**RESEARCH METHODS (WORK & SOCIETY 715)**

**Fall 2017**

**Seminars**

Fridays 12:30 – 3:20

KTH 732

**Instructor**

Dr. Stephanie Premji

Office: Kenneth Taylor Hall room 701

Office hours: by appointment

Email: [spremji@mcmaster.ca](mailto:spremji@mcmaster.ca)

\*\*\*If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact me at extension 21448 or at [spremji@mcmaster.ca](mailto:spremji@mcmaster.ca)\*\*\*

**Course Description**

The objective of this course is to assist graduate students in becoming knowledgeable producers of research. As part of this course, students will develop practical skills for labour studies research. They will learn how to design a research project, conduct a literature review, and consider the ethical implications of their research. They will also learn how to read and produce quantitative tables, and how to collect, analyze and report qualitative data with a focus on data from interviews, focus groups, and documentary and internet-based sources. Finally, students will be introduced to the concepts of knowledge exchange, transfer and translation as important components of justice-oriented research. Throughout the course, students will learn about research as a contested terrain and about its potential for helping bring to light the issues and concerns of the less visible and powerful. This course is mandatory for all graduate students.

**Course Materials**

Readings are available on Avenue to Learn unless otherwise indicated.

**Course evaluation**

20% - Class participation (throughout)

10% - Presentations (sign-up)

25% - Quantitative tables (October 20)

20% - Article review (November 17)

25% - Podcast (December 1)

**Class participation (20%)**

The course follows a seminar format and student participation is essential. The goal is to create a collaborative learning environment where students learn from each other as well as from the instructor. Class participation will be evaluated based on student contributions to in-class discussions and participation in the in-class exercises (to be assigned and completed during class). Students are expected to do all of the readings before each class and to be prepared to share their thoughts. In preparation for each class, students should write, for each reading, a list of key concepts and terms and two or three issues or questions that they feel warrant discussion. These two or three issues should not summarize the readings, but rather critically evaluate the claims of the readings. For some weeks, students should also complete, prior to class, the assignments noted on the course outline. The objective of the assignments is to deepen the understanding of the weekly readings. Class participation will be based on the following criteria: 1) quality and regularity of in-class contributions; 2) knowledge of the weekly readings; 3) participation in the in-class exercises; and 4) preparedness with regards to the weekly assignments.

**Presentations (10%)**

Each student will prepare one ~30-minute presentation / discussion on a supplemental reading related to one of the weeks’ topics (the weeks during which students may present are marked with an asterisk in the class schedule). The purpose of the presentations is to collectively deepen our understanding of the methods learned, introduce new concepts or divergent perspectives and, when relevant, illustrate concepts through examples of “research in action”. Students should explain why they selected the reading, summarize its main arguments (noting their strengths and weaknesses), ask questions and lead a discussion. Readings typically will be peer-reviewed journal articles though other sources (i.e. reports, news articles) may be presented with approval from the instructor. The presentations should avoid “how tos” since these will be covered in class and through the assigned readings. Instead, they should bring in a critical perspective to the material. For example, a presentation for Week 7 “Interviews and Focus Groups” may discuss the appropriateness of common recruitment strategies for hard-to-reach populations. A presentation for Week 2 “The Relationship Between Research Question, Theory, Design and Methods” may discuss the implications of asking the wrong research questions. Readings should be discussed with the instructor (in person or by email) at the latest on the Monday prior to the presentation.

**Quantitative Tables (20%)**

The purpose of this assignment is to help students familiarize themselves with quantitative data. First, students will identify a source of publicly available quantitative data related to their research interests or topics (e.g. Statistics Canada, Association of Workers’ Compensation Boards of Canada, etc.). Using this data, students will produce (not replicate) two tables, one univariate and one bivariate (cross-tabulation) to provide background or supporting evidence for their research projects. Students will ensure that all necessary elements are included for the tables to be self-explanatory (title, legend, footnotes, etc.). For each table, students will briefly describe the data source, geographical area, study population, variables, and data. Quantitative data analysis software is not required for this assignment. The assignment is to be submitted in class in hard copy. For more information on table construction, please consult: Wolfer, L. 2007. Real research: conducting and evaluating research in the social sciences. Pearson: Boston. Pp. 571-574.

**Article Review (20%)**

In this era of “fake news” and “junk science”, the ability to evaluate the strengths and limitations of research cannot be overstated. Taking a critical stance towards scholarly literature (and other printed materials) can help avoid relying on untrustworthy sources. Students will choose one research article from among 3 provided by the instructor which will reflect different topics and methods. Your review will begin with a brief summary of the article (what is the central argument). It will then aim to answer the following questions:

* Is the argument clear and logical? Is it supported by appropriate evidence? Is it contextualized in relation to other scholarship?
* Are statements throughout the article supported by evidence?
* What are the strengths and limitations of the article? How can it be improved upon? (Consider the research design, theoretical framework, methods for collecting and analyzing data, discussion and conclusions).

The review should be 1,500-2,000 words and reflect the knowledge acquired in class or through the course readings. Though citing separate sources is not typically part of reviews, it might be relevant for the purpose of this exercise to cite separate sources, for example to point to a body of literature that has not been considered, or to support an argument. The review will be evaluated based on the quality of the arguments made as well as writing style (clear, organized, good grammar).

**Podcast (25%)**

The ability to make research accessible for lay audiences is extremely important. It can help you communicate results to policy-makers, members of the media or the general public, or even get you a job. Students will produce a short (5 minutes) podcast on their research interest or topic for a lay audience. A podcast is very different from a scientific presentation. The objective is to present your research *as a story* in a manner that is compelling and accessible. Creativity is encouraged, and students may (though are not required to) incorporate sound effects or interviews in their podcasts. Instructions for the podcast will be provided on Avenue to Learn and discussed in class. Completed podcasts should be uploaded on Avenue to Learn by December 1st. Students will listen to others’ podcasts and write a few notes evaluating each podcast, to be submitted to the instructor at the latest one week after the deadline. The peer evaluations will inform the instructor’s evaluation of this assignment. Students should start thinking about / working on their podcasts early in the term.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Academic Dishonesty**: [**http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html**](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html)

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and 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 kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

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.

**Late Policy**

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, including Saturdays and Sundays. The instructor will permit extensions for exceptional circumstances only.

**DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

Labour Studies staff does not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of student papers. All papers should be submitted/returned in-class or, when that is not possible, emailed to the instructor.

**Code of conduct:** [**http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca**](http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca)

“McMaster University is a community dedicated to furthering learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge and personal and professional development. Membership in this community implies acceptance of the principle of mutual respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study work and live within it.”

**Computer use**

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

**Course Modifications**

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 their McMaster email AND Avenue to Learn *regularly during the term* to note any changes.

**E-Mail Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences**

All e-mail communication sent from students to instructors 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 receives a communication from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

**Student Accessibility Services:** [**http://sas.mcmaster.ca/**](http://sas.mcmaster.ca/) **MUSC-B107 905-525-9140 x28652**

*NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.*

Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, and Classroom Accommodations. **\***Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.

**McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy:** [**http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf**](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)

**Student Success Centre:** [**http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/**](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/)

**GH-110 905-525-9140 x24254**

Some services include: student orientation, academic skills, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. Writing Support: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>

**Student Wellness Centre:** [**http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/**](http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/)

**MUSC-B101 905-525-9140 x27700**

Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counselling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Services

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**

September 8: Introduction and What We Study / Don’t Study, and Why

In the first class we will review the structure and expectations of the course. We will also discuss students’ research interests and career aspirations and their objectives in terms of learning about research methods. We will then discuss the role of research in society and talk about the reasons for and implications of certain topics being researched or not.

Readings:

* Messing, K. 2014. Pain & Prejudice. What science can learn about work from the people who do it. BTL Books. Chapter 1, pages 1-11 AND Chapter 11, pages 129-137.

**\*WEEK 2**

September 15: The Relationship Between Research Question, Theory, Design and Methods

Readings:

* Maxwell, J.A. 2013. Research Questions: What Do You Want to Understand? IN Qualitative Research Design. An Interactive Approach. 3rd Edition. Chapter 4, pages 73-86.
* Carter S.M. and Little, M. 2007. Justifying Knowledge, Justifying Method, Taking Action: Epistemologies, Methodologies, and methods in Qualitative Research. Qualitative Health Research. 17(10): 1316-28.
* Sil, R. 2004. Problems chasing methods or methods chasing problem? Research communities, constrained pluralism, and the role of eclecticism. In Shapiro I., Rogers M., and 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 McMaster library).

**WEEK 3**

September 22: Searching and Reviewing the Literature

This class will meet at Mills Library, Wong e-classroom, L107, from 12:30-2:00 for a library research skills class. The class will teach students how to search for information using various databases as well as how to cite sources properly and ethically. It will also introduce students to citation management software. Following the research skills class, we will engage in a literature review mapping exercise.

Readings:

* Goldring, L. and Joly, M-P. 2014. Immigration, Citizenship and Racialization at Work: Unpacking Employment Precarity in Southwestern Ontario. Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society. 22: 94-121.

* University of Toronto Scarborough. Writing a Literature Review.
* North Carolina State University Libraries. Literature Reviews: An Overview for Graduate Students: <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/litreview/> (9:38)

If you require more assistance on the process of writing a literature review, I highly recommend:

* Machi, L.A. & McEvoy, B.T. 2012. The Literature Review. Six Steps to Success. Sage Publications. (this book can be borrowed from the instructor).

Assignment: Based on the example of the literature map provided on Avenue, students should map the main components of the literature review in the Goldring and Joly article.

**\*WEEK 4**

September 29: Working with Quantitative Data I – Univariate Statistics

In this class we will learn how to produce and interpret univariate data, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency and dispersion. In doing so, we will learn to use the best measure for the data at hand. We will also discuss the categorization of variables.

Readings:

* Statistics Canada. 2013. Frequency distribution tables. Available from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/power-pouvoir/ch8/5214814-eng.htm>
* Statistics Canada. 2013. Statistics: Power from Data! Measures of Central Tendency. Available from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/power-pouvoir/ch11/5214867-eng.htm>

(Read: calculating the mean, calculating the median, calculating the mode, and exercises – available by clicking from the menu on the left-hand side).

* Statistics Canada. 2013. Statistics: Power from Data! Range and Quartiles. Available from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/power-pouvoir/ch12/5214890-eng.htm>

Assignment: Students should come to class with a rough sketch of their univariate table.

**\*WEEK 5**

October 6: Working with Quantitative Data II – Bivariate & Multivariate Statistics

In this class we will learn how to interpret bivariate or multivariate data while seeking to understand, broadly and critically, how to think about the link between two variables. In doing so, we will explore commonly used concepts and terms such as positive and negative relationships, statistical significance, causation, confounders, etc.

Readings:

* Premji S and Etowa J. 2014. Workforce Utilization of Visible and Linguistic Minorities in Canadian Nursing. Journal of Nursing Management, 22(1): 80-88.
* Hill, AB. 1965. The environment and disease: association or causation? Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine. 58(5): 295-300.
* Messing K. 1998. Constructing Scientific Knowledge IN: One-eyed science: Occupational Health and Women Workers. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapter 6, pages 73-84.

Assignment: Students should come to class with a rough sketch of their bivariate (crosstab) table. In addition, students should select and read one of the case studies from the “Calling Bullshit” class at the University of Washington: <http://callingbullshit.org/syllabus.html#Spotting> and be prepared to discuss their case study in class.

**WEEK 6**

**Mid-term recess – No class**

**\*WEEK 7**

October 20: Interviews and Focus Groups

\*\*\*Quantitative Tables Due\*\*\*

* Robinson O.C. 2014. Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11(1), pages 25-41.
* Robson, C. 2011. *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings, 3rd edition*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 11.
* Fahie, D. 2014. Doing sensitive research sensitively: ethical and methodological issues in researching workplace bullying. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 13: 1-18.

**\*WEEK 8**

October 27: Other Sources of Qualitative Data: Documentary and Internet-Based Research

* Ahmed, J.U. 2010. Documentary research method: New dimensions. Industrial Journal of Management and Social Sciences. 4(1) 1-14.
* Robson, C. 2011. *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings, 3rd edition*. John Wiley & Sons. Pages 378-384.
* Premji, S., et al. 2008. "Would a “one‐handed” scientist lack rigor? How scientists discuss the work‐relatedness of musculoskeletal disorders in formal and informal communications." American Journal of Industrial Medicine 51(3): 173-185.

**\*WEEK 9**

November 3: Qualitative data analysis and reporting

* Halcomb, E.J., Davidson, P.M. 2006. Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary? Applied Nursing Research. 19, pages 38-42.
* Robson, C. 2011. *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings, 3rd edition*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 17.
* Ritchie J. and Spencer L. Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In: Analyzing Qualitative Data, Bryman A. and Burgess R.G. (eds). Chapter 9, pages 173-194.
* O’Brien, B.C., Harris, I.B., Beckman, T.J., Reed, D.A., and Cook, D.A. 2014. Standards for reporting qualitative research: A synthesis of recommendations. Academic Medicine. 89(9).

Assignment: Students should download the free trial for NVIVO: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/trial-nvivo> and do the free “Explore NVIVO” tutorial: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-learning/nvivo-tutorials>

**\*WEEK 10**

November 10: Best Practices for High Quality Qualitative Research

Readings:

* Tracy, S.J. 2010. Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. Qualitative Inquiry. 16(10): 837-851.
* Fassinger R, Morrow SL. 2013. Toward best practices in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research: a social justice perspective. Journal of Social Action in Counseling and Psychology. 5(2): 69-83.
* Bettez, SC. 2014. Navigating the complexity of qualitative research in postmodern contexts: assemblage, critical reflexivity, and communion as guides. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education. Published online ahead of print. Pages 1-23.

**\*WEEK 11**

November 17: Research Ethics

\*\*\*Qualitative Review Assignment Due\*\*\*

Nick Caric, Senior Ethics Advisor at McMaster University, will visit our class between 12:30-2:00.

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 2010. Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10.

**WEEK 12**

November 24: No class

**\*WEEK 13**

\*\*\*Podcast Due\*\*\*

December 1: Knowledge Transfer, Exchange and Translation

* Graham, I.D., Logan, J., Harrison, M., Straus, S.E., Tetroe, J., Caswell, W., and Robinson, N. 2006. Lost in knowledge translation: Time for a map? The Journal of Continuing Education in Health Professions, 26, pp. 13-24.
* Eakin JM, Endicott M. 2006. Knowledge translation through research-based theatre. Healthcare Policy, 2(2): 54-59.
* Lavis, J. 2006. From research to practice: A knowledge transfer planning guide. Institute for Work and Health: <https://www.iwh.on.ca/system/files/at-work/kte_planning_guide_2006b.pdf>