



**DEMS
4721**

***Qualitative
Methods***

*Winter 2020, HNE 033
Thursdays, 2:30-5:30pm*

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What do all these situations have in common?

- Your boss asks you “did this brochure result in the public being more prepared for disasters?”
- Your professor asks you “what have researchers found out about survival in tornados?”
- A reporter asks you “how do people in this community experience earthquakes?”

Each situation asks you to make an empirical claim; to say something about what’s fact and what’s not.

This class is all about *how* we know the world around us. We’ll learn about research design, how to conduct our own studies, and especially about ‘qualitative’ approaches to research. Want to be able to trust your knowledge? This class is for you.

Course Resources



Questions?
ebk@yorku.ca



No textbook.
Readings on Moodle.



Office Hours By Appointment
Atkinson Room 249



FEMA staff conducting mitigation interviews in the United States.

(Image: FEMA, public domain, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_37813_-_FEMA_Mitigation_Interview_at_DRC.jpg)

Course Purpose

In this class, you'll achieve three big things:

- First, you'll be able to design a rigorous, reliable research or evaluation project... especially using qualitative methods for disaster research.
- Second, you'll be able to carry out this project, from beginning to end, producing knowledge that actually helps us understand, mitigate, and manage disasters.
- Third, you'll be able to critically analyze the methodological design of other research and evaluation in the field, identifying strengths, weaknesses, how you'd do it differently, and what reliable knowledge it offers.

To help you succeed at this, the course will be run in a workshop style. Each week, you'll do readings to prepare. Combined with some lecture content from me, this will help you to understand the content. Then, we'll spend the majority of our time together *applying* this knowledge to your projects, and to analyzing real-world research done on disasters.

I'll post slides, readings, and resources to the course Moodle. I'll even give you a weekly list of what you need to learn and know, so that you can be confident you're on top of the material! I'd recommend studying from these contents, not other sources like OneClass. I'll give you the exact version you need (don't pay for an out-of-date version of what I'll give you free!).

What We'll Cover

To help decide whether this course is right for you, here's a sense of what topics and issues we will (and won't) be covering:

1. The class focuses on research design and qualitative methods. We don't cover statistical analysis of quantitative results in here... but we will help you make some sense of what you learned in your stats course, and how it applies to research!
2. We cover both research and evaluation. Research is where we want to understand the world; evaluation is where we want to assess if we've met our goals. We cover both of these, because while you'll use *research* skills often in the university, much of what you do in your job will be *evaluation* (but it uses the same tools!).
3. We focus on disaster and emergency management (DEM) applications. I'm thrilled to have people in the class from all programs across the university! But, the examples we focus on will come from the world of DEM. It's an exciting, literally life-and-death topic, so hopefully you'll enjoy.
4. Finally, we integrate theory, application, and analysis. You'll be expected to understand why and how to do something; to apply it to an actual project; and to analyze when other people do it.



Field research being conducted by the US Forest Service (note: we're not doing this kind of research!).
(Image: US Forest Service, image public domain, available at <https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/d8072563-0d90-4c11-bb42-3025e0319b79>)

Assessment (Quizzes & Projects)

Because you'll be learning the theory, application, and analysis of research and evaluation methods, we need to use a number of different assessment strategies. These help me to know how you're doing, but also give you regular feedback on how effectively you're learning.

1. 50% of your grade comes from weekly quizzes. Each week (11 total), we will spend ~20 minutes on a timed, closed-book quiz, cumulative. Instead of cramming for an exam (and then forgetting everything!), this will help make sure we're on track each week. *I'll only count your best 9 quizzes.*
2. 25% of your grade comes from weekly, in-class assignments analyzing the *example* reading that you did at home that week. You'll work in groups to complete a series of questions. You'll turn in the assignment (20%), as well as a short evaluation of the peers in your group (5%). *I'll only count your best 9 group assignments and peer evaluations.*
3. 25% of your grade comes from the term project, which we'll be workshopping regularly in class. In this project, you'll develop a robust research or evaluation project. The project will be submitted at the end of the term, but you'll develop it throughout the semester with regular feedback along the way.

Readings

Each week, you'll have two readings to examine closely. One will be a *theory* piece, giving you more detail about how to do the stuff we're talking about. The other will be an *example*, where you'll analyze how that method was applied in the real world.

To reduce costs, there is no required textbook in this course. I'll post all readings to Moodle. The list there is a definitive guide of what you need to read, and any changes will be communicated at least one week in advance.

"Best Of" Mechanism

The skills you're learning each week are challenging! To pass the class, you need to master all the content and demonstrate that you can apply it in different ways.

That said, I also know that life happens: you might enrol in the course late; need to be away for illness, work, or to take care of a family member; or you might just have an 'off' week!

To make room for this, I provide *universal accommodation*. In other words, everyone will only have their top nine grades counted on both the quizzes and activities. That way, you don't even need to disclose what challenges you're facing if you'd rather not... everyone gets the benefit of the doubt, no questions asked 😊.



A focus group on cybersecurity run by the US Military.

(Image: US Air Force, public domain, image available at <https://www.wpafb.af.mil/News/Photos/igphoto/2001833197/mediaid/2304889/>)

Class Structure

To help you learn as much as possible, we do two things differently in this class:

- First, this class is run as a workshop, which is exactly how I'd teach you these skills if you were a professional in industry already. In this format, the majority of our class time will be spent in hands-on activities: analyzing research, designing our own, doing exercises, and solidifying our knowledge through quizzes.
- Second, each module is split over two weeks. During the first week, I'll introduce the topic and provide a short lecture/discussion to get you up to speed. Then, we'll do more advanced analysis during the second session, based on the readings you did at home that week.

As a result, you'll get out of this class as much as you put into it. I'll give my all to help make it exciting and educational, but the format also depends on you investing in our community.

This also means that doing the readings is really important for three reasons:

1. The theory reading is testable material on each quiz.
2. Your group is depending on you to understand both the theory and example reading for the analysis activity that week.
3. Your group will evaluate whether you came prepared to class, and this will count to your grade!

I have two tips to succeed in this course:

- Make sure to review your notes each week! Each quiz is cumulative, so it can test anything from the class... I want you to *learn* this stuff, not just cram it! Finding ~20-30 minutes each week to review with a classmate is incredibly helpful.
- Make use of the resources I provide. I'll share past quizzes, learning goals, and more to help make sure you're on track.

EXAMPLE:	Class #7	At Home	Class #8
First Half	<i>[Previous topic...]</i>	Do two readings: (1) Theory about interviews (2) Example of interviews	Continue interviews. Q&A/Review. Analyze example article.
Middle		Review introduction & class material	Quiz on interviews + cumulative
Second Half	Introduce Interviews		<i>[Next topic...]</i>



Participants receiving their cameras for a 'Photovoice' project, a new qualitative method.

(Image: Lưu Trọng Đạt / CCAFS SEA, creative commons, image available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cgiarcclimate/33462936200>)

My Commitments to You

I care about making sure that this course is a good experience for you. No matter who you are, what background you come from, or what perspectives you bring, I want to make sure that you are both challenged by the material and able to learn, grow, and perform to the best of your abilities. I design my classes to be universally accessible so that everyone can accommodate how they need to, without needing to disclose.

- I offer a no-questions-asked, 24 hour extension on your term paper. All you need to do is email me by the due date to receive this automatically (no confirmation required).
- I'm happy to work with you to develop an extension/plan for this assignment, if you need more than 24hrs. The earlier you tell me, the more flexibility I can give you.
- I'll use the 'best of' scores (described on p. 3) to help make sure everyone is accommodated without needing to disclose what's going on in your life.
- Each quiz will take place before the break, allowing up to 50% extra time beyond what the quiz is timed to require.
- To prevent unintentional bias, I grade all quizzes & assignments blinded. Please never put your name on an exam or assignment: student numbers only!
- You'll get feedback each week from your quizzes so that you know how you're doing in the class, and can make adjustments along the way (or decide whether it's right for you).

Your Commitments to Us

As a member of this community, you have a few responsibilities as well:

- If you are struggling to understand material, please talk to me early! We can set up a time to meet (in person or virtually) to help make sure you're comfortable and confident.
- I understand you might need to miss a class. If you're going to be away, please (1) complete the readings, (2) get notes from a classmate, (3) make notes based on the learning goals and slides from that week, and then (4) spend 20-30 minutes reviewing with a classmate to make sure you got the material. If you still have questions after these steps, I'd be happy to meet with you to help!
- Academic honesty is **incredibly** important, and this class has a zero-tolerance policy for infractions. You could receive a zero on your assignment (or worse!) if you:
 - > Use an idea without citing it
 - > Copy & paste words without quotation marks and citations
 - > Attempt to cheat/gain unfair advantage
 - > Have someone else do your work for you
- Bring your whole self to the class (e.g., arrive on time, take notes, put electronics away). You'll get out of this class what you invest into it. I'll do my best to make this class as useful, educational, and fun as possible – please help!



Halifax devastated after the 1917 explosion: the origin story of disaster research.

(Image: Public domain, available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Street_Station_\(Halifax\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Street_Station_(Halifax)))

Course Schedule

Week	Theme	Notes
Week 1 Jan 9	Introduction to Research & Evaluation	
	Key Concepts in (Qualitative) Research	
Week 2 Jan 16		First quiz + assignment (weekly)
	Designing a Research Question	
Week 3 Jan 23		
	Sampling	
Week 4 Jan 30		
	Systematic Reviews	
Week 5 Feb 6		
	Survey Design: Questions	
Week 6 Feb 13		
	Survey Design: Structuring	Note: Reading Week after this!
Week 7 Feb 27		
	Interviews & Focus Groups	
Week 8 Mar 5		
	Ethnographic Methods	
Week 9 Mar 12		Prof away: Quiz Online
	Secondary Data	Prof away: Lecture Online
Week 10 Mar 19		
	Transcription, Coding, and Quantitative Analysis	
Week 11 Mar 26		
	Qualitative Analysis	
Week 12 April 2		Last quiz + assignment
	Wrapping up/Lessons Learned	Term paper due date TBA



This is ocean floor surveying by the Canadian Coast Guard. This is not the kind of surveying we'll do. (Image: By United States Geological Survey, public domain, available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usgeologicalsurvey/4371016246>)

University Regulations

TL;DR: Talk to me early if there's anything I can do to help you learn, feel comfortable, and succeed!

Deferred Exams: Deferred standing may be granted to students who are unable to write their final examination at the scheduled time or to submit their outstanding course work on the last day of classes. Details can be found at <http://myacademicrecord.students.yorku.ca/deferred-standing>

Any request for deferred standing on medical grounds must include an Attending Physician's Statement form; a "Doctor's Note" will not be accepted.

DSA Form: http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/deferred-standing_agreement.pdf

Attending Physician's Statement form: <http://registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/attending-physicians-statement.pdf>

In order to apply for deferred standing, students must register at <http://apps.eso.yorku.ca/apps/adms/deferredexams.nsf>

Followed by handing in a completed DSA form and supporting documentation directly to the main office of the School of Administrative Studies (282 Atkinson) and add your ticket number to the DSA form. The DSA and supporting documentation must be submitted no later than five (5) business days from the date of the exam. These requests will be considered on their merit and decisions will be made available by logging into the above mentioned link. No individualized communication will be sent by the School to the students (no letter or e-mails).

Students with approved DSA will be able to write their deferred examination during the School's deferred examination period. No further extensions of deferred exams shall be granted. The format and covered content of the deferred examination may be different from that of the originally scheduled examination. The deferred exam may be closed book, cumulative and comprehensive and may include all subjects/topics of the textbook whether they have been covered in class or not. Any request for deferred standing on medical grounds must include an Attending Physician's Statement form; a "Doctor's Note" will not be accepted.

Academic Honesty: The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies considers breaches of the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty to be serious matters. The Senate Policy on Academic Honesty is an affirmation and clarification for members of the University of the general obligation to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. As a clear sense of academic honesty and responsibility is fundamental to good scholarship, the policy recognizes the general responsibility of all faculty members to foster acceptable standards of academic conduct and of the student to be mindful of and abide by such standards. Suspected breaches of academic honesty will be investigated and charges shall be laid if reasonable and probable grounds exist.

Students should review the York Academic Honesty policy for themselves at: <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>

Students might also wish to review the interactive on-line Tutorial for students on academic integrity, at: <https://spark.library.yorku.ca/academic-integrity-what-is-academic-integrity/>

Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy: The grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) shall be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and, under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for 'full year' courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade, with the following exceptions:

Note: Under unusual and/or unforeseeable circumstances which disrupt the academic norm, instructors are expected to provide grading schemes and academic feedback in the spirit of these regulations, as soon as possible. For more information on the Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy, please visit: <http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=86>

In-Class Tests and Exams - the 20% Rule: For all Undergraduate courses, except those which regularly meet on Friday evening or on a weekend, tests or exams worth more than 20% will not be held in the two weeks prior to the beginning of the official examination period. For further information on the 20% Rule, please visit: <http://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/limits-on-the-worth-of-examinations-in-the-final-classes-of-a-term-policy/>

Reappraisals: Students may, with sufficient academic grounds, request that a final grade in a course be reappraised (which may mean the review of specific pieces of tangible work). Non-academic grounds are not relevant for grade reappraisals; in such cases, students are advised to petition to their home Faculty. Students are normally expected to first contact the course director to discuss the grade received and to request that their tangible work be reviewed. Tangible work may include written, graphic, digitized, modeled, video recording or audio recording formats, but not oral work. Students need to be aware that a request for a grade reappraisal may result in the original grade being raised, lowered or confirmed. For reappraisal procedures and information, please visit the Office of the Registrar site at: <http://myacademicrecord.students.yorku.ca/grade-reappraisal-policy>

Accommodation Procedures: LA&PS students who have experienced a misfortune or who are too ill to attend the final examination in an ADMS course should not attempt to do so; they must pursue deferred standing. Other students should contact their home Faculty for information. For further information, please visit: <http://ds.info.yorku.ca/academic-support-accommodations/>

Religious Accommodation: York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community, and making accommodations for observances of special significance to adherents. For more information on religious accommodation, please visit: <https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/edm.woa/wa/reqobj>

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities (Senate Policy)

The nature and extent of accommodations shall be consistent with and supportive of the integrity of the curriculum and of the academic standards of programs or courses. Provided that students have given sufficient notice about their accommodation needs, instructors shall take reasonable steps to accommodate these needs in a manner consistent with the guidelines established hereunder. For more information, please visit the Counselling and Disability Services website at <http://www.yorku.ca/dshub/>

York's disabilities offices and the Registrar's Office work in partnership to support alternate exam and test accommodation services for students with disabilities at the Keele campus. For more information on alternate exams and tests please visit <http://www.yorku.ca/altexams/>

Please alert the Course Director as soon as possible should you require special accommodations.