

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
Department of Health, Aging & Society

HLTH AGE 714: QUALITATIVE AND HISTORICAL METHODS IN STUDIES OF HEALTH AND AGING

Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Meridith Griffin
Office: KTH 241
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Office Hours: By appointment

Day and Time of Classes: Tuesdays, 2:30-5:20
Class Location: LRW 5001

Course website: <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society at 905-525-9140, ext. 27227; email: hasdept@mcmaster.ca

Course Content and Objectives:

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 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.

By the end of the course, students will 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 each student's research
- Provide an opportunity to share in the research progress of fellow students

Course Format:

This is a seminar style course held on Tuesdays 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 for 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. Out of a total of 35% of the final grade, 15% 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 “evaluation components.”

Final Research Design and Reflection Workshop:

Students will present their research proposals at an end of year workshop. Research proposals should cover central research questions, key literature, theoretical framework, and methodology. Students are expected to work on their research proposals throughout the course.

Readings:

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 may be found on the course website (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>).

Recommended (helpful) books:

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

Course Evaluation:

1. 15% - Class Participation (throughout)
2. 15% - Selecting a research topic (due October 3rd)
3. 20% - Class facilitation and Critical Commentary (date as assigned)
4. 15% - Workshop Presentation (December 5th)
5. 35% - Research Proposal (due December 5th)

1. Class Participation (15%)

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. Selecting a research topic (15%)

For this assignment, students will be asked to think about a topic of interest for a qualitative and/or historical research project. Students will provide an overview of the purpose of the study and the qualitative method you will use for investigation (e.g., one-on-one interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, etc.). Students will develop 1-2 research questions that will be answered using these methods. You should also provide a description of your sampling strategy (e.g., who will you include in your study and why?). This assignment should be no more than 5 pages. Students should be prepared to discuss their research topics in class. Due in class, by hard copy, on October 3rd.

3. 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 (September 12th), 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 2-3 page written critical commentary on assigned weekly readings. Critical commentaries should be handed in 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.

4. Workshop Presentation (15%)

Students will develop an oral presentation of their research proposal and present this to the class during a workshop on Tuesday, December 5th. We may expand class running time to ensure adequate time for everyone. The number of students in the class will determine the amount of time that will be available for the presentation.

5. Research Proposal (35%)

Students will prepare a 15-20 page research proposal that identifies their research question, provides a literature review, 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 in class, by hard copy, on Tuesday, December 5th.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING POINTS CAREFULLY:

Assignments and Late Policies

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Please submit your assignments by hard copy, in class on the day they are due. 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. 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.).

Grading and Review of Grades

Your final mark will be converted to a letter grade according to the scale used by the School of Graduate Studies and available in the Graduate Calendar.

Rubric for all Written Work:

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

F. No work or insulting work. Student either did not turn in work or what was turned in showed no serious effort to keep up with or tackle course material, took no care with readings, and was sloppily presented.

Writing skills: At the very least, your writing should demonstrate correct spelling and grammar. I strongly urge you to visit the university's writing lab if you know you have problems in this area.

* I reserve the right to adjust final marks by up to 5% of the total earned by the student in order to account for unusually good or unusually poor classroom participation and conduct.

Grade Review

All course work will be graded carefully. On occasion, students may disagree with the mark they receive. If this occurs, I would be happy to review the mark, provided the request is serious and the following procedure is followed.

Write a one-page statement describing in detail why you think a marking error was made. Using the grading rubric described above, support your argument with examples from your paper of how you believe you satisfied the criteria better than your grade reflected.

The statement should be submitted, along with the marked assignment, to me for review. You may submit the request for a re-mark no sooner than one week and no later than one month after the assignment or test was returned. I will review your mark and get back to you with written feedback.

Please note that there is a possibility that when a mark is reviewed, the new mark may be lower than the original.

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.

Registered students are automatically enrolled in this space, which can be accessed at the following web address: <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>

If you are unable to access this space, please contact your instructor to enrol you. Please keep in mind that it takes 24 hours (and sometimes longer) after you have registered for you to have access to Avenue to Learn.

Computer & Cell Phone Use

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that environment. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off (or asked to leave) for the remainder of the class.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

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>

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 at least once weekly for announcements.

Email/Class Communication

While you can reach me by email at griffmb@mcmaster.ca, I strongly encourage you to ask questions about the syllabus and course assessments during class time and/or by appointment. My preference is for our conversations to take place in person rather than via email, thus allowing us to get to know each other better and fostering a more collegial learning atmosphere. If you use email, please include the course code in the subject line, and your full name and student number in the body of the email. I will endeavour to respond within 24 hours (**excluding weekends and holidays**).

In the context of a university course, email is a mode of professional communication. Please keep the conventions of professional communication in mind when composing messages (e.g., use full sentences with proper punctuation, be polite, and refrain from using informal abbreviations).

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.

McMASTER POLICY ON 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.

WEEKLY TOPICS (Required readings will be available on Avenue to Learn)

Week 1

September 12: What is Qualitative Research?

The first class will be devoted to providing an overview of the course structure and expectations, and going over assignments and readings. We will define what qualitative research encompasses, and accompanying philosophical assumptions. We will spend some time discussing students' research goals, and objectives. We will have an open class discussion on why people do research (motivations), what types of research people conduct (theoretical, historical, empirical, applied) and the difference between methodology and methods.

Week 2

September 19: Traditions in Qualitative Research

This class will consist of an overview of a number of communities and traditions within qualitative research, including: ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, life history and narrative, critical or openly ideological research, and case study.

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. (YR). 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.

Mini-facilitations:

-Ethnography: Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). What is ethnography? In Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (Eds.), *Ethnography: Principles in practice, 3rd 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: Riessman, C.K. (1993). Introduction: Locating narrative. In Riessman, C.K., *Narrative analysis: Qualitative research methods series* (30, pp. 1-7). London, UK: Sage.

-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

September 26 – Pre-Study Tasks - Linking Theory, Design and Method

In the seminar portion of this class (2:30 – 4:00pm), the objective is to demonstrate how the different pieces of research design fit together, before we move to considering methods of data collection.

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.

* Sil, R. 2004. Problems chasing methods or methods chasing problems? Research communities, constrained pluralism, and the role of eclecticism. In Shapiro, I., Rogers, M., & Masoud, T.E. (Eds.), *Problems and methods in the study of politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp 307-331). [Available as an e-book through the library]

Activity: Literature Searching and Reviewing. Using McMaster's e-portal to search and review published literature. **Class will meet from 4:00 - 5:20 at the Mills Library, Wong e-classroom (L107).**

Week 4

October 3 – 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, Jacqueline 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

October 10 – Midterm Recess (no class)

Week 6

October 17 – 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 7

October 24: Visual & digital methods

Readings:

- * Drew, S.E., Duncan, R.E., & Sawyer, S.M. (2010). Visual storytelling: A beneficial but challenging method for health research with young people. *Qualitative Health Research*, 20(12), 1677-1688.
- * 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.
- * 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. DOI: 10.18357/ijih111201616014
- * 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.

Speaker: Dr. Chelsea Gabel, Health, Aging & Society, McMaster University

Week 8

October 31 – Content & Discourse Analysis

Readings:

- * 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.
- * 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.

Week 9

November 7: Historical methods

Readings:

- * Savelli, M. (2015). Blame George Harrison: Psychiatry and drug use in communist Yugoslavia. In Savelli, M. & Marks, S. (eds.), *Psychiatry in Communist Europe*, pp. 180-195. London, UK: Palgrave.
- * 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. Available online at: <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/12621> (Scroll down to the bottom of the page to access the pdf file).
- * Hooker, C., & Chapman, S. (2007). Our youth must be protected from drug abuse: Talking tobacco in the NSW Parliament 1950-2003. *Health and History*, Vol 9, no. 1 106-128.

Speaker: Mat Savelli, Department of Health, Aging & Society, McMaster University

Week 11

November 14: 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.
- * Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- * Murray, M. (2000). Levels of narrative analysis in health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 5(3), 337-347.
- * Phoenix, C., Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2010). Narrative analysis in aging studies: A typology for consideration. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 24 (1), 1-11.

Week 12

November 21: Representing qualitative findings

Readings:

- *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.
- * Speechley, M., DeForge, R.T., Ward-Griffin, C., Marlatt, N.M., & Gutmanis, I. (2015). Creating an ethnodrama to catalyze dialogue in home-based dementia care. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(11), 1551-1559.
- * 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.

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, 8-14.

Week 13

November 28: Ethical issues & judging the quality of qualitative research

Readings:

- *Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. 2010. Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December. Chapters 1, 2, and 10 (pp. 5-20; 139-142). Available at:
http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.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.
- * Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight 'big-tent' criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.

*Smith, B., & McGannon, K. (2017). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, DOI: 10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357.

* 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.

Week 14

December 5: Research Proposal & Workshop Presentation

**Throughout the semester we may adapt the above schedule if guest speakers become available/unavailable, and/or if we find a large number of students in the course have a strong wish to focus more elaborately on one of the theme areas described above.