

SYLLABUS

LARC 5380

RESEARCH METHODS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

FALL 2006

Wednesday's, Noon-2:50 p.m.

Pat D. Taylor
817-272-2801

pdt@uta.edu
dkzpdtd@aol.com

Office hours by appointment

OBJECTIVES:

- *To develop techniques and skills in formulating research approaches in landscape architecture;
- *To understand the characteristics of qualitative, quantitative and descriptive research techniques; and,
- *To demonstrate applications of these techniques and skills in academics and 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; and,
- *To apply appropriate research techniques to the practice of landscape architecture, public and private.
- *To write a thesis proposal.

NEED:

Design and planning are based upon input, message exchange, negotiations and information management. How to select, synthesize and use environmentally critical information is the applied objective of this course.

Historically, the design professions have had little exposure to measuring client input, whether through individual or group participation. This void underscores the need for scientifically acceptable approaches to research. In addition, design decisions often rely on intuitive, seat-of-the-pants observations, which make aims and outcomes difficult to understand, difficult to explain, unsuitable 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 knowledge. In fact, in the United States, design practitioners rather than academicians, 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 achievements in the academic environment in which we perform, 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 emphasis here has switched from design theses to research theses over the past decade. (We will discuss the differences in these formats as the semester unfolds.)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this course is to develop among upper level graduate students in landscape architecture the techniques and intellectual skills necessary to complete an original, academically acceptable research thesis. While preparing the student to undertake the thesis process, the course aims as much as anything at developing the student's abilities to critically think about, and frame, landscape architecture. Therefore, the skills and techniques taught in this course are those useful both in academics and practice, and it can be said that 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 instructor) with solid, well-grounded critical thought, and 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've learned.

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, thinking caps on, and current in reading and writing assignments. Participation in class is a good measure of preparedness.

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. This proposal includes an introduction, literature review, methodology and conclusion. Other sections or models will be discussed later.

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

A subjective and comprehensive written exam—let's call it an in-class paper—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 | 20% |
| ○ Paper or writing assignment | 35% |
| ○ Project(s) | 25% |
| ○ Exam | 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 are what we will learn from one another. The responsibility for reporting articulately, and writing with brevity and clarity, falls primarily on your shoulders.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Block, Peter, 1981. Flawless Consulting. San Diego: University Associates.

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

Eyres, Gloria W., 1991. "Thesis and Dissertation Manual of Style," UT Arlington (electronic version available on Graduate School website.)

Henderson, Karla A., 1991. Dimensions of Choice. 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.

Taylor, Steven J. and Robert Bogden, 1991. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Taylor, Pat D. and Randal Harwood et al, 2006. "Thesis Guidelines for the Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington: Data are Plural," Unpublished Manuscript. (Issued in class.)

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, 2003. The Craft of Research. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

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

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(strongly recommended texts, continued)

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

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.

Turabian, Kate L., 1996 (and later editions.) A Manual for Writing Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Spradley, James P. Participant Observations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

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

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

OWNERSHIP OF STUDENT WORK

All products of classed 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. 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.

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ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include 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.)

SCHEDULE:

August	30	Introduction; reading assignments; levels of theory and theory development; quantitative, qualitative and descriptive techniques.
September	6	IRB/Human Subjects training.
September	13	Continuation of topics from week 1; authentic behavior; client/consultant relationships; field assignments interview techniques; field notes/first assignments issued; class discussions on readings, including theses and Landscape Journal articles.
September	20	Brief history of research methods; discussion of readings; qualitative, quantitative and descriptive techniques; applications to landscape architecture; participate observations and field notes; assignment of field exercises.
September	27	Quantitative data techniques; survey development and testing; statistical analysis (Dr. Lee.)
October	4	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	11	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.
October	18	Quantitative data collection/analysis; and/or field exercises (Dr. Lee.)
October	25	TBA
November	1	Review of class materials; review of literature and key concepts; assignments due; mid-course review (what is it that you know you do not know.)

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(schedule continued)

November 8	Discussions from readings; issues related to proposals; current issues and theory development; framing theory.
November 15	First draft of proposals submitted.
November 22	Thesis proposal drafts returned; review.
November 29	TBA
December 6	Research Seminar; final theses proposals submitted.
December 13	Final Exam

Note: Again, this class is a seminar, requiring a lot 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 comprehension of the importance of research methods to a high quality thesis, and to an understanding of critical thinking as a component of successful practice in landscape architecture.

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 by faculty initiative.

For that reason, it is the faculty's hope that your thesis will join those from the Program that have won 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 syllabus is subject to change, and it is highly likely that it will.**

REMEMBER: Data ARE plural.