

# QUALITATIVE AND HISTORICAL METHODS IN STUDIES OF HEALTH AND AGING

Winter 2023

**Instructor:** Dr. Meridith Griffin  
**Email:** griffmb@mcmaster.ca  
**Lecture:** Wednesdays 2:30-5:20; LRW  
3001

**Office:** KTH 241  
**Office Hours:** By appointment

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## **Course Description**

This seminar introduces graduate students to basic issues in epistemology, research design and methodological choices we face in qualitative health and aging research. The objective is to provide an opportunity for students to develop a rigorous research proposal suitable for a graduate level dissertation, thesis or Major Research Paper (MRP) in the health or social sciences. The seminar is structured to help students understand and inform methodological choices, debates, and issues that pertain to conducting and/or evaluating qualitative research. This includes: traditions in qualitative research; the link between theory, design and method; development of a research topic and question; reviewing and appraising literature; planning, collecting and analyzing data; representation of findings; ethical conduct of research with human participants; and evaluating the quality of qualitative research. The hope is that each student will find an area of research that they are passionate and curious about and explore this in a new and exciting way. We will conclude the course with a research design and methods reflection workshop, where students will present their developed proposal. The purpose of the workshop is to critically reflect on strategies of research design that might be useful as you work towards your own research project.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the research enterprise
- Be able to critically evaluate the methodological choices of scholarly work
- Think critically about the congruency of different components of a research project
- Develop a methodologically rigorous research proposal
- Critically examine the structure, method and plans of proposed research
- Provide feedback and share in the research progress of fellow students

## **Required Materials and Texts**

There is no required text for this course. Required readings will take the form of journal articles and book chapters, and links to these online readings corresponding to weekly topics will be found on the course website (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>).

### **Recommended (helpful) books:**

- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Available at Mills Library: H 61.C73 2018
- Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2014). *Qualitative methods for health research, 3rd edition*. London, UK: Sage. Available at Health Sciences library: W 20.5.G796Q 2014
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London, UK: Sage. Available at Mills library: H 62.B655 2013

## **Class Format**

This is a seminar style course held on Wednesdays from 2:30pm - 5:20pm. Seminar style course format requires active participation, attendance and contribution from all members of the class. Participation in class discussion, after careful reading of and reflection of course material, is therefore indispensable to your success. Students are expected to attend every class prepared to discuss the required readings for that session, and to share what they know in discussion with other students. For 40% of the final grade, 20% is for participation in class discussions and 20% is for leading a class seminar. Each week, a portion of the weekly class will be student-led. More information is provided below in the “course evaluation - details.”

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. 20% - Class Participation (throughout)
2. 20% - Class facilitation and Critical Commentary (date as assigned)
3. 20% - Research Proposal Presentation (April 5<sup>th</sup>)
4. 40% - Research Proposal (due April 12<sup>th</sup>)

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **1. Class Participation (20%)**

Class participation grades in this course will be based upon (a) the quality of the discussion each week; (b) observed mastery of the required readings assigned each week; (c) observed ability to engage other students in discussion relevant to the course; (d) consistency of participation in the course. Allowances will be made for differences in personal style.

### **2. Class Facilitation AND Critical Commentary (20%)**

From the second class onwards, students will lead the seminar each week. Sign-up for a specific week will take place during the first class (January 11<sup>th</sup>), and whether this is done solo or in pairs will depend on final enrolment numbers.

The facilitation involves critically presenting the readings under weekly discussion to the class, leading a discussion, posing questions, and incorporating information and material from outside of the course readings if desired. Facilitation is expected to encompass *at least* one hour within the class time slot.

The student(s) leading the seminar for the week will (each) provide a 3-5 page written critical commentary on assigned weekly readings. Critical commentaries should be handed in by email OR by hard copy in class on the day of the facilitation. Keep in mind that the central purpose of the critical commentary is to develop your critical-thinking skills. I am not looking for summaries of readings, but for a critical evaluation of the claims and methods of the readings.

It is useful to briefly identify a list of key concepts and terms, a summary statement of no more than four sentences written in your own words and three or four issues or questions in the reading that are important and require some discussion that you would

like to see addressed. Commentaries may also highlight points of agreement and disagreement among multiple readings and draw out implications.

### **3. Research Proposal Presentation (20%)**

Students will develop an oral presentation of their research proposal and present this to the class on Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. The number of students in the class will determine the amount of time that will be available for the presentation (likely/approximately 10-15 minutes per student).

### **4. Research Proposal (40%)**

Students will prepare a 15-20 page research proposal that identifies their research question, provides a literature review, and outlines a theoretical and methodological approach. These areas are critically important in the production of a graduate level major research paper or thesis. Writing style will be diligently evaluated as students must be able to achieve a high standard for written work. The final version of the proposal will be due on Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Week 1 (January 9-13)**

**January 11 – What is Qualitative Research?**

Readings: None

### **Week 2 (January 16-20)**

**January 18 – Traditions in Qualitative Research**

Readings:

- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A.C. (2016). Introduction: An invitation to qualitative research. Chapter 1, In Smith, B. & Sparkes, A.C. (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*, pp. 1-3. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Chapter 1: Some very important starting information (**excerpt**: pp. 3-8) AND Chapter 2: Ten fundamentals of qualitative research (pp. 19-41). In Braun, V., & Clarke, V., *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London, UK: Sage.
- Cresswell, R. (2018). Excerpt from Chapter 4: Five qualitative approaches to inquiry. In Cresswell, R., *Qualitative inquiry and research design*, pp. 103-106. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

+ *Each student will be assigned one of the following:*

- **Ethnography**: Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). What is ethnography? In Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (Eds.), *Ethnography: Principles in practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, pp. 1-19. New York, NY: Routledge.
- **Phenomenology/Grounded theory**: Starks, H. & Trinidad, S.B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse

analysis and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372-1380.

- **Narrative:** Spector-Mersel, G. (2010). Narrative research: Time for a paradigm. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 204-224.
- **Case study:** Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.

### **Week 3 (January 23-27)**

#### **January 25 – Pre-Study Tasks: Linking Theory, Design and Method**

Readings:

- Morse, J. (2003). The Paradox of Qualitative Research Design. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(10), 1335-1336.
- Carter, S.M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1316-1328.
- Cresswell, R. (2018). Chapter 6: Introducing and focusing the study. In Cresswell, R., *Qualitative inquiry and research design*, pp. 127-146. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Swaminathan, R., & Mulvihill, T.M. (2017). Questions along the qualitative research journey. In Swaminathan, R., & Mulvihill, T.M., *Critical approaches to questions in qualitative research*, pp. 18-37. New York, NY: Routledge.

### **Week 4 (January 30-February 3)**

#### **February 1 – Fieldwork**

Readings:

- Wolcott, H.F. (2005). Fieldwork: The basic arts. Chapter 5, in Wolcott, H.F., *The art of fieldwork* (pp. 79-114). Lanham, MD: AltaMira.
- Wacquant, L. (2004). Preface: The taste and ache of action; and Prologue. In Wacquant, L., *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer* (pp. vii-xii; and 3-11). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Watts, J.H. (2011). Ethical and practical challenges of participant observation in sensitive health research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 14(4), 301-312.
- Nygard, L. (2006). How can we get access to the experiences of people with dementia? Suggestions and reflections. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 13(2), 101-112.

## **Week 5 (February 6-10)**

### **February 8 – Interviews and Focus Groups**

Readings:

- Warren, C.A.B., & Williams, K.N. (2008). Interviewing elderly residents in assisted living. *Qualitative Sociology*, 31(4), 407-424.
- Cook, K., & Nunkoosing, K. (2008). Maintaining dignity and managing stigma in the interview encounter: The challenge of paid-for participation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(3), 418-427.
- Peek, L., & Fothergill, A. (2009). Using focus groups: Lessons from studying daycare centers, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina. *Qualitative Research*, 9(1), 31-59.
- Phoenix, C., Orr, N., & Griffin, M. (2017). Bringing Socio-Narratology and visual methods to focus group research. In Barbour, R., & Morgan, D. (Eds.), *A new era of focus group research*. Palgrave Macmillan.

## **Week 6 (February 13-17)**

### **February 15 – Visual Methods**

Readings:

- Phoenix, C. (2010). Seeing the world of physical culture: The potential of visual methods for qualitative research in sport and exercise. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 2(2), 93-108.
- Gabel, C., Pace, J., & Ryan, C. (2016). Using Photovoice to Understand Intergenerational Influences on Health and Well-Being in a Southern Labrador Inuit Community. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 11(1), 75-91.
- Maina, G., Sutankayo, L., Chorney, R., & Caine, V. (2014). Living with and teaching about HIV: Engaging nursing students through body mapping. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(4), 643-647.
- Darbyshire, P., MacDougall, C., & Schiller, W. (2005). Multiple methods in qualitative research with children: More insight or just more? *Qualitative Research*, 5(4), 417-436.

## **Week 7 (February 20-24)**

### **February 22 – Reading week**

## **Week 8 (February 27-March 3)**

### **March 1 – Digital Methods**

Readings:

- Bundon, A. (2016). The Web and digital qualitative methods: Researching online and researching the online in sport and exercise studies. In B.

Smith & A. Sparkes (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 355-367). London, UK: Routledge.

- Gubrium, A. (2009). Digital storytelling: an emergent method for health promotion research and practice. *Health Promotion Practice, 10*(2), 186-191.
- Willox, A.C., Harper, S.L., & Edge, V.L. (2013). Storytelling in a digital age: Digital storytelling as an emerging narrative method for preserving and promoting Indigenous oral wisdom. *Qualitative Research, 13*(2), 127-147.

+ Recommended (not required):

- Lupton, D. (Ed.). (2021). Doing fieldwork in pandemic (crowd-sourced document), revised version. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6P0NvMgVuiHZCl8/preview>

## **Week 9 (March 6-10)**

### **March 8 – Historical Methods & Content and Discourse Analysis**

Readings:

#### *Historical Methods*

- Hooker, C. (2010). History and social change in health and medicine. In Bourgeault, I., Dingwall, R., & de Vries, R. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Health Research* (pp. 265-286). London, UK: Sage.
- Hooker, C., & Chapman, S. (2007). Our youth must be protected from drug abuse: Talking tobacco in the NSW Parliament 1950-2003. *Health and History, 9*(1), 106-128. (An example of historical health research).

#### *Content and Discourse Analysis*

- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.
- Rozanova, J. (2010). Discourse of successful aging in The Globe & Mail: Insights from critical gerontology. *Journal of Aging Studies, 24*(4), 213-222.

+ Recommended (not required):

- Kaphingst, K., Dejong, W., Rudd, R.E., & Daltroy, L.H. (2004). A content analysis of direct-to-consumer television prescription drug advertisements. *Journal of Health Communication, 9*(6), 515-528. (An example of content analysis).

## **Week 10 (March 13-17)**

### **March 15 – Qualitative Analysis**

Readings:



- Sparkes, A.C., & Smith, B. (2014). Qualitative analysis. Chapter 5, In Sparkes, A.C., & Smith, B., *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and health*, pp. 115-146. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Thorne, S. (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 3(3), 68-70.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

+ Recommended (not required):

- Murray, M. (2000). Levels of narrative analysis in health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 5(3), 337-347.
- Lopez, K.A., & Willis, D.G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(5), 726-735.

## **Week 11 (March 20-24)**

### **March 22 – Representing Qualitative Findings**

Readings:

- King, S. (2016). In defence of realist tales. In B. Smith & A.C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*, pp. 291-301. London: Routledge.
- Sandelowski, M., & Leeman, J. (2012). Writing usable qualitative health research findings. *Qualitative Health Research*, 22(10), 1404-1413.
- Parry, D.C., & Johnson, C.W. (2007). Contextualizing leisure research to encompass complexity in lived leisure experience: The need for creative analytic practice. *Leisure Sciences*, 29(2), 119-130.
- Kontos, P., Grigorovich, A., Dupuis, S., Jonas-Simpson, C., Mitchell, G., & Gray, J. (2020). Raising the curtain on stigma associated with dementia: Fostering a new cultural imaginary for a more inclusive society. *Critical Public Health*, 30(1), 91-102.

Not required reading, but examples of additional forms of representation:

- Auto-ethnography: Stone, B. (2009). Running man. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise*, 1(1), 67-71.
- Poetry: Fitzpatrick, K. (2012). 'That's how the light gets in': Poetry, self and representation in ethnographic research. *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, 12(1), 8-14.
- Auto-ethnography: Peers, D. (2012). Interrogating disability: The (de)composition of a recovering Paralympian. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise*, 4(2), 175-188.
- Messy text: Griffin, M., & Phoenix, C. (2014). Learning to run from narrative foreclosure: One woman's story of aging and physical activity. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 22(3), 393-404.

## Week 12 (March 27-31)

### March 29 – Ethical Issues; Judging the Quality of Qualitative Research

Readings:

#### *Ethical Issues*

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2018). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, December. Chapters 1, 2, and 10 (pp. 5-20; 133-142). Available at: <https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2018-en-interactive-final.pdf>
- Lahman, M., Geist, M., Rodriguez, K., Graglia, P. & DeRoche, K. (2011). Culturally responsive relational reflexive ethics in research: The three Rs. *Quality & Quantity*, 45(6), 1397-1414.

#### *Judging Quality*

- Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight 'big-tent' criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
  - Sparkes, A.C., & Smith, B. (2009). Judging the quality of qualitative inquiry: Criteriology and relativism in action. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 10(5), 491-497.
  - Smith, B. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: Misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health*, 10(1), 137-149.
- + Recommended (not required):
- Smith, B., & McGannon, K. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 101-121.
  - Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health*, 13(2), 201-216.
  - Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328-352.

## Week 13 (April 3-7)

### April 5 – Research Proposal Presentations

## **Week 14 (April 10-14)**

**April 12 – Research Proposal due**

### **Course Policies**

#### **Submission of Assignments**

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Please submit your assignments both by hard copy, in class on the day they are due, and via Avenue to Learn. Faxed and emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Please do not bring assignments to the main Health, Aging & Society office. The Health, Aging & Society staff do not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers. Assignments will be returned to you in class.

All assignments should employ the format of 12-point font, one-inch margins, and double spacing.

#### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
0-69	F

#### **Late Assignments**

Barring exceptional circumstances (i.e., serious illness), there will be a deduction of 5% per day for all late assignments. After one week, late submissions will not be accepted unless an extension has been granted.

#### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

Absence for medical or other reasons will be considered on a case by case basis. Students should contact the instructor prior to or immediately following an absence to discuss and/or arrange accommodation. Supplemental information may be requested (i.e., doctor's note, etc.).

#### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. 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.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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 behavior 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.

For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>.

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 credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g., use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx, or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

### **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail 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.

### **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.

**Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.