I. Course Description

Content

How do we produce ethical, useful knowledge? This course investigates the theory and methods used in qualitative inquiry, offering students both hands-on experience as knowledge producers and rigorous discussion of the underlying beliefs and claims implicit in scholarly work. We will wrestle with the ethical and practical dilemmas confronting researchers, and develop our skills in gathering, interpreting, and presenting knowledge, with a particular focus on feminist, indigenous, and other critical approaches to research.

Learning Objectives

- to familiarize students with a variety of research tools and increase their confidence and capacity as emerging scholars;
- to encourage students to notice and critically examine their own beliefs about knowledge, research, and their own agency as knowledge producers and consumers;
- to enhance students’ ability to recognize and analyze truth-claims, enabling them to become more conscious of the systems and discourses shaping their perceptions and priorities;
- to introduce students to a variety of theoretical perspectives and leading thinkers in the field;
- to connect students' intellectual pursuits with their passions and convictions;
- to experiment with unconventional and collaborative approaches to learning which reflect the theories being discussed;
- to show that methods can be fascinating, fun, controversial, and exciting!

II. Preclusions

There are no courses precluded by this course.

III. Texts

Unless otherwise noted, all course readings are available on Ares, the library’s online reserves system, which may be accessed through the library website or the course’s CULearn page. Reading is an essential component of success in this course.

IV. Course Calendar

This course consists of one 3-hour weekly seminar, to be held Mondays, 2:35 to 5:25, in 2010 Dunton Tower.

NOTE: The first class will be held on Monday September 14. There will be no class on Friday September 4.
1. 14 September - Qualitative, interdisciplinary research: How we got here

2. 21 Sept - (Post) realities and (partial) truths


3. 28 Sept - Postcolonial paradigms


4. 5 Oct - Feminist (in)differences


5. 19 Oct - Selves and others


6. 2 Nov - Collaborative, critical, and activist research


7. 9 Nov - Performance, affect and bodies in research


Maggi MacLure, ‘Qualitative Inquiry: Where are the ruins?’ Qualitative Inquiry 17.10 (2011): 997-1005.

8. 16 Nov - Learning from people


9. 23 Nov - Learning from things


10. 30 Nov - Visual methods


11. 7 Dec - Writing and interpreting realities


V. Evaluation

Students are expected to attend each class, participate in class discussions and activities, and complete assignments. There are three readings assigned weekly; students are expected to have read them before they are taken up in class on Mondays. Success in this course requires consistency and good time management, as much of the course grade derives from small, repeated, weekly tasks.

*Grading Scheme*

1. Reading questions - 30%

For each of the assigned readings, a discussion forum will be created in CULearn. Every student is expected to add a strong discussion question to the forums associated with the readings each week. Questions are due by midnight on the Saturday before each class. Late questions will, at best, receive half marks.

A strong discussion question shows evidence of engagement with the reading’s content, stems from genuine curiosity or perplexity, and does not have a simple yes/no or factual answer. It is clearly stated and accessible to its audience (your peers). Further criteria for strong discussion questions will be discussed in class. Doing the readings, and developing the associated questions, will be time-consuming - which is why a significant portion of your grade (30%) is tied to those tasks.

2. Curating - 10%

Every student will be asked to serve as curator for one of the reading discussions. Curating selections will be made in the first class and on a first-come, first served basis thereafter. The curator will a) collect, organize, and refine their peers’ questions, as posted on CULearn; b) grade the quality of the submitted questions, using the peer assessment tool provided within CULearn; c) facilitate a world-cafe style in-class discussion of the assigned reading based on their analysis of it and their synthesis of their peers’ questions; and d) provide an informal oral in-class summary of the key themes, questions, or issues that emerge from this discussion.
At the end of every class, students will be asked to evaluate the quality of the curators’ performance, with a simple anonymous evaluation form. Curators will, at the same time, write a brief self-assessment. Half the grade for curating will be based on these peer- and self- evaluations; the remaining half will be based on my observation of the discussion groups.

Please note: If a student needs to be absent when they are scheduled to serve as curator, it is their responsibility to try to switch curating assignments. Marks lost by missing your curating duties cannot be made up.

3. Participation and peer evaluation - 10%

Students will be asked to fill out, sign, and hand-in a peer evaluation form every week, which assesses the performance of their curators and offers evidence of their own engagement and participation. Students will be graded for the degree of care and thought that they put into their peer evaluations, with each being worth 1% of their final grade. Peer evaluation grades lost due to absence cannot be made up unless there are exceptional circumstances.

4. Reading reflection - 20%

Students will be expected to prepare a 5-page reading reflection. This assignment may be based on any one of the assigned readings for the course, and can be handed in on CULearn at any time before the end of the final class on December 7. Extensions will not be available. Completing this assignment requires a) reading the selected material; b) taking an otherwise unnecessary walk for at least 20 minutes, to think about it; and c) writing a reflection that responds to 6 assigned questions. A detailed assignment description will be posted on CULearn, along with the associated evaluation criteria.

5. Take-home exam - 30%

Students will be given a research article and asked to critically analyze it, based on a number of questions. Take-home exams are to be written individually (that is, students may not work in groups on this assignment). The take home exam will be explained in the last class and due by the end of the examination period (December 21 at noon). Take home exams will be submitted as assignments through CULearn. I cannot provide extensions; students who are unable to complete their exam on time must contact the Registrar’s Office to arrange a deferral.

Etiquette

Much of the learning in a small seminar class comes from engagement with your peers. The quality and usefulness of this course depends on each of you being present, prepared, and attentive. Web-browsing, texting, chatting, tweeting, facebooking, gaming, online shopping, or otherwise causing a distraction is not permitted in class, because it harms your classmates’ ability to learn. I will not pretend that I haven’t noticed; if you are on your gadgets in class I will (politely) ask you to knock it off or leave. Students are expected to be punctual, as a courtesy to their classmates, and to conduct themselves in a way that fosters the open exchange of ideas and perspectives.

If something is inhibiting your participation or making you uncomfortable in class, it is your responsibility to promptly bring this issue to my attention in order to work toward a solution. Creating a safe, frank, open learning environment is a team effort and I depend on your feedback in order to provide the best possible service as your instructor.

Grading

I aim to return all assignments two weeks after their due date. Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that the grades which you receive from me and which are posted on CULearn may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.
Students are welcome to appeal a grade if they feel that I have made a mistake or been unfair. The procedure for doing so is as follows: 1) students are asked to take a 24-hour ‘cooling off’ period before making their appeal. 2) Grade appeals should be made in writing, by email. Please include a summary of the grade you received and the reasons why you believe it is unfair or inaccurate. 3) I will arrange to meet with you, generally during my office hours. Please bring the assignment to the meeting (if it isn’t on CU-Learn).

**Communication**

Course announcements, materials, grades, and some assignments will be communicated through CU-Learn. Please make sure that you check in regularly at carleton.ca/culearn. For help and support, go to Carleton.ca/culearnsupport/students or contact Computing and Communication Services (CCS) at 613-520-3700 or ccs_service_desk@carleton.ca. I will respond to email within 48 hours, excluding weekends (often sooner but no promises). In order to respect your confidentiality, I cannot send email to you at a non-Carleton address. Mutual respect is required in all verbal and written communication.

**Academic Integrity**

Ideas and the words that express them are the currency of the academic world. Good scholarship locates itself within its field by showing, through proper use of citations and bibliographies, whose ideas it has borrowed and built upon. Scholarship that fails to do so steals intellectual property and cannot contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

Plagiarism is defined by the Carleton University Senate as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:
- Reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting it as your own, without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- Submitting work written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas, direct quotations, or paraphrased material without appropriate acknowledgement in any academic assignment.
- Using another’s data or research findings without attribution;
- Using direct quotations without quotation marks;
- Handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission from the instructor.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the instructor. All suspected cases are sent to the Associate Dean, who conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. Penalties are not trivial and can include failing the course.

It is the students’ obligation to ensure that they are familiar with the rules for proper citation and attribution of sources. I urge you to be extremely careful in this regard, particularly if you are using online or other non-standard sources. The library website offers a wide range of style guides and other citation tips, and the subject specialists for your program are always happy to help.

**VII: Requests for academic accommodations**

Students who are struggling with their studies and/or life are encouraged to speak to their Instructor or to these friendly folks:

The Student Academic Success Centre - Drop-in academic support - 302 Tory
The Writing Tutorial Service - 4th floor Library
International Student Services - 128 University Centre
Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy, or religious commitments. Please review the course outline carefully and write to me promptly with any requests for academic accommodations. This should be done by the second week of class or as soon as the need becomes pertinent.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific learning disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC at 613 520 6608 every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class activity requiring accommodations.

Pregnancy

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a letter of accommodation. You should then make an appointment to speak with me about your needs at least two weeks prior to the first academic event requiring accommodation.

Religious observance

Students requiring accommodations for religious observances should write me a formal, written request for alternate dates or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made in the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. We will work out accommodations directly and individually in a way that does not disadvantage the student. Those with questions about the eligibility of religious events or practices for academic accommodations may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton’s accommodation policies, or contact an Equity Services advisor for assistance.