

Professor: **Jeremy Slack**

Office Hours: 11:00 to 12:30 Monday and Wednesday

(or by appointment)

**Old Main 307**

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LABS 5390

Tuesdays 6:00pm – 9:00pm

### **Border Research**

#### Course Description:

This is an experimental graduate seminar devoted to border research. The goal is for this course to be a mix of in class, social science methodology and border related theoretical readings, combined with fieldwork experience. We will discuss the basic fundamental debates, interpretations, ethical implications and techniques of research for the social sciences as it has typically related to the U.S. Mexico border. We will focus on the nuts of and bolts of participant observation, field notes and interview techniques. However, the major focus of this class will be the development of specific understandings of how to conduct research on the border that fits with the larger debates and methodological trends.

This is an experimental course and will require out of class participation in research. I will try to give options that accommodate a number of schedules but outside participation is MANDATORY. I anticipate that about half of this course will take place outside of the classroom.

We will divide our attention between three primary goals and their subsequent final projects: 1) develop an advanced understanding of methodological techniques, 2) demonstrate a command of theoretical debates about the U.S. Mexico border, and 3) conduct research with one of our community partners, producing a final report and presentation.

#### Course components:

For the first goal we will structure the class around your field methods journal where you will be given a number of assignments designed to give you practical skills for conducting fieldwork. You will be able to choose between different options in order to hone your skills with the most useful and appropriate methodologies for your own research interests. The second component will be evaluated based on your reading responses. You will be expected to write a one-page response each week based on the readings. Each student will also guide class discussion in small groups once during the semester. This will require meeting with me before the class to discuss your plan. Finally, each person will be required to craft a research proposal that will be broken down into a

variety of components during the semester. Your final paper will demonstrate an acceptable research problem, research question and appropriate methodological section that will adequately address your research. You will present your proposal before the class at the end of the semester.

***Course Goals:***

Define the different methodological approaches to border research  
Understand basic debates and  
Evaluate the theoretical and ethical debates surrounding research  
Assess the impact these debates have on your own research

***Course Objectives:***

By the end of the course you will be able to:  
Implement a variety of qualitative research methods in the field  
Analyze qualitative data in a variety of styles  
Present a coherent research proposal including 1) research problem 2) research questions and 3) the appropriate methodological choices to answer your questions.  
**Be prepared to conduct original research and write your graduate thesis!**

**Required Texts:**

Wendy Vogt. 2018. *Lives in Transit: Violence and Intimacy on the Migrant Journey*.  
University of California Press.

Alison Mountz. 2010 *Seeking Asylum: human smuggling and bureaucracy at the border*.  
University of Minnesota Press.

**Recommended Text:**

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2011. **The sage handbook of qualitative research**. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (excerpts are taken from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition but all editions will contain useful information pertinent to research if you are interested...older editions are cheaper on Amazon)

**Grading:**

Attendance and Participation – 32 points

You will be graded on your attendance and preparedness for class including demonstration that you did the required readings.

Reading Responses - 18 points

You will be graded on each reading response based on thoughtfulness and demonstration that you did the assigned reading (3pts). You may miss one reading response without it hurting your grade (subsequently completing all assignments results in extra credit!). Each reading response should be between 250-500 words.

Class Presentations - 50 points

You will present your research from the semester at the end of the class. These will be group presentations. Depending on how the semester works, we may invite outside members of the community to attend.

Field Journal – 50 points

You must document your research over the semester. Generally, you will keep detailed field notes of all research activities, as well as interview notes. This will make up the bulk of your field journal.

Final Report– 50 points

Your group will write a final report detailing your research and data analysis. This will develop throughout the semester and will include a literature review, methods section, data analysis and conclusions. We will be flexible in terms of authorship, but each person will be responsible for an individual section that contains research methodology, literature review and analysis.

*IRB Certification – 10 points*

**TOTAL POINTS: 200 (=100%)**

### **Academic Honesty Statement**

The course will follow the University of Texas at El Paso's policies on academic honesty. These policies can be found at <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386>

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

All material submitted must be the student's own work. Ideas and expressions cited from the work of others must be credited appropriately. Avoid plagiarism by giving credit where credit is due, using quotation marks when using words directly from another source, and preferably putting things in your own words. I prefer your own phrasing, even if it is imperfect, to a beautifully phrased statement that is borrowed from some other source. Violations will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

### **Academic Assistance and Disability Statement**

In Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Center for Accommodations and Support Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition that may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Center for Accommodations and Support Services. You may call (915) 747-5148 for general information about the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you have as a UTEP student with a disability. You also can visit the CASS website at <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/> or the CASS office in Room 106 East Union Building. Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at The University of Texas at El Paso.

### **Tentative Schedule**

**08/27 –**

**Introduction to Border Methods and Course Goals**

**09/03 –**

**Theories of the Border and Research**

Johnson et. al. "*Interventions on rethinking the "border" in border studies.* –

Slack – *Deported to Death* – Chapter 8

Uncharted Terrains – *Introduction*

Denzin and Lincoln: *Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. (PDF)*

## **COMPLETE IRB TRAINING**

**09/10 -**

### **Ethnography and Interviewing**

#### **Discuss methods of participant observation for Field Journal**

Mitchell - Ethnography  
Uncharted Terrains – Guerra - Magana  
Rubin - Interviewing  
Wacquant\_ Scrutinizing the Street  
Anderson\_ response to Wacquant  
Agar – Professional Stranger

**Prepare 2 page prospectus on your research interests**

**09/17 –**

### **Central American Migration**

Vogt – Lives in Transit – Whole book

**09/24 –**

### **Participatory Action Research and other alternative approaches**

Austin-Partnerships not Projects  
Fals Borda; Rahman – 1991  
Pulido-09  
Hale -2005  
Uncharted Terrains - TBD

**10/01 –**

### **Mountz – Seeking Asylum (whole book)**

**10/08 –**

### **Research Ethics and Politics**

Bowman Expedition Editorials (Bryan10; Herlihy10; Cruz10; Agnew10)

**10/15 – Field Work**

**10/22 – Field Work**

**10/29 – Field Work**

*Hand in Field Journal*

**11/05 – Data Management and Coding**

Reading TBD

**EXERCISE #6 DUE**

*Discuss Field Journal #3*

**11/12 – Field Work**

**11/19 – Analysis and Writing**

Denzin and Lincoln – Chap 32

Foucault – Discourse and Method

Gill- Discourse analysis

**FIELD Journal #3 DUE**

**11/26 – Final Presentations**

**12/03 – Final Presentations**