



Syllabus

PA 3306 Advanced Research and Writing for the Policy Sciences Spring 2026 | The University of Texas at Dallas

Time: Monday and Wednesday 1:00 pm to 2:15 pm

Class Location: GR 3.402A

Instructor: Salman Bin Habib

E-mail: Salman.Habib@UTDallas.edu

Website: salmanbinhabib.org

Office: GR 2.512 (EPPS TA room)

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 2:30 pm to 4 pm [MS Teams or in-person by appointment]

IMPORTANT: Please Use your UTD email only. Per university policy, any emails from a non-UTD address will not receive a response. Communication from the instructor outside of class time will take place through email or MS TEAMS, so please check yours regularly.

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

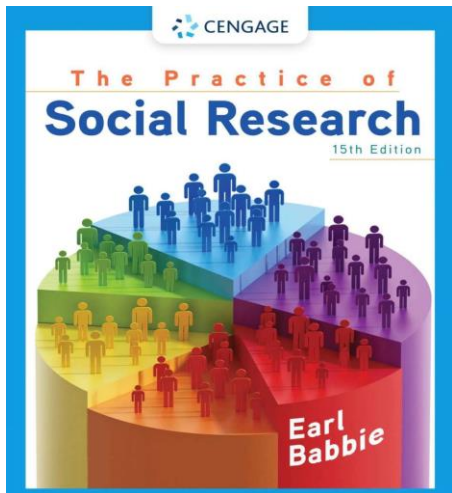
PA 3306 – Advanced Research and Writing for the Policy Sciences is an introduction to research design and data analysis methods used in social science research. It is an undergraduate-level course which will require students to learn the basics of research design and develop an independent research project, thereby improving their writing skills. Implications for public policy will be considered.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

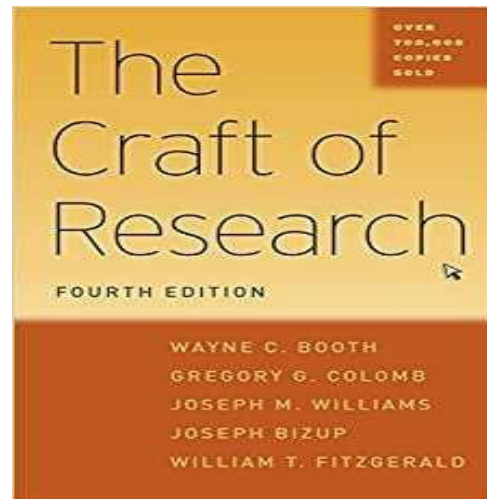
- Develop a basic understanding of research design in social science research.
- Learn to write a research paper.
- Acquire basic data analysis skills.
- Most importantly, become curious and inquisitive learners

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

- Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research. 15th Ed. Cengage Learning, 2021. (14th edition also acceptable) (Referred as PSR)
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. The Craft of Research. 4th Ed. University of Chicago Press, 2016. (Referred as CR)
- Textbooks and some other bookstore materials can be ordered online through Off-Campus Books <http://www.offcampusbooks.com>, VitalSource, or the UT Dallas Bookstore <http://www.bkstr.com/texasatdallasstore/home>



[PSR]



[CR]

- (Supplementary Texts) Turabian, Kate L. A manual for writers of research papers, theses and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers. 9th Ed. University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- (Additional Course Materials) Additional readings will be posted on eLearning and instructors website. However, students are not required to print material available electronically.

CLASS FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

This is a face-to-face course, and we will meet in a designated classroom (**GR 3.402A**) for each session. All assignments will be provided through UTD eLearning site <https://elearning.utdallas.edu>, using UTD Net ID account. Lecture PowerPoints will be posted each week on eLearning after each week's class. Please note that the PowerPoint presentations are designed to assist you with your textbook readings but are not to substitute them.

Students are expected to attend AND participate in classes regularly, complete assignments on time, and engage with the assigned course materials. Assessments will include attendance, quizzes, a midterm exam, a final research paper and associated research assignments. Attendance will be recorded, and late submission will not be accepted, except for extenuating circumstances, and only with proper written documentation.

Please see the course access and navigation section of the site for more information <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/students/current/getting-started>

To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the Student eLearning Tutorials <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/students/current/tutorials>.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day/7days a week. The eLearning Support Center <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/helpdesk> services include a toll-free telephone

COURSE COMPONENTS

Attendance and participation (25%, 250 points)

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. The instructor will notify any changes regarding in advance. If for some reason students must miss a class, please contact the instructor in advance. Failure to notify the instructor and providing valid documentation for absence will result in severe penalty upon the discretion of the instructor.

Participation is evaluated through in-class contributions and completion of short in-class work products.

Participation Passport

- To earn participation points, you will submit or show a brief in-class work product during most class meetings. These products are low-stakes but required.
- You have two “Life Happens” passes for the semester. You may use them for any reason without documentation. After these are used, missed participation products may require documentation and will be handled case by case.

Quizzes (25%, 250 points)

There will be five (5) in-person quizzes held during class time. In addition, there will be one online skill check at the end of the semester. The best five scores out of six assessments will count toward your quiz grade. Each assessment is worth 50 points. Each quiz will cover designated chapters and include 15 multiple-choice questions. The quizzes will be held **in-person** during class time.

The quizzes will be **timed (30 minutes)**, and students will need to complete them in **one sitting**. If you exit the quiz page, you will not be able to log back in and complete it. The quizzes will be held **open book**, which means you can refer to the assigned book text and class lectures/PowerPoint slides while completing the quiz. Use of any internet sources is prohibited.

Midterm Exam (10%, 100 points)

The midterm exam will cover the first half of the syllabus and include 30 multiple-choice questions, and 5 short QA. The midterm will be held at the UTD TESTING CENTER on e-learning platform. The exam will be held **closed book**.

The midterm exam will be **timed (75 minutes)**, and students will need to complete it in **one sitting**. If you exit the test page, you will not be able to log back in and complete it.

Research Assignments [20%, 200 points]

The research assignments are intended to facilitate an independent research paper (detailed in the “**Research Paper**” section) to be submitted towards the end of the semester. Timely completion of the research assignments will relieve students of considerable workload during the final week of classes. There are **four** research assignments worth **50 points (5%) each**:

(i) *Research Proposal* (**One page**): A research proposal outlines what an individual wants to investigate, along with their motivations and their plan of operationalization. Learning to craft a concise yet substantive research proposal is crucial for academic (e.g. conferences and academic research grants) as well as non-academic (e.g. evaluation projects) scenarios. The research proposal should be no longer than **one page** (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced) and include,

(a) Research question (s): *What* do you intend to study/investigate?

(b) Motivation/Contribution (s): What makes you interested in your study/ what do you feel is/are the study's primary contribution (s)? Your answer needs to be informed by existing research. A review of scholarly literature at the research proposal stage helps one narrow down their research question by (i) identifying gaps in literature in an area where one is interested, (ii) determining whether this "gap" has already been filled by other researchers, etc. You are encouraged to leverage Google Scholar and/or other sources (UTD Library, JSTOR, among others) to discover 3-4 articles and/or theories relevant to your study. However, owing to the page limit assigned, citations are not necessary in the research proposal.

(c) Plan of operationalization: Operationalization involves specifying your dependent and independent variables and outlining how you intend to measure them using available data and methods.

(ii) *Literature Review* (**Four to six pages**): Students should summarize articles and/or theories relevant to their study in the literature review assignment. A good literature review tells a naturally flowing story beginning with an introduction (*what the story is about*), followed by a motivation/contribution section (*why you should continue to read*), and then detailing what the main characters are and whether and how they relate to each other. Therefore, the following sections are necessary for the successful completion of the literature review assignment:

(a) introduction/background,

(b) motivation/contribution,

(c) sections defining and/or explaining the dependent and independent variables and how they have been explored in relation one another in the existing literature,

(d) hypotheses (i.e. *anticipated* results), meaning, your *expectation* of how the independent variable (s) will be associated with the dependent variable (s).

The literature review should consider at least one *theory* to inform the potential relationship between the dependent and the independent variable (s). Theories can be included in any and all of the sections mentioned above (a – d); that is, a separate section for "theory" is not required but will not be penalized. The literature review should be **4-6 pages** (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced).

(iii) *Operationalization* (**Up to four pages**): This section outlines *how* you intend to investigate your research question. Operationalization involves specifying your dependent and independent variables and outlining how you intend to measure them using available data and methods. The

operationalization section should therefore include the following sections (a) Variables (b) Data, (c) Methods. Important considerations for this assignment include:

- (a) Do my variables measure what I want to measure? (Are my variables a good representation of a construct I want them to represent?)
- (b) What data sources can I utilize?
- (c) What is my sample? (How do I select within my data? Who/what do I include?)
- (d) What research method is most appropriate? (Do I include a comparison group? What am I controlling for?)
- (e) How do I conduct my data analysis? (OLS? Logit? SEM? STATA? R?)

The operationalization assignment should be **no longer than 4 pages** (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced).

(iv) Paper presentation (**12 to 15 minutes**): Students are required to present the progress on their research paper in the presence of the instructor and their peers. The paper presentation should include, at a minimum, (a) research question, (b) motivation/ contribution (s), (c) literature review (inclusive of at least one theory), (d) operationalization, (e) preliminary results, and (f) limitations. A “future research opportunities” section is encouraged but not necessary. This assignment is intended to improve the presentation skills of students and help them obtain valuable feedback that they can incorporate in their final research paper. The presentation should be no longer than **12-15 minutes**.

Poster Presentation and Final Research Paper (20%, 200 points)

Students will present their research as a policy-relevant poster and submit a final paper. This category includes both deliverables:

- Poster (100 points): a single-page poster summarizing the question, motivation, data, methods, key findings, and policy implications. Posters will be presented during the final weeks of the semester.
- Final Research Paper (100 points): Students will choose a single topic and write a research paper on a single topic (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced). The topic does not have to be the same as the proposal, but students are encouraged to study a research topic that they are already passionate about. The paper should be **no longer than 15 pages** and include the following sections:
 - I. Literature Review [*see the “Literature Review” assignment*]
 - II. Operationalization [*see the “Operationalization” assignment*]
 - III. Findings [*describe the results of your data analysis*]
 - IV. Conclusion [*summarize your research question, your findings, the limitations of your research*]

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on the scale below. Grades for all assignments and tests will be

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posted on eLearning under grades.

Attendance and Participation	250 points (25%)
Quizzes (best 5 of 6)	250 points (25%)
Midterm Exam	100 points (10%)
Research Assignments (4 x 50 points)	200 points (20%)
Poster and Final Paper	200 points (20%)
Total	1,000 points (100%)

Grading Policy Grading for this course shall be structured as follows:

A = 930 and above	A – = 900-929	
B+ = 860-899	B = 830-859	B – = 800-829
C+ = 760-799	C = 730-759	C – = 700-729
D+ = 660-699	D = 630-659	D – = 600-629
F = 0-599		

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Reading required	Assignments and deadlines
1	Wed, Jan 21	Course Orientation (complete survey for extra credit)		Pre-class survey due Jan 22
2	Mon, Jan 26	Research and Public Policy (Part 1)	PSR 1, CR 1-2	
2	Wed, Jan 28	Research and Public Policy (Part 2)	PSR 2	
3	Mon, Feb 2	Research Ethics	PSR 3	
3	Wed, Feb 4	Research Design	PSR 4	Quiz 1 (in person)
4	Mon, Feb 9	Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement	PSR 5	
4	Wed, Feb 11	Indexes and Scales	PSR 6, CR 6	
5	Mon, Feb 16	Sampling and Generalizability	PSR 7	
5	Wed, Feb 18	Sampling continued and Experimental Design	PSR 7-8	Quiz 2 (in person)
6	Mon, Feb 23	Experimental Design continued and Survey Research	PSR 8-9	
6	Wed, Feb 25	Survey Research (Guest lecturer: TBA)	PSR 9	
7	Mon, Mar 2	Research Writing 1: Electronic Database Search		Quiz 3 (in person)
7	Wed, Mar 4	Research Writing 2: Workshop on Research Proposal	CR 3-5	
8	Mon, Mar 9	Research Writing 3: Individual Research Topics		
8	Wed, Mar 11	Research Writing 4: (Guest lecturer: TBA)		Research Proposal due
9	Mar 16 to Mar 22	Spring Break: No Class		
10	Mon, Mar 23	Midterm Exam	PSR 1-9	Midterm (testing center)
10	Wed, Mar 25	Midterm review and literature review activity		
12	Mon, Mar 30	Research Writing 5: Theory, Literature Review, and Systematic Review	CR 6-9	Quiz 4 (in person)
11	Wed, Apr 1	Qualitative Research 1	PSR 10-11	
11	Mon, Apr 6	Qualitative Research 2 (Guest lecturer: TBA)	PSR 12-13	Literature Review due
12	Mon, Apr 13	Univariate and Bivariate Analysis	PSR 14	
13	Wed, Apr 15	Operationalization and Descriptive Analysis	PSR 16	
13	Mon, Apr 20	Descriptive Analysis continued and Workshop on Excel 1		Operationalization due
14	Wed, Apr 22	Workshop on Excel 2 (Guest lecturer: TBA)		In-class assignment due
14	Mon, Apr 27	Research Writing 6: Planning and Drafting of Your Report	CR 12-13	
15	Wed, Apr 29	Research Writing 7: Reading and Writing Social Research and Presentation Expectations	PSR 17, CR 16	Quiz 5 (in person)
16	Mon, May 4	Research Presentations		
17	Wed, May 6	Research Ethics Revisited and Final Q and A		Online Quiz (optional). Final paper due Saturday, May 9, 11:59 pm

Note: The course syllabus may be amended at any time by the instructor. If necessary, the updated syllabus will be posted on eLearning.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND LATE WORK

Your regular participation in in-person classes is crucial for your success. Students are required to allocate sufficient time each week to engage with the assigned readings. It is important to complete the assigned work on time, as late work will not be graded. If there are any special circumstances, the student should let me know ahead of time so we can make arrangements.

MAKEUP EXAMS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Exam and assignment dates are listed on the class schedule. In the case of extenuating circumstances, make-up exams will be allowed only for legitimate reasons and with proper written documentation. If you fail to take an exam or quiz or turn in a late assignment without a reasonable excuse, you will receive a “0” for that portion of the course.

COMMUNICATION WITH INSTRUCTOR

The instructor will primarily communicate with students in the classroom. We will also use eLearning to communicate through Announcements, the Discussion board, and course email. Students may send personal concerns or questions to the instructor via email. Please schedule a prior appointment with the instructor if you wish to meet in person. NOTE: If you have something that requires the instructor’s immediate attention, please send an email with URGENT – PA 3306 in the subject line. For more details, please visit the eLearning Tutorials webpage at <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/students/current/tutorials> for video demonstrations of eLearning tools. Student emails and Discussion board messages will be answered within 3 working days under normal circumstances.

Electronic Device

You may take notes and access articles on your laptop or tablet. You are expected to use electronic devices for coursework-related activities. Please be respectful to your colleagues and resist the urge to browse the internet. Please remember to keep your cell phone on silent during class time.

Policy on Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time-sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online eLearning Help Desk <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/helpdesk>. UTD provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Please use this link to access the UTD eLearning Support Center: <http://www.utdallas.edu/elearninghelp>, 1-866-588-3192. The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

Mental Health Service

This is a gentle reminder that mental health services are available to you on campus. Students experiencing anxiety or distress, whether from topics discussed in this class or other stressors, are encouraged to seek self-care through the on-campus services provided: Student Counseling Center, Phone: 972-883-2575. Location: Student Services Building, SSB 4.600. If you are having a mental health crisis, you can call 972-UTD-TALK or 911, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The faculty expects from its students a high-level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. See <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/integrity/>.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty can occur in any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can involve individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. To avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand their professors' expectations. This is best accomplished by asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/dishonesty/>.

COMET CREED

This creed was approved by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to follow: “As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

ACADEMIC SUPPORT RESOURCES

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.

UT DALLAS SYLLABUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) grading option and withdrawal from class. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.