

McMaster University
Health, Aging, and Society
Winter 2017

Advanced Research Inquiry
HLTHAGE 3B03

Instructor: Dr. Julia Woodhall-Melnik

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Office: KTH 234

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-11am or by appointment

Lecture Times: Tuesday 11:30am-1:20pm & Thursday 11:30am-12:20pm

Location: LRW 1055

Course Description:

Students' development of a firm comprehension of the theoretical and practical elements of social research methods is an integral part of a well-rounded education in the social sciences. Through this course, students will be presented with and asked to practice with components of conducting and consuming social research. This course is structured to help students understand and organize the components of a research proposal and provides students with an opportunity to develop elements of a research proposal that would be suitable for a fourth year thesis project or independent project in the health or social sciences.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a rigorous methods section and research question for a research proposal
- Develop and present an academic poster
- Critically reflect on social research methods and research outputs
- Demonstrate competency in selecting appropriate methods for answering research questions

Course Prerequisites: Registration in Level III or above of a Health, Aging and Society program.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to attend all lectures as material presented will go beyond the information in weekly readings. Additionally, all students are expected to complete the required readings for this course. Students' participation in classroom discussions and in class activities is required.

Required Text:

David, M. & Sutton, C. (2011). Social Research: An Introduction (2nd edition). London, Sage.

Note: In order to complete assignments and participate in group activities, students will be required to download additional readings directly from McMaster's e-journal portal. You will need your McMaster username and password.

Optional Texts:

Northey, M., Tepperman, L. & Albanese, P. (2012). Making sense in the social sciences: A students' guide to research and writing (5th edition). Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Van den Hoonaard, D. (2012) Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Evaluation:

Group Work: Selecting a Research Topic for Poster Presentation (10%): Due January 22nd

Group Work: Methods Section Write Up (15%): Due March 14th

Group Work: Final Poster Presentation during Mini Conference (20%): March 28th

Individual Work: TCPS Core Certification (5%): Due January 29th

Individual Work: Qualitative Methods: Field Notes and Reflections (25%): Due February 14th

Individual Work: Quantitative Methods: Brief Analysis (25%): Due February 28th

Assignment Descriptions:

Group Evaluation:

- 1) Selecting a Research Topic for Poster Presentation: Due January 22nd by 11:59pm:
Upload to Avenue

In class on Thursday January 19th, 2017, students will be asked to work in groups to brainstorm topics. Students will be provided with five questions which will help guide the brainstorming process. This work will begin in class; however, it is expected that students make arrangements to meet with their groups or communicate via-email and Avenue to complete this assignment. Each group will be responsible for submitting their typed answers to the five questions provided in class. This should be no more than 2 pages single spaced. In addition, each group member will participate in the concept activity in class. At the end of the mapping session, a photo of the map should be taken and uploaded to the end of your assignment. Each question will be graded out of 1.5 and the concept map will be graded out of 2.5 for a total of 10 marks.

- 2) Methods Section Write Up: Due March 14th by 11:59pm: Upload to Avenue

This assignment will help guide students toward the creation of a methods section for their final group posters. Each group member is responsible for reading the three exemplar articles posted in the content section on Avenue under the heading "methods section assignment." As a group, you will use lecture, text and the exemplar article

material to assist in constructing a 3-4 page double spaced methods section that could be adapted for an academic paper or research proposal. In this assignment, you should begin by clearly stating your research question. Your methods section should include the following:

- The aim of your study
- Your research design and data collection (e.g. method used including a brief definition of the method, sampling frame and sampling strategies, recruitment strategies, any social interventions if your research is experimental not observational, any secondary data sources if using secondary data, a description of how you will collect your data and the tools used [interview guides, surveys, observation, etc.], logistics of data collection [length of time taken to complete the interview/survey/observation, location of data collection—internet, phone, in person and physical location if any], compensation provided to participants)
- Data analysis (e.g. step by step procedures for how you will analyze your data). Make reference to and describe any theory that will be used in your data analysis.
- Ideal participant characteristics: As you are not conducting original research, here we would like you to write a section based on your ideal. Ideally speaking, how many participants would you like to involve in your research (or if using secondary data, how many cases), what would be the ideal sociodemographic characteristics of your participants (e.g. mean age, gender distribution, racial distribution, mean income, geographic distribution, and any other characteristics which are relevant to your study)?
- Ethics statement: include a statement that indicates whether or not you will need to seek Research Ethics Board approval for your research. If so, where will you get approval from (MREB, HIREB)?

In addition, each group is required to attach a single spaced page that includes each individual group member's name and a summary of contributions made toward the group project. This one page document should be titled "contributions" and can be written in point form (e.g. Jane Smith: read exemplar articles, participated in group meetings, wrote section on ideal participant contributions, edited the document, etc.). Although individual group members may take responsibility for writing different sections of the assignment, each group member should participate in conceptualizing and editing every part of the assignment. If discrepancies in group participation arise, the instructor may rely on this one page document when assigning marks.

NOTE: A good methods section should be detailed enough that another researcher would have enough information to replicate your work after reading it.

3) Final Poster Presentation at the Mini-Conference: Due In Class on March 28th

Each group will be required to prepare an academic poster that displays their groups' research topic, presents central research questions, highlights key literature and theoretical frameworks, and presents ethical considerations, methodology, methods, and a proposed data analysis plan. Students are expected to work on their posters throughout the course. There will be class sessions dedicated to working on posters as a group.

On March 28th, each group will display a poster in class and class members will circulate to ask each other questions and listen to the poster presentations of their peers. The course instructor will visit each group separately. While the instructor is evaluating a group, all members of the group are expected to be present to contribute to the discussion. An evaluation rubric will be provided in class. Should a group member be absent for the mini-conference, proof of absence will be required through the McMaster Student Absence protocol. In the event of a justified absence, students may be asked to present the poster separately to the instructor.

Individual Evaluation:

- 1) TCPS Core 2 Certification: Due January 29th by 11:59pm: Upload to Avenue

Each student is required to complete the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) Core Ethics Certification. In order to complete the certification, each student will visit <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>, create an account and follow the directions to work through each module and complete the quizzes. Upon successful completion, students will receive a certificate. Save a copy of this certificate and upload it to Avenue by 11:59pm on January 29th, 2017. Please note, as technical difficulties can occur and a log-in account must be created, students are advised to log into the TCPS system as soon as possible in order to deal with any potential technical difficulties that could arise. Last minute technical difficulties will not be considered for an unpenalized extension.

- 2) Qualitative Methods: Field Notes and Reflections: Due In Class February 14th

Students will be asked to work in their groups to agree upon a common, familiar and public setting (e.g. library, coffee shop, classroom, bus stop) to be studied using an observation approach. The purpose of this assignment is to observe, describe, and explain a complex public setting using the approach of non-participant observation, and to learn what is possible to hear, see, and learn through just observation. Before your observation, you must report the location your group chose to Dr. Woodhall-Melnik. You must receive permission to work at this site. You must pick a site where there is no expectation of privacy.

You are expected to spend at least one hour in the predetermined location observing and making notes, when or if it is appropriate to do so. Your field notes must be written by hand. Information cannot be recorded in photograph, video, or audio format.

After the observation has been conducted, you will transform your hand written field notes into field note format. Please note that approximately 4 to 6 pages, double-spaced, of field notes should be written for one hour of observation. In your field notes, you may wish to include a map or diagram of the physical space. Your field notes should not identify any individual person by their real name. If you assign names to people in your notes, be sure to assign them a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity. The field notes will be graded out of 10. In your field notes, you should describe the following and use subheadings for each of the following categories:

- The setting: What does the entire physical space look like? What do you see? What does it smell like? What sounds are present? How is the space laid out?
- The people: What types of people are in the setting? What characteristics seem to be common to the people present? Are any people acting differently or unusually from others? If so, in what way(s)? Why do you think this might be?
- The action: What are the relationships between people and groups? What is interesting about the people in the setting? What are they doing? What are they saying?

In addition to the 4-6 page double spaced field notes, you will also hand in a 2 page double spaced reflection of your experience conducting the observation. This reflection should answer three questions: 1) What did you learn from this observation, 2) What were some of the challenges you faced as a social researcher conducting an observation, and 3) What would you do differently if you had to do the observation again? Please use subheadings to indicate which question you are answering. An exceptional reflection will comprehensively incorporate material from class and text and will illustrate a strong understanding and application of said material. The reflection will also receive a mark out of 10.

3) Quantitative Methods: Brief Analysis: Due In Class on February 28th, 2017

Each student will be asked to participate in a brief 2 minute survey to collect the data that we need for this assignment. Please follow the link posted via the announcements section on Avenue and complete this survey no later than January 15th, 2017.

Detailed assignment instructions will be posted on Avenue. We will also have a tutorial in class on February 9th to walk through the steps to completing the assignment using SPSS. Students can access a one month free trial of SPSS on the IBM website. SPSS packages are available for purchase at a discounted rate through McMaster. Each student will be required to replicate the analysis that is conducted in our practical tutorial and hand in a printed out copy of the output from their replication. The replication will be worth 5 marks. Each student will then be required to answer 10 questions about the output. Each question will be worth 2 marks for a total of 20 marks. The assignment questions will be posted in late January and each student is expected to hand in original, independent work for this assignment.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Dates	Weekly Lecture Topic	Relevant Readings	Assignments or Extra Preparations
Week One January 5 th	Overview of the course, discussion of expectations, reviewing	N/A	N/A

	assignment components and brief introduction		
Week Two January 10 th & January 12 th	Identifying areas of interest and using the literature to define and refine research questions Conducting literature searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 1 and 3 	Class on January 12 th will be held at Mills Library in the Wong e-Classroom (L107) at 11:30am
Week Three January 17 th & January 19 th	Theory driven research, knowledge paradigms and links to methodology. Choosing a research method to answer your question. Group Work: Brainstorm and determine topic for and begin to outline poster presentation in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 4 and 11 	Due Sunday January 22 nd by 11:59pm (submit on Avenue): Group Topic for Poster Presentation
Week Four January 24 th & January 26 th	Research ethics (Guest Presentation: Dr. Karen Szala-Meneok, Senior Ethics Advisor) Discussing risk and benefits of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2 	Due Sunday January 29 th by 11:59pm (submit on Avenue): Upload copy of TCPS Core Certificate
Week Five January 31 st & February 2 nd	Field Research Project: Review of Observation methods and field notes Group Work: Determine a common site for observation and agree on deadlines for peer note reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 5, 8 and 10 	
Week Six	Designing a quantitative study, considerations,	Chapters 12, 13, 23, 24, 25 and 27	

February 7 th & February 9 th	survey design and secondary data collection February 9 th : step by step tutorial on how to complete your quantitative assignment using SPSS		
Week Seven February 14 th & February 16 th	Designing a qualitative study, considerations, method choice, participant recruitment techniques Data collection: Qualitative interviews and focus groups	Chapters 14, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 21	Due February 14 th in class: Qualitative Field Observation Assignment
Week Eight February 21 st & February 23 rd	Reading Week	N/A	N/A
Week Nine February 28 th & March 2 nd	Partnership Research, Community-Engaged Research and Community-Based Participatory Action Research (Guest Speaker—Alicia Powell, PhD Candidate) Designing effective poster presentations (Guest Speaker—Dr. Jessica Pace, Post- Doctoral Fellow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 28 	Due February 28 th in class: Quantitative analysis assignment
Week Ten March 7 th & March 9 th	Examples of Emerging Methods in Qualitative Research: Peer Interviewing and the World Café method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapters 17, 20 and 22 	

	Group Work: Poster Presentation and methods section work		
Week Eleven March 14 th & March 16 th	Understanding knowledge and critically evaluating research: What makes a study methodologically sound? What should we look for? Group work: Poster Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Chapter 28 	Due March 14 th by 11:59pm on Avenue: methods section write-up
Week Twelve March 21 st & March 23 rd	Group Work: Mini Conference Preparation Disseminating Results and Knowledge Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Chapter 28 	
Week Thirteen March 28 th & March 30 th	Mini Conference with Poster Presentations (March 28 th) Course Wrap-up (March 30 th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	Poster presentation during mini-conference: March 28 th in class

Important Course Information:

Contesting Grades: If you wish to contest the grade assigned to your work, you will need to indicate why in writing. Using the grading criteria described below, support your argument with examples from your paper/assignment of how you believe you satisfied the criteria better than your grade reflected.

A range: Between excellent and exceptional work that combines the following characteristics in differing degrees: a superior grasp of course material, both conceptual and substantive; a strong analytic reading of written materials used; some original insights and in general very thoughtful; and exceptional writing skills.

B range: Strong, good work that combines the following characteristics in differing degrees: a firm grasp of course material, by and large, though there are some minor errors or a competent

analytic reading of written materials used; not especially original but well considered; and competent writing skills.

C range: Average work that displays the following characteristics in differing degrees: perhaps shaky but passable understanding of course material; largely reiterative or summative (rather than analytic) reading of written material; displays a moderate effort to think through issues; shaky but intelligible writing skills.

D to F range: Poor work that displays the following characteristics in differing degrees: Student appears to have made little to no effort to tackle lecture or reading materials; misunderstands them fairly seriously; has poor writing skills.

Deadlines and Late Penalties: Assignments are to be submitted on the due date using the venue listed on the syllabus. Late submissions will be penalized 5% per business day. Assignments will not be accepted if they are greater than 10 business days late unless a formal extension has been granted. In the event of an absence for medical or compassionate reasons, students should follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar. For group work, please reference “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Team Work.”

Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Students Requiring an Accommodation:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with

Disabilities: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

Notice Regarding Possible Course Modification:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Faculty of Social Sciences Email Communication Policy:

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Statement for Courses with an Online Element:

In this course we will be using Avenue. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society (ext. 27227 | e-mail: hasdept@mcmaster.ca).