

Research Methods

Winter 2021

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Stephen Lin
EMAIL: cclin@mcaste.ca

OFFICE HOURS: After Class or by Appointment
LECTURE: Thursdays, 4:30pm – 7:30pm

Course Description

Social scientists gather and employ empirical data to make theoretical observations about the social world. Methodologically, there are many strategies used to inform and gather empirical data including interviewing, participant observation, and focus groups (to name a few). Over the course of the semester, we will learn about a host of research methodologies and how to assess and apply them. We will consider the ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research strategies, although our focus will be on the practical considerations involved in the data collection, analysis and presentation process. To build capacity in research methods, students will “learn by doing”; we will engage in a series of activities catered toward building research skills and confidence. Organizationally, we will privilege your individual projects and goals, as well as deconstruct our social location in the research process. The final assignment is a research project proposal.

Course Delivery Method

The content of this course will be delivered fully online via a **synchronous learning format**. This means that the instructor and the students in the course engage with the course content and each other **at the same time**, but from different locations. The instructor interacts with students in real time by means of tools such as Zoom to livestream audio, video, and presentations. It is important for you to attend the online class and take your own responsibility to learn from the instructor and other students.

Course Learning Objectives

- Become equipped at formulating sound research questions
- Understand how to analyze literature and produce coherent literature reviews
- Become knowledgeable on the ethical challenges of conducting research, including what constitutes sound research within a university context
- Gain practical skills in research, including formulating research questions, generating interview guides, conducting observational research, and giving academic presentations
- Produce a research proposal that will advance your individual research projects

Required Texts

- Van den Hoonaard, D.K. (2018). *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*. (3rd Edition). Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199030026.
- Additional readings are available on Avenue.

Please note that the required textbook can be purchased from the following link provided by the campus store at McMaster University

https://campusstore.mcmaster.ca/cgi-mcm/ws/txsub.pl?wsTERMG1=211&wsDEPTG1=LABRST&wsCOURSEG1=715&wsSECTIONG1=DAY%20C01&crit_cnt=1

Course Evaluation Breakdown

Group Oral Presentation (Starting from February 4)	20%
Research Proposal (Due on February 22)	15%
Online Ethnography (Due on March 26)	25%
Class Participation	10%
Final Project Proposal (Due on April 15)	30%

Group Oral Presentation (20%)

On the first day of this class, you will be paired up with other students and prepare a maximum of **45-minute** presentation at the beginning of the online class. The presentation will start from Thursday, **February 4, 2021**. Your main tasks are listed below:

- Summarize the key points from the assigned readings.
- Find an example from the media (e.g., cover stories from the online news, internet advertisement, or featured stories) to illustrate the application of the assigned topic.
- Prepare relevant and thoughtful discussion questions throughout the presentation.
- Provide personal reflections on how the assigned topic relates to any research in labour studies.

Important Notes:

1. You will be assessed based on organization, idea cohesion, comprehension, creativity and critical thinking.
2. Your group must include every member's name and email address on the first slide of presentation and submit one copy to me by email prior to the presentation.

Research Proposal (15%) - Monday, February 22, by 11:59pm

At the end of this semester, you are required to complete a research proposal based on your own interest in labour studies. In this first assignment, you will learn how to propose a qualitative research question and discuss the rationale and importance of your topic. Then, you will conduct a brief literature review on existing studies related to your research topic. Please see the detailed instruction on Avenue. This assignment is due on Monday, February 22, by 11:59pm. Submit a Word file to Avenue.

Online Ethnography (25%) – Friday, March 26 by 11:59pm

This online ethnography is designed to help you understand the key components in unobtrusive research. Specifically, you will learn how to conduct research based on your critical observational skill. Instead of conducting ethnography in a specific site, you will be asked to watch a video and write **a maximum of 4-page report** based on your personal interaction with the content of the video. Please see the detailed instruction on Avenue. This assignment is due on Friday, March 26, by 11:59pm. Submit a Word *file* to Avenue.

Final Project Proposal (30%) - Thursday, April 15 by 11:59pm

The first research proposal will prepare you to complete this final project proposal. You will extend your literature view and design a qualitative study by using one or more methods you have learned in this course. You will also discuss ethical issues that can potentially arise from your research. This paper should be **8 pages maximum**. Please see the detailed instruction on Avenue. This assignment is due on Thursday, April 15 by 11:59pm. Please submit a Word Document to the dropbox on Avenue.

Class Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend every online class meeting having thoughtfully completed the readings and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. Your class participation will be evaluated based on both **frequency and quality** of your contribution.

MRP and Thesis Research Presentations (No Grade Assigned) – Thursday, April 8

In the final session of LABRST 715 Methods (typically the **first week of April**), all MA students will make a 5-minute presentation on their MRP or thesis topic to the class and the rest of the School of Labour Studies faculty and students. All MA students are expected to participate in this session. Faculty supervisors are also expected to attend. The goals of this session include: making sure you are on track in your MRP/Thesis research, giving you a chance to inform faculty and fellow students what you are working on and to get feedback from them, having an opportunity to provide feedback to students working on other projects. At a minimum, these presentations should include:

- The research question
- The significance of the research question (i.e. why bother answering it, why is it important?)
- Preliminary findings

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week	Date	Topic/Assignment	Assigned Readings
1	Jan 14	Introduction to the course Forming a Group (3 students)	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 1
2	Jan 21	Designing a Qualitative Study	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch.2 & 3
3	Jan 28	Literature Review Writing your first draft (Guest Speaker: TBA)	Galvan & Galvan (2017)
4	Feb 4	Content Analysis *Presentation Begin*	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 8 Alexander (2003)
5	Feb 11	Discourse Analysis Critical Discourse Analysis	Van Dijk (1993) Phillips & Jorgensen (2002)
6	Feb 18	Reading Week (No Class)	No Reading
7	Feb 25	Ethnography *Research Proposal Due (Feb 22)*	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 5 Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995)
8	March 4	In-Depth Interviewing Focus Groups	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 6 Hesse-Biber (2014) Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 7 Madriz (2000) /Carey (1994)
9	March 11	Qualitative Research in a Digital Age	G & T Ch. 9 Wilkerson et al. (2014)
10	March 18	Sampling in Qualitative Research	Luborsky & Rubinstein (1995) Bungay et al. (2016)
11	March 25	Analyzing Qualitative Data Grounded Theory *Online Ethnography Due (March 26)*	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 9 Charmaz (2014) LeCompte (2000)
12	April 1	Ethics in Qualitative Research Guest Speaker (TBA)	Van Den Hoonaard, Ch. 4

13	April 8	Department Oral Presentation Final Project Proposal	No Reading
14	April 15	Final Project Proposal Due	No Reading

Course Policies

Grades in graduate courses are reported as letter grades. However, instructors may record grades for individual components of the course either as letter or numerical grades. The averaging of letter grades assigned to individual components of a course must be done by using the McMaster 12-point scale, as follows: A+ = 12, A = 11, A- = 10, B+ = 9, B = 8, B- = 7, C+ = 6, C = 5, C- = 4, D+ = 3, D = 2, D- = 1, F = 0. Further, all .5 marks should be rounded up. The passing grades for courses at the graduate level are A+, A, A-, B+, B, and B-. Graduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses will be subject to the grading scale as courses in the graduate level. The minimum passing grade is a B-. Final grades are normally converted to letter grades after the numerical grade is determined.

Graduate Student Grading Scale:

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentages	Pass/Fail
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	P
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	77-79	
B	8	73-76	
B-	7	70-72	
F	0	69 and under	F

Note: Grades in graduate courses are reported as letter grades.

Late Assignments

Assignments should be submitted by the specific time on the due date unless you are granted an extension. Extensions will be considered only under exceptional circumstances. Requests for extensions must be made prior to the due date. Otherwise, **late assignments come with a 5% penalty per day, including weekends.**

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, and 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.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been up-held (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Department/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, in tutorials or during Professor/TA office hours. Instructors who utilize Avenue to Learn will provide instructions on that preference.

Academic Dishonesty:

<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 as-signed 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.

Absence Reporting: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>

On-line self-reporting tool – illness lasting less than 3 days. Can only be used once per term. Instructors are not allowed to accept medical notes! These must be submitted to your Faculty office. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Re-quests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please communicate with the course instructor.

Online Elements:

This course includes on-line elements, specifically (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), Zoom, Dropbox, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, usernames 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

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.

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

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1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
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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.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy:

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email 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.

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 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.

Privacy Protection:

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded papers

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

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.