



DEMS
4721

Qualitative Methods

Fall 2023
Dr. Eric Kennedy
ebk@yorku.ca

Thursdays
2:30 – 5:30
Ross S103

Table of Contents

Introduction	p. 1
Course Purpose	p. 2
What We Cover	p. 2
Assessments	p. 3
Readings	p. 3
'Best Of' Mechanism	p. 3
Class Structure	p. 4
Our Commitments	p. 5
Tips for Success	p. 6
Schedule of Topics	p. 6
Regulations	p. 7

- > Your boss asks you “is our company ready for a blackout?”
- > Your professor asks you “what have researchers found out about survival in tornados?”
- > A reporter asks you “how did the earthquake affect people?”

Each of these situations requires you to figure out what is real and true about the world. This class is designed to equip you with the tools to figure these things out.

During the next four months, we'll learn how to design different kinds of research projects; how to assess research that others have done; and how to separate truth from fiction.

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

Course Resources



1-on-1 meetings:
[Sign up at this link!](#)



Primary communication:
<https://discord.gg/8qvvuSvfu>



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 rigorous, reliable research and evaluation projects, especially using qualitative methods.
- Second, you'll acquire the skills to carry out these projects, 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 short presentations 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.

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 future 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 lots of 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 actual projects; and to analyze when other people do it.



Field research 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

My goals in assessment are to (a) ensure you've actually learned the material, not just crammed it for an exam; (b) to help you practice the skills you'll need in your life + career; and (c) to offer you 'formative' feedback throughout the whole process. We also need to make sure you understand the theory, application, and analysis of research and evaluation methods alike.

To do this, 40% of your grade will come from weekly quizzes beginning the second week. These are closed book and cumulative (i.e., each quiz tests everything we have covered thus far in class). 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 of 11 quizzes, and there is a bonus quiz available if you stay home when sick to protect others.*

For the other 60% of your mark, you get to choose two of these five different assignments:

- Comparing how two studies apply a method
- Developing an alternative to a real study
- Doing a 'deep dive' on a specific method
- Supervising an AI to develop a protocol
- Developing a proposal for a research project

You will sign up for your assignments using an online form between Sept 15 & 21. You get to choose which assignments to do, what order to do them in, how much weight to put on each assignment, and whether to do them alone or in pairs. More information can be found in each assignment description on eClass.

Readings

To reduce costs, there is no required textbook in this course. I'll post all readings to eClass.

Each week, you'll need to come ready to discuss two readings. Typically, 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.

Flexibility & Accommodation

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, life happens: you might enrol late; need to work or take care of a family member; or you might just have an 'off' week!

As such, I provide *universal accommodation*. We will have 11 quizzes, but I'll only count your best 9. That way, you don't even need to disclose what you're facing if you'd rather not... everyone gets the benefit of the doubt, no questions asked 😊. I also offer 100% bonus time to complete the quizzes: I'm testing your knowledge, not speed.

With COVID & other illnesses, **it's also important that we protect each other by not coming to class when sick**. If you feel ill, have any symptoms, test positive, or should be isolating because of exposure, please stay home. There will be a bonus quiz for anyone who stayed home to help stop the spread.



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 #6	At Home	Class #7
First Half	[Previous topic: Survey Design, Part 2]	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		[Next topic: Ethnography]



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 learning experience for you. No matter who you are 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 you can find flexibility without needing to disclose personal situations. For example,

- You get to choose assignments & deadlines.
- I offer a no-questions-asked, 24 hour extension on each take-home assignment. You do not need to explain why you need it. To use this extension, simply email me **anytime before the deadline**.
- I'm happy to work with you if you need more than 24hrs. The earlier you tell me, the more flexibility I can give you.
- For quizzes, we drop your lowest grade and have a bonus quiz if you stayed home if sick.
- To prevent unintentional bias, I grade material blinded. **Please never put your name on an assignment: student numbers only!**

Most importantly, let's take care of ourselves and each other. We are people first, and your mental health, happiness, and well-being matter to me. If you need support, please do not be afraid to reach out to me (cbk@yorku.ca), Counselling Services (416-736-5297), or 416-408-4357 (24/7).

Your Commitments to Us

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

- To succeed in this class, it's critical to come prepared. Our classes are not lectures: they're activity-based sessions to build on the learning you've done since we last met!
- Take advantage of our Discord: 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 with their questions!
- This class only works if we build a welcoming, respectful community. Whether in person, Zoom, Discord, or email, please [be kind](#) and be [the most charming guest](#) at the party.
- Many of us are vulnerable or have vulnerable people in our lives. Plus, long COVID can cause long-term damage to your brain, heart, and lungs. **Please show your care for our community by staying home if you are sick**, have symptoms, or should be isolating. **Masking is strongly recommended**, especially since many COVID cases are caused by people who don't have symptoms.
- 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 ""/citation
 - > Attempt to cheat/gain unfair advantage
 - > Have someone or something else do your work for you, including an AI



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 review the core material we've discussed and extend your knowledge with the readings before we meet again.** To help with this review and extension, please use Discord, where we'll have an asynchronous conversation about the concepts between the first & second half of each theme.

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

Friday-Wednesday before class:

1. Start by reviewing the "pedagogical goals" from the material we covered last class. Consider generating and/or answering possible quiz questions. Ask questions on Discord to get clarification!
2. Next, do the conceptual reading. Figure out how it builds on what we learned together and what pedagogical goals it addresses.
3. Third, do the case study reading. Make sure you can apply (i.e., 'identify' and 'explain') the pedagogical goals to analyzing this case.
4. Consider sharing your thoughts, reactions, and questions to the reading on Discord in that week's channel & responding to others.

Thursday: Attend our in-person class/workshop to participate in the application activities.

Friday-Sunday after class: Review your notes on the past topic & 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.

Week	Theme
Week 1 Sept 7	Introduction to Research & Evaluation
Week 2 Sept 14	Key Concepts in (Qualitative) Research
Week 3 Sept 21	Designing a Research Question
Week 4 Sept 28	Sampling
Week 5 Oct 5	Survey Design pt 1: Items
Week 6 Oct 19	Survey Design pt 2: Structuring
Week 7 Oct 26 (R)	Interviews & Focus Groups
Week 8 Nov 2	Ethnographic Methods
Week 9 Nov 9 (R)	Secondary Data
Week 10 Nov 16	Transcription, Coding, and Quantitative Analysis
Week 11 Nov 23	Qualitative Analysis
Week 12 Nov 30	Systematic Reviews
	Wrapping up/Lessons Learned

R = Remote, asynchronous, no in-person class



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 and university. Talk to me, early if possible, about how I can support your learning and success. Be kind and caring to each other. Don't cheat.

Academic Honesty: In this course, we strive to maintain academic honesty to the highest extent possible. Please familiarize yourself with the meaning of academic integrity by completing [SPARK's Academic Integrity module](#) at the beginning of the course. Breaches of academic honesty range from cheating to plagiarism (i.e., the improper crediting of another's work, the representation of another's ideas as your own, etc.). All instances of academic dishonesty in this course will be reported to the appropriate University authorities and can be punishable according to the [Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

Accessibility: While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to achieve excellence, the University recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to perform at their best. The University encourages students with disabilities to register with [Student Accessibility Services](#) to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors through their Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Please let your instructor know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course. Sufficient notice is needed so that reasonable steps for accommodation can be discussed. Accommodations for tests/exams normally require three (3) weeks (or 21 days) before the scheduled test/exam arrangement.

Religious Observance Accommodation: York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community, and making reasonable and appropriate [accommodations to adherents for observances of special significance](#). Should any of the dates specified in this syllabus for course examinations, tests, or deadlines conflict with a date of religious significance, please contact the instructor within the first three (3) weeks of class. If the date falls within the formal examination periods, you must complete and submit a [Religious Accommodation for Examination Form](#) at least three (3) weeks before the start of the exam period.

Intellectual Property: Course materials are designed for use as part of this particular course at York University and are the intellectual property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third-party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian copyright law. Students may not publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any course materials or work without the instructor's express permission. Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course. Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a charge of misconduct according to York's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), the [Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#), and/or legal consequences for copyright violation.

Student Conduct in the Learning Environment: York University is committed to fostering teaching and learning environments that are free of disruptive and/or harassing behaviour, are physically safe, and conducive to effective teaching and learning. Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy, civility, and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Individuals who fail to adhere to such standards and who violate University or public law may be subject to disciplinary action by the University. For more information, see the policies on [Disruptive and/or Harassing Behaviour in Academic Situations](#), the [Student Conduct and Responsibilities](#), and the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#).

Netiquette for eClass and Online Learning: Students and instructors have a joint responsibility to create and maintain a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). Please review and familiarize yourself with behaviours that support "netiquette" in virtual classrooms by consulting the [Guide to Netiquette](#) and [Student Guide to eLearning](#).

Student Notice of Recording for Online Teaching and Learning: Activities for this course may involve recording, in partial fulfillment of the course learning outcomes. Images, audio, text/chat messaging that have been recorded may be used and/or made available by the University to students enrolled in the course and those supporting the course for the purpose of materials review, for assessment, etc. Recordings will be managed according to the University's Common Record Schedule and will be securely destroyed when no longer needed by the University. Your personal information is protected in accordance with York University's [Guidelines on Access of Information and Protection of Privacy](#) and the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#). Access to online materials, including recordings or live meetings, is subject to York University's [Senate Policy on Computing and Information Technology Facilities](#). The University will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of the recorded information, but cannot provide a guarantee of such due to factors beyond the University's control, such as recordings being forwarded, copied, intercepted, circulated, disclosed, or stored without the University's knowledge or permission, or the introduction of malware into computer system which could potentially damage or disrupt the computer, networks, and security settings. The University is not responsible for connectivity/technical difficulties or loss of data associated with your hardware, software, or Internet connection. By engaging in course activities that involve recording, you are consenting to the use of your appearance, image, text/chat messaging, and voice and/or likeness in the manner and under the conditions specified herein. In the case of a live stream recording, if you choose not to have your image or audio recorded, you may disable the audio and video functionality. If you choose to participate using a pseudonym instead of your real name, you must disclose the pseudonym to your instructor in advance to facilitate class participation. You are not permitted to disclose the link to/URL of an event or an event session recording or copies of recording to anyone, for any reason. Recordings are available only to authorized individuals who have been directly provided the above instructions/link for their use. Recordings for personal use, required to facilitate your learning and preparation of personal course/lecture notes, may not be shared with others without the permission of the instructor or event coordinator, and may not be published, posted, linked to, or otherwise made available online, including on social media feeds, even if those feeds are private.

Zoom: Zoom is hosted on servers in the United States and Canada. Recordings done since May 1, 2022 are stored in Canada. For more information, please refer to the notes on [Zoom Privacy and Security](#) provided by Information Security at York. If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name or a nickname when you join a session. The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it. Here are some useful links for student computing information, resources, and help: [Student Guide to eClass](#), [Zoom@York.U Best Practices](#), [Zoom@York.U User Reference Guide](#), [University Information Technology \(UIT\) Student Services](#), [Student Guide to eLearning at York University](#).

Grading: The grading scheme for this course conforms to the 9-point system used in undergraduate programs at York University. For a full description of the York grading system, visit the [York University Academic Calendar](#).

Assignments & Grading: The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (1) the grading scheme (i.e., kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) must be announced, and available in writing within the first two weeks of class, and (2) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade shall be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade. The last date to drop a course without receiving a grade this semester is November 11, 2022.

The '20% Rule': Please note that no examinations or tests worth more than 20% of the final grade may be given during the final fourteen (14) calendar days of classes in a term (see the Limits on the Worth of Examinations in the Final Classes of a Term (Policy) for exceptions to this rule). If you have an examination or test worth more than 20% of the final grade, it must be scheduled during the formal exam period. The final exam period this semester is Dec 8 to 23rd.

Health & Safety: All York students and instructors share responsibility for the safety and well-being of the community while on York's campuses. Please continue to check [YU Better Together](#) for the latest information on health and safety.

Student Support and Resources: To help you succeed academically, York University offers a wide range of resources and services. Everything from writing workshops and peer mentorship to wellness support and career guidance is available to fulfill our LA&PS students' needs. Explore the links below to access these on-campus resources: [Academic Advising](#) is available to provide students support and guidance in making academic decisions and goals; [Student Accessibility Services](#) are available for support and accessibility accommodation when required; [Student Counselling, Health & Wellbeing](#) offers workshops, resources, and counselling to support your academic success; [Peer-Assisted Study Sessions \(PASS\) Program](#) provides student study sessions for students to collaborate and enhance their understanding of course content in certain courses; [Student Numeracy Assistance Centre at Keele \(SNAC\)](#) supports students in courses involving math, stats, and Excel; [The Writing Centre](#) provides multiple avenues of writing-based support including drop-in sessions, one-to-one appointments, a Multilingual Studio, and an Accessibility Specialist; [ESL Open Learning Centre \(OLC\)](#) supports students with building proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English; [Learning Skills Services](#) provides tips for time management, effective study and learning habits, keeping up with coursework, and other learning-related supports; [Learning Commons](#) provides links to supports for time management, writing, and speaking skills, preparing for exams, and other learning-related resources; [Roadman to Student Success](#) provides students with timely and targeted resources to help them achieve academic, personal, and professional success; [Office of Student Community Relations \(OSCR\)](#) is responsible for administering the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) and provides critical incident support; [eS&A/E](#) is staffed by York students and can accompany York community members to and from any on-campus location, such as the Village Shuttle pick-up hub, parking lots, bus stops, or residences. For a full list of academic, wellness, and campus resources visit [Student Support & Resources](#).

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://sis.ams.lans.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 Adkinson) 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 amsas@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.

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/>.