



**DEMS
4721**

*Qualitative
Methods*

*Fall 2021
Remote Delivery*

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- > Your boss asks you “did our workshop actually help the community prepare for disasters?”
- > Your professor asks you “what have researchers found out about survival in tornados?”
- > A reporter asks you “how are the people in this community affected by the fear of earthquakes?”

What do all these situations have in common? Each situation asks you to make an empirical claim; to say something about what’s true – and what’s not!

In other words, this class is all about how to produce reliable knowledge – especially ‘qualitative’ forms of knowledge. We’ll learn about how to design a research project; how to conduct your own study; and how to ‘critically’ read existing research.

Want to be able to trust your own knowledge? Actually do your own research? This class is for you!

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Course Resources



Virtual Office Hours:
[Sign up at this link!](#)



Primary communication mode:
<https://discord.gg/UysKJDwqQu>



No textbook.
Readings on eClass.



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

Through your work 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.
- Second, you'll acquire the skills 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 make our 'remote' style of class most effective, we will **not** have three-hour zoom calls. Instead, before class, you'll work independently to use online/asynchronous materials to help you learn the key concepts – supported by a class Discord server to help answer questions as they arise. Then, we'll meet for 60-90 minutes each week on Zoom to work through exercises applying these materials.

Instead of an expensive textbook, I'll be posting readings, videos, study guides, and practice quizzes on eClass. I highly recommend studying directly from these sources, rather than other sources like OneClass: get the most recent materials for free from me, rather than paying for previous, old versions!

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 research in disaster and emergency management (DEM), so will use lots of catastrophic case studies. But, I'm thrilled to have students from other programs in this class too! As long as you're okay with a focus on disaster case studies, you'll fit right in. 😊
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 Methods

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 to help solidify your knowledge and assess how you're progressing.

The first assignment gives you a choice:

- Complete an assignment comparing two real-world studies based on different foundational concepts (e.g., constructivist vs. positivist; unit of analysis; etc)
- Conduct a 15 minute, one-on-one oral exam about the core concepts from weeks 1-3

Note: You can choose to do either one. If you choose to do both, the assignment scoring highest will be weighted at 20% and the assignment scoring lowest only 5%.

In the second assignment, you'll conduct a deep-dive into a method of your choice to write a short report about a methodological issue involved in that technique. You get to choose: do this solo, in pairs, or in a trio?

In the third assignment, you'll choose two real-world research projects that use the same method to compare their similarities, differences, and effectiveness. This one is solo, but you can choose whatever projects/topic you are most interested in.

In the fourth assignment, you (solo or in pairs; your choice!) will propose a research project. You'll write the proposal as a mock application to an Institutional Ethics Review Board.

For all assignments, due dates and detailed instructions are posted on eClass. There's a thread on Discord specifically for assignment questions, so ask away!

*Assignments are accepted for up to 7 days after the due date, with a penalty of -5% per day. **Please read the next page for more info: As long as you get in touch before the due date, there are many options to get extensions and extra support so that you can succeed!***

Deliverable	Weight	Note
Core Concepts Comparison – OR – Oral Exam	25%	Solo.
Technique Technicalities Deep Dive	25%	1, 2, or 3 people.
Method Comparison	25%	Solo.
Project Proposal	25%	Solo or in (different) pairs.



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/cgiarclimate/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 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 to me what you're going through. For example,

- I offer a no-questions-asked, 24 hour extension on all written assignments. You do not need to explain why you need it. To take advantage of this extension, simply email me **anytime before the deadline**.
- 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.
- To prevent unintentional bias, I grade all assignments blinded. **Please never put your name on an exam or assignment: student numbers only!**

Most importantly, let's take care of ourselves and each other. COVID has been brutal on mental health, relationships, and all of life. If you need help or support, please do not be afraid to reach out to me (ebk@yorku.ca), York Counselling (416-736-5297), or call 416-408-4357 (24/7).

Your Commitments to Us

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

- **To succeed in this class, it's critical you make time to work through the online material before coming to the workshop.** The Zoom sessions are not lectures: they're activity-based sessions to build on the learning you've done during the week online!
- Take advantage of our Discord. It's your place to ask questions, get clarification about what you've been learning, and make sure you're ready for the workshop each week. The best way to learn is to help someone else through their questions – and I'll do my best to monitor, jump in, and assist whenever needed!
- This class only works if we build a welcoming, friendly, respectful community. **If you can, please consider having your video on during workshops** – it's so helpful for feeling connected, as well as seeing who is understanding and who isn't. And, whether on Zoom, Discord, or email, please [be kind](#) and be [the most charming guest](#) at the party.
- Academic honesty is **incredibly** important, and this class has a zero-tolerance policy. You could receive a zero (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



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)))

How to Succeed in this Class

In this course, **it's your job to learn the core content in the week leading up to the workshop session.** I'll post a study guide, readings, and videos to help you do this at your own pace. And, hop onto Discord, where we'll have an asynchronous conversation about the concepts in the days leading up to our workshop.

To maximize your chance of success in this class, here's what I'd suggest doing:

Saturday-Wednesday before class:

1. Start with the “pedagogical goals” for the week. This tells you exactly what you need to learn and will guide your studies.
2. Next, do the readings and watch any videos posted. As you do this, take notes on (a) each pedagogical goal and (b) anything else you find interesting or confusing.
3. If you have questions, hop over to Discord. Ask them in the week's channel (see “Weekly Topics”) to get help from me and your peers.
4. Try out the practice quizzes. When this class is in person, there are weekly quizzes to help everyone stay on track. These don't work so well remotely, but I've posted them as a way to check your learning.

Thursday: Attend the workshop to participate in the application activities.

Friday-Sunday: Review your notes & ask any lingering questions on Discord to make sure you're on track!

Schedule of Topics

Note that this schedule is subject to possible changes.

I will try my best to post materials at least two weeks ahead on the eClass page, in case you want to work ahead (i.e., by Week 1 class, I'll try to have Weeks 2 and 3 ready on eClass).

Week 1: Introduction to the class + big ideas

Week 2: Key concepts in (qualitative) research

Week 3: Designing a research questions

Week 4: Sampling

Week 5: Systematic reviews

Week 6: Survey design – items

Week 7: Survey design – instruments

Week 8: Interviews and focus groups

Week 9: Ethnographic methods

Week 10: Secondary data

Week 11: Transcription, coding, and quantitative analysis

Week 12: Qualitative analysis



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: I want to see you succeed in this class. Talk to me, early if possible, about how I can support your learning and success. And, don't cheat.

Deferred Final 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. *Students are not required to submit a doctor's note or an Attending Physician's Statement in support of requests for deferred standing for courses impacted by the COVID-19 situation.* Details can be found at <http://myacademicrecord.students.yorku.ca/deferred-standing>. DSA

Form: http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/deferred_standing_agreement.pdf. In order to apply for deferred standing, students must register at: <http://sas-app.laps.yorku.ca>

Followed by handing in a completed original Deferred Standing Agreement (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. **During this time of remote learning, you will be required to submit the forms via email to apsas@yorku.ca.** 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. **Deferred exams might take place during the regular exams period or in subsequent weeks depending on the course;** precise dates are known when the Office of the Registrar publishes the final exam schedule of the term. 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.

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-accomodations/>

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://v2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs>

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 Student Accessibility Services (formerly known as Counselling and Disability Services) website at <https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca>. 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.