oral and visual summary of his / her thesis proposal at the end of the semester.

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An outside project(s) or exercise(s) will be required, focusing on participant observations within some social and/or physical setting. Data also will be collected using survey research techniques. Such projects or exercises may or may not be associated with the writing assignment.

A subjective and comprehensive written exam—let’s call it an in-class exercise—will be administered at the end of the semester.

Details on these sub-parts of the course will unfold in the next few class meetings. To some degree the dynamics of the class dictate the emphasis of each component, but the proportional value of each for now is:

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|--|-----|
| ○ Participation, attendance and preparation  | 25% |
| ○ Paper, thesis proposal, or writing assignment<br>(including verbal presentation) | 30% |
| ○ Project/data collection exercises  | 25% |
| ○ Comprehensive in-class exercise  | 20% |

Finally, this class aims to increase your ability to clearly observe, synthesize and report what is happening in your environment. How to observe and how to synthesize what we experience are what we will learn from one another. The responsibility for reporting articulately, and writing with brevity and clarity, falls primarily on you.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Block, Peter, 2011. Flawless Consulting. San Diego: University Associates. ISBN 978-0-7879-4803-0

Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, 2008. The Craft of Research. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN-10 0226065669 (Highly recommended)

Clayton, Susan and Susan Opatow, eds. 2003. Identity and the Natural Environment. Cambridge: MIT Press. ISBN 9780262033114

Deming, M. Elen and Simon Swaffield, 2011. Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design. Hoboken NJ: John Wiley and Sons. ISBN 978-0-470-56417-2

Taylor, Steven J. and Robert Bogden, 1991. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. New York: John Wiley and Sons. ISBN 0-471-88947-4

Taylor, Pat D. and Randal Harwood et al, 2015. “Thesis Guidelines for the Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington: Data are Plural,” Unpublished Manuscript (issued in class.)

Turabian, Kate L., 2013 Taylor, Steven J. and Robert Bogden, 1991. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. New York: John Wiley and Sons. ISBN 0-471-88947-4  
(and later editions.) A Manual for Writing Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Or similar writing manual)

### **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

2013. "Thesis and Dissertation Handbook," UT Arlington (electronic version available at [http://www.uta.edu/library/etd/ETD%20Files/TD\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.uta.edu/library/etd/ETD%20Files/TD_Handbook.pdf))

Glaser, Barney and James Strauss, 1977. The Discovery of Grounded Theory. New York: Aldine Publishers.

Henderson, Karla A., 1991. Dimensions of Choice. State College PA: Venture Publishing Inc.

Henderson, Karla A., 1995. Evaluating Leisure Services. State College PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

Kaplan, Stephen and Rachel Kaplan, 1998. With People in Mind: Design and Management of Everyday Nature. Washington D.C: Island Press.

Langer, Ellen J., 1997. The Power of Mindful Learning. Reading MA: Addison Welsey Publishing Company.

Tannen, Deborah, 1998. The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue. New York: Random House.

Spradley, James P., 1980. Participant Observations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. ISBN-10: 0030445019

Strunk, William Jr. and F.B. White, 2003 (and later editions.) The Elements of Style. New York

Van Wageningen, Keith, 1991. Writing a Thesis: Substantive Style. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall

### **OWNERSHIP OF STUDENT WORK**

Student products from all classes and studios in the Program in Landscape Architecture are the property of the student. However, the Program has the responsibility of retaining any student work it deems appropriate for accreditation purposes, for up to six years. This means that most work submitted by students is not returned. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to retain copies, photographs or reproducibles of all work submitted.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT**

It has been, and will continue to be, the policy of The University of Texas at Arlington to be an equal opportunity employer. The University does not discriminate on any basis prohibited by applicable law including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, or veteran status in recruitment, employment, promotion, compensation, benefits or training. It is also the University's policy to maintain a work environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to seeking the best qualified person to fill each available position and will reward employees based on their job performance.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112—The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA,) pursuant to section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodation” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty as the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic Integrity: All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*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.*

According to UTA as the Instructor of the course I may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in my 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* 5010 1, §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.

"Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22).

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The University of Texas at 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. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources) for more information

### **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

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>.

### **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 Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

### **STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY:**

At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a 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/>

### **GRADE GRIEVANCE POLICY**

VII. Rules, Regulations and Projects; Grade Grievance: Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current graduate catalog. For graduate courses, see <http://www.uta.edu/gradcatalog/2012/generalregulations/#grades>.

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR OUT-OF-CLASS STUDY**

Students can expect to spend 3-8 hours per week (average) on reading, field work, and writing. These times will ebb and flow according to due dates and work load outlined in the syllabus.

### **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, [which is located out the door and to the right](#). When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

September 02	Introduction; reading assignments; levels of theory and theory development; quantitative, qualitative and descriptive techniques; <i>Landscape Journal</i> assignment.
September 09	Brief history of research methods; discussion of readings; qualitative, quantitative and descriptive techniques; applications to landscape architecture; participant observations and field notes; assignment of field exercises.
September 16	IRB/Human Subjects training; quantitative data techniques; (Mary Colette Lybrand, Alyson Stearns, University Regulatory Services;) survey development and testing; statistical analysis.
September 23	Continuation of topics from weeks 1, 2 and 3; client/consultant relationships; field assignments; field notes/first assignments issued; class discussions on readings, including theses and <i>Landscape Journal</i> articles.
September 30	Quantitative data techniques; survey development and testing; results from pre-testing; authentic behavior; client/consultant relationships; balance theory and the Golden Mean; initiation of thesis proposals; Abstracts due.
October 07	Communications and information flow; interpersonal communication issues; review of thesis outline and beginning of literature search; diffusion of innovations; restricted code systems; issues in qualitative research (including ethics.)
October 14	Diffusion theory; personality typing; androgyny and gender roles; interviewing (exercise;) authentic behavior.
October 21	Data collection/analysis; and/or field exercises
October 28	Introduction and Literature Review due. Review of class materials; review of literature and key concepts; assignments due; mid-course review (what is it that you know that you do not know?)
November 4	Field exercises; no class meeting (ASLA Annual Meeting, Chicago)
November 11	Field exercises

**(schedule continued)**

November 18	Discussions from readings; issues related to proposals; current issues and theory development; framing theory; Research Methods chapter due (no review.)
November 25	Work on thesis drafts (no class meeting;) (last day to defend theses)
December 02	First draft of proposals submitted; thesis draft return date to be determined
December 09-25	Proposed period of LARC thesis presentations (attendance required)
November 25	Research seminar; final thesis proposals submitted; verbal presentations; (11.25.15, last day for thesis defenses.)
December 02	TBD
December 09	Last day of classes;
December 16	Final (in-class exercise)

Note: As mentioned earlier, this class is a seminar, requiring a considerable amount of outside work. All classroom discussions rely on assigned readings, class notes and personal experiences derived during the data collection exercises. Thus, preparation through review of literature is essential. Student contributions in this class reflect a student's understanding of the importance of research methods to a high quality thesis, and to an understanding of critical thinking in the successful practice of landscape architecture.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The UT Arlington Program in Landscape Architecture constantly raises its standards for both students and faculty. These standards are elevated by the ever-improving performance of our students as much as they are through faculty initiative.

For that reason, it is the faculty's hope that your thesis will join those from the Program that have won regional, national, and international recognition. It is also our hope that you will submit a summary article from your thesis for peer review in an appropriate refereed outlet. This can be through a presentation at a professional or scholarly conference or a published paper. It is, in fact, an expectation, so you should discuss this step with your committee chair.

**\*\*This course schedule is subject to change depending on contingencies of the semester.**

**YOU ARE EXPECTED TO REMEMBER:**  
**Data ARE plural**



