

## **SOCWORK 772: Qualitative Research Methods**

Starts Spring 2019, resumes Winter 2020

Winter Term (2020): Wednesdays, 9:30am-12:20pm in KTH 308

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## **Course Overview**

### **Course Description:**

This course will review approaches in qualitative social work research. We will discuss issues relating to research ethics, approaches to data generation and analysis, and the presentation of research results. Building on the conceptual material from “Critical Approaches to Social Work Knowledge” (SW 737) and “Research for Social Change” (SW 771), the course will emphasize the more practical aspects of designing and conducting qualitative social work/social justice research.

For this course you require your own ‘data’ (generated over the summer/ fall, based on the plans and REB application you created following our classes & meetings last April) – this could be two or three interviews, field observations, autoethnographic reports etc. In an early class we’ll talk about when and how to prepare and circulate this material (page set up, anonymizing, password protection, etc.).

The course will be run as a workshop for your own projects. You are expected to actively engage the readings; draw from the readings to think through your own research questions, plans, and process; come prepared to present & discuss this in the seminar, and to support other students to do the same.

## Course Objectives:

- refine skills in the design and implementation of qualitative research projects;
- consider various data sources and approaches to data generation;
- develop skills in analyzing qualitative data; and,
- consider how qualitative research can help promote social justice.

The basic assumptions of this course concur with the broader curriculum context set by the **School of Social Work's Statement of Philosophy**:

*As social workers, we operate in a society characterized by power imbalances that affect us all. These power imbalances are based on age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic location, health, ability, race, sexual identity and income. We see personal troubles as inextricably linked to oppressive structures. We believe that social workers must be actively involved in the understanding and transformation of injustices in social institutions and in the struggles of people to maximize control over their own lives.*

## Course Format

Classes will be conducted as a seminar. Information will be presented through lectures, practical application of research methods and class discussion. To maximize learning and nourish the kind of critical critique and debate that the graduate program seeks to foster, everyone's participation and preparation is important. Students are asked to be familiar with assigned readings and be ready to contribute to our ongoing seminar conversation. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to integrate their emerging research projects and data generation endeavors into class discussion.

## Required Texts:

1. Mason, J. (2018). *Qualitative Researching* (3rd edition). London: Sage.
2. Journal articles that are available through the McMaster library will be accessed electronically.

## Course Requirements/Assignments

### Requirements Overview and Deadlines

1. Assignment 1: Knowing where you stand (20%), Due February 12, 2020
2. Assignment 2: Towards analysis (60%), Due April 17, 2020
3. Contributions to seminar 'workshop' (20%)

## Requirement/Assignment Details

1. Assignment 1: Knowing Where You Stand
  - Describe your dissertation research along the lines specified in Mason Chapter 1: Intellectual Puzzles and Research Questions. This is a short chapter, but it asks very important questions about your research, and offers direction for engaging these questions deeply. You may wish to start with question 6, about your aims and purpose.
  - 8 - 10 double spaced pages
2. Assignment 2: Towards analysis
  - Submit a paper that takes up one analytic approach listed on this syllabus (or agreed on). Offer a brief overview of your study (approximately 3 pages) and then discuss your analytic approach, including implications for how you will go about engaging your data (about 6 pages). Then offer an analysis of (excerpts from) your own transcripts (about 6 pages) (include the transcripts as an appendix). In the next pages reflect on the adequacy of this analytic approach in the context of your study as outlined in Assignment 1. Then consider either a) other approaches that might be better suited (using at least one reading on another approach to analysis) or b) ways your forays into analysis influence decisions about your data generation approaches (using at least one reading about data generation) or c) issues of presentation and representation in relation to the analysis you have just offered (using at least one reading on this theme).
  - 20 - 23 double-spaced pages
3. Contributions to seminar 'workshop'
  - The contribution grade recognizes your efforts to create a seminar environment in which we move forward collective understanding and individual research endeavors. It is based on your timely preparation for seminar discussion; ability to draw forward and elaborate key ideas from readings and identify the relevance and significance of these ideas for your own and others' research; your presentations and written summaries to the class and constructive engagement and contributions to discussion of your classmates' research.

## Assignment Submission and Grading

### Form and Style

- Written assignments must be typed using 12 pt. font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri), double-spaced and submitted with a front page containing the title, student's name and email address, and the date. Number all pages (except title page).

- Assignments should be stapled together. Please do NOT use plastic report covers or binders.
- Papers will also be assessed on the basis of academic writing style, grammar and spelling, and on the content, flow and structure of the argument.
- Paper format must be in accordance with the current edition of American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual with particular attention paid to font size, spacing (double spaced) and margins (minimum of 1 inch at the top, bottom, left and right of each page).
- Students are expected to make use of relevant professional and social science literature and other bodies of knowledge in their term assignments. When submitting, please keep a spare copy of your assignments.

## **Submitting Assignments & Grading**

Please hand in papers either to me directly (email at [iona@mcmaster.ca](mailto:iona@mcmaster.ca), hard copy in class, or drop in mailbox) or to the School of Social Work Office (KTH-319) by the due date. All work is due on the date stated in course syllabus unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor (e.g., medical or other reason). A late penalty of 2 percentage points per day will apply after the due date (weekends included).

## **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 five digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

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.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

## **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.

## Student Responsibilities

- Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Students should read material in preparation for class, attend class on time and remain for the full duration of the class. A formal break will be provided in the middle of each class, students are to return from the break on time.
- Audio or video recording in the classroom without permission of the instructor is strictly prohibited.
- Please ensure your cell phone is turned off before class begins. Please do not answer your cell phone or engage in texting during class.
- The classes in this course will be conducted in an open and respectful environment. It is expected that participation will be expressed in a constructive, respectful manner that contributes to learning and is sensitive to people's social location.

## Attendance

Participation, attendance, and questions are essential in order to fully engage in the analysis of the readings. Furthermore, the expectation is that students will attend all lectures.

## 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](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf) Print URL <https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

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

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or

e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Print URL <https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

## **Accessibility Statement**

The School of Social Work recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom, and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please be in touch with the course instructor.

## **Religious, Indigenous and 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 requiring a RISO accommodation 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.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation. Print URL <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/riso>

## **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, they may not reply.

## **Course Weekly Topics and Readings**

### **PART 1 – SPRING 2019**

#### **Week 1:**

##### **Topic:**

- Beginning to know where you stand...

**Notes:**

- In class we'll review the syllabus and discuss your current ideas about your dissertation study. For this course, you are expected to have 'data'... two or three interviews, field observations, autoethnographic reports etc. In class we'll discuss a small research project you'll do over the summer, that will move your dissertation study forward and generate data for us to discuss when we resume the class in 2020.

*To move your dissertation thinking and your summer research project along, before next class:*

- *consider Chapter 1 of the Mason text in relation to your project. As you read, make notes about your own project along the lines specified by Mason (your ontological perspective, your broad research area, your intellectual puzzle and research questions, your aims and purposes). Start to 'try out' the forms of puzzle she suggests, and generate a few versions of your research questions.*
- *In addition, to move your thinking about data generation along, create a list of potential questions for interviewees*
- *Email a summary (approximately 2 pages single spaced) to everyone with your (provisional!) responses to Mason's questions and your draft interview questions. This is a first take, to be refined in class discussion and as you move through the course & data generation, talk with members of your committee, etc.*

**Week 2:****Topic:**

- Crafting a pilot study

**Notes:**

- *Come to class prepared to discuss your summary/ your further thinking about your study, and your pilot research. Also come having read your classmates' summaries, and with ideas to support their work.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 1: Finding a focus and knowing where you stand

**Week 3:****Topic:**

- Crafting a pilot study: preparing for MREB  
*Create a draft letter of information and consent for your pilot study (see the sample on the REB website: <https://reo.mcmaster.ca/educational-resources>). This is the document that must describe, in accessible language, your purpose, and everything you will ask participants to do, and the risks and how you will mitigate them. Circulate this ahead of time (by May 15) to the class.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 2 [pages 24 – 32 only]: Designing qualitative research
- Mason Ch. 3: Data sources, methods and approaches
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2010. [[PDF](#)]
  - *Read chapter 10, and any sections especially salient to your own work. Make notes on what strikes you, what questions or insights are raised in relation to your projects, and discuss with the class how you might address these in your ethics board application.*

**Over the summer you'll create an MREB application, with support from me and your committee. Mostly we'll work by email, meeting face to face/ by skype as needed.**

**PART 2 – Winter 2020**

**9:30am – 12:20pm in KTH 308**

**Week 1: January 22****Topic:**

- Re-knowing where you stand...

**Notes:**

- *Come to class with a revised, updated description of your dissertation project (as it stands now!) along the lines specified in Mason Chapter 1 (approximately 2 single-spaced pages; please circulate by email by the Monday prior to class). Use this to update the rest of us on your current thinking about your project. This summary is the basis for Assignment 1.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 1: Intellectual Puzzles and Research Questions

**Week 2: January 29****Topic:**

- Generating data

**Notes:**

- *Come to class prepared to reflect on your data generation. Discuss the assumptions operating in your data generation, and offer your reflections about the process & challenges to date, & insights for your future data generation, drawing on at least two relevant readings from the list below (or other readings that are congruent with your methodological approach). By Monday, circulate by email a summary (approximately 2 single spaced pages)*



reflecting on these themes, so we can all come prepared to engage your work.

### **Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 5: Qualitative interviewing
- Mason Ch. 6: Observing and participating
- Mason Ch. 7: Being creative with methods

### INTERVIEWING & FOCUS GROUPS

- Rapley, T. (2004). Interviews. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 15-33). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives: Vol. 3* (pp. 1-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldanha, K., & Nybell, L. (2016). Capturing/captured by stories of marginalized young people: Direct scribing and dialogic narrative analysis. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1473325016656750.
- Marjorie L. DeVault and Liza McCoy (2006). Institutional Ethnography: Using interviews to investigate ruling relations. In D.E. Smith (Ed.), *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (pp. 15-44). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 16(1), 103 - 117.
- Macnaghten, P., & Myers, G. (2004). Focus Groups. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 65-79). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### OBSERVING AND PARTICIPATING [& AUTOETHNOGRAPHY]

- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2001). Participant observation and fieldnotes. *Handbook of ethnography*, 352-368.
- Elaine Bass Jenks (2002). Searching for autoethnographic credibility: Reflections from a Mom with a Notepad. In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 170-186). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

### USING VISUAL METHODS AND DOCUMENTS; ARTS INFORMED INQUIRY [&AUTOETHNOGRAPHY]

- Neilsen, L. (2008). Lyric inquiry. *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research*, 93-102.
- Ronald J. Pelias (2008). Performative Inquiry: Embodiment and its Challenges (2008). In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 185-194). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Rena Miller (2005). "Wife Rena Teary." Pp. 181-179 in Leslie Brown & Susan Strega (editors), *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous & Anti-Oppressive Approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.

### **Week 3: February 5**

**Topic:**

- Aligning Methods with Ontology and Epistemology, and Planning Approaches

**Notes**

*Come to class prepared to discuss the reading below in relation to your own project and your planned data analysis.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 2: Choosing Methods and Planning Approaches

### **Week 4: February 12**

**Topic:**

- Engaging & Analyzing Qualitative Data

**Notes**

*Come to class prepared to discuss the reading below in relation to your own project and your planned data analysis. By Monday, circulate by email a summary (approximately 2 single spaced pages) of your reflections. Make two or three anonymized transcripts/ sections of transcripts from your study available to the class – upload to MacDrive.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 8: Making sense of qualitative data

### **Week 5: February 19 [READING WEEK – NO CLASS]**

### **Week 6: February 26**

**Topic:**

- Engaging & Analyzing Qualitative Data

**Notes:**

*Come to class prepared to further discuss the reading below in relation to your own project and your planned data analysis. Assignment 1 due.*

**Readings:**

- Mason Ch. 8: Making sense of qualitative data

## Week 7: March 4 – individual conversations with me about your analysis & presentations

## Week 8: March 11

### Topic:

- Engaging & Analyzing Qualitative Data

### Notes:

- *This week and the next weeks involve presentations of your early analysis of transcripts. Each week one person will present, and everyone else will pitch in.*
- *The presenter will take up one of the approaches to analysis listed on the syllabus (or that we agree on). Offer an overview of the approach, including implications for how to go about engaging and analyzing data; bring a handout (max 6 pages) about the approach, to support your discussion and as a resource to other students. Then offer an analysis of sections of your own transcripts using this lens. Assignment 2 is based on this presentation.*
- *Detailed guidance on the presentation will be circulated.*
- *If you are not presenting, come to class having read about the analytic lens the presenters have chosen and prepared to discuss your classmates' transcripts.*

### Readings:

- Mauthner, N., and A. Doucet. "Reflections on a Voice-Centred Relational Method." In *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Private Lives and Public Texts*. 119-46. London: Sage, 1998.
- Holstein, James A. & Gubrium, Jaber F. (2004) Context: Working it Up, Down and Across, in Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice*, pp. 297-311. London: SAGE.
- Starks, H. and Trinidad, S.B. "Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory", *Qualitative Health Research* 207, 17 (10):1372-1380.
- Wilkinson, S. "Women with breast cancer talking causes: Comparing content, biographical and discursive analyses", *Feminism and Psychology*, 2000, 10(4):431-460.

### THEMATIC ANALYSIS and GROUNDED THEORY

- Coffey, A, and P Atkinson. "Concepts and Coding." In *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. 26 - 53. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.
- Gery Ryan & H. Russell Bernard (2003). "Techniques to Identify Themes." *Field Methods* 15 (1), 85-109.

- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded Theory. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice* (pp. 496-521). NY: Oxford University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). Coding in Grounded Theory Practice in *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (pp. 42-71). London: Sage Publications Limited.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). Memo-writing in *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (pp. 72-95). London: Sage Publications Limited.
- Rosiek, J. L., & Heffernan, J. (2014). Can't Code What the Community Can't See: A Case of the Erasure of Heteronormative Harassment. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 726-733.

#### NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

- Riessman, C.K. 2007. "Looking Back, Looking Forward [Introduction]." In *Narrative methods for the human sciences*, 1-19. London Sage
- Riessman, C.K. 2007. "Thematic Analysis " In *Narrative methods for the human sciences*, 53-76. London Sage.
- Riessman, C. K. (2007). Structural Analysis *Narrative methods for the human sciences* (pp. 77-103). London Sage
- You can also review work by: Clandinin & Connelly

#### DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- Hicks, S., & Taylor, C. (2008). A Complex Terrain of Words and Deeds: Discourse, Research and Social Change. In P. Cox, T. Geisen & R. Green (Eds.), *Qualitative Research and Social Change: European Contexts* (pp. 52-72). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tonkiss, F. (2012). Discourse analysis. In C. Seale (Ed.), *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Analyzing racism through discourse analysis: Some methodological reflections. In J. Stanfield (Ed.), *Race and ethnicity in Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Edley, N. 2001. "Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions." *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*:189-228.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2001. "The Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis " *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*:229-266.
- Rose, Gillian. "Discourse Analysis I: Text, Intertextuality, Context ". In *Visual Methodologies* 189-226. London: Sage, 2012.
- Jean Carabine (2001). Unmarried motherhood 1830-1990: A genealogical analysis. *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*:267-310.

#### INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

- Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. (2004). *Mapping Social Relations: A primer on doing institutional ethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

- Liza McCoy (2006). Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experience. In D.E. Smith (Ed.), *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (pp. 109-126). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- DeVault, M. L. (2014). Mapping Invisible Work: Conceptual Tools for Social Justice Projects. *Sociological Forum*, 29(4), 775-790.

#### PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- van Wijngaarden, E., Leget, C., & Goossensen, A. (2015). Ready to give up on life: The lived experience of elderly people who feel life is completed and no longer worth living. *Social Science & Medicine*, 138, 257-264.
- Cosgrove, L. (2000). Crying out loud: Understanding women's emotional distress as both lived experience and social construction. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(2), 247-267.
- Allen-Collinson, J., & Pavey, A. (2014). Touching moments: phenomenological sociology and the haptic dimension in the lived experience of motor neuron disease. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 36(6), 793-806

#### INDIGENOUS APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS

- Hallett, J., Held, S., McCormick, A. K. H. G., Simonds, V., Real Bird, S., Martin, C., . . . Trottier, C. (2017). What Touched Your Heart? Collaborative Story Analysis Emerging From an Apsáalooke Cultural Context. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(9), 1267-1277. doi: 10.1177/1049732316669340
- Barnes, H. M., Gunn, T. R., Barnes, A. M., Muriwai, E., Wetherell, M., & McCreanor, T. (2017). Feeling and spirit: developing an indigenous wairua approach to research. *Qualitative Research*, 17(3), 313-325.
- Jackson, R., Ryan, C., Masching, R., Whitebird, W (2015). Towards an Indigenous Narrative Inquiry: The Importance of Composite, Artful Representations (pgs. 135-158). In Sinding, C. & Barnes, H. (Eds.), *Social Work, Beyond Borders, Social Work Artfully*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press

#### [explicitly!] THEORY-DRIVEN ANALYSIS

- Patricia McKeever (2004). Mothering children who have disabilities: A Bourdieusian interpretation of maternal practices. *Social science & Medicine* 59, 6, 1177-1191.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2011). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- This book has chapters on 'thinking with' Foucault (power/knowledge), Spivak (marginality), Butler (performativity) and others... the introduction is on the Avenue site.

### **Week 9: March 18**

#### **Topic:**

- Engaging & Analyzing Qualitative Data cont'd

**Readings:**

- As above

**Week 10: March 25****Topic:**

- Engaging & Analyzing Qualitative Data cont'd

**Readings:**

- As above

**Week 11: April 1****Topic:**

- Course summary, review, next steps for each of you