SOWK 6200

Critical Approaches to Social Work Research

Instructors:

Hugh Armstrong  Susan Braedley
DT624  DT 618
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30- 4:30 pm  Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30 pm
OR either instructor is available by appointment
Tel ext: 1890  Tel ext: 3662

This course seeks to build on students’ understandings of knowledge production and methods through an exploration of the epistemological debates and research methodologies in social work-related practice and policy research. The course will explore how knowledge is created, what counts as knowledge and what kinds of knowledge are associated with different research paradigms. It will explore the political, economic and social relations that shape knowledge production and the range of research methodologies that have emerged from these relations, in order to ask how social work research can best contribute to social justice and equity.

Course Objectives:

- To inspire and develop an enjoyment and appreciation for social work research
- To engage with epistemological debates in order to explore knowing and knowledge creation as contested processes
- To make connections between epistemologies, methodologies and methods, including consideration for power relations in the research process
- To understand the politics of knowledge production, including the role of funders, disciplines, universities, and governments
- To explore the relationship between research and practice/policy, and develop critical thinking about evidence issues
- To think through the role of the researcher in analysis and the significance of standpoint and reflexivity
- To develop an understanding of research ethics and the debates about ethical considerations in research

Course Format:

This course is conducted as a seminar. Students will come to class with notes on the week’s readings and be prepared to contribute to class discussions. Students and faculty will take turns leading the class discussion by summarizing the main themes of the readings and bringing forward discussion questions. The class will occasionally include visits from other faculty or guests whose experience and knowledge will support our learning together.
Expected Course Outcomes:

This course will offer the opportunity for doctoral students to:

- Develop and practice skills in critical reading, writing, research and thinking
- Draft a tentative proposal for their doctoral research
- Learn about and refine academic facilitation and presentation skills
- Expand their knowledge of epistemologies, methodologies and methods as they apply to social work research
- Develop an understanding of research ethics and the process for completing ethics reviews

Assignments and Grading:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Analysis of the readings – 6 short papers 750-1000 words</td>
<td>6 x 5% = 30%</td>
<td>As organized</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Class Discussion facilitation - 2x</td>
<td>2x 5% = 10%</td>
<td>As organized</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Research proposal – submission 1 Framing of a research question and lit review – 3000 words</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Jan. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Research proposal – submission 2, Methodology and method – 3000 words</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>April 2</td>
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Assignment 1: Analysis of the Readings

These short analytical papers will summarize, compare and contrast the readings for one week. On the first week of class, students will choose from the topics and proposed list of readings and assign themselves three weeks in each semester, in collaboration with other students, so that all of the weeks are covered. These papers are due in class on the date that the readings are to be discussed. Evaluation will be based on the student’s ability to provide a clearly written critical summary and analysis of the readings that is likely to include identification of key questions, absences and contradictions.
These analyses will be assigned for different weeks than those assigned to each student for class discussion facilitation.

Assignment 2: Class Discussion Facilitation

In each semester, each student will take responsibility for leading and facilitating discussion for the class. This entails drawing up a list of questions (4 or 5) and posting them prior to and at class. The questions should be designed to promote a critical and cross-cutting assessment of the themes, key questions and problems presented by the readings. Creativity can be shown in the facilitation style and organization. One week after the seminar, the facilitator will provide a 750-1000 word discussion of the readings as perceived after discussion. Evaluation will be based upon the student’s ability to produce a clearly written summary and analysis that includes consideration of the methods of facilitation, and guest presentations and points raised in discussion.

Assignment 3: Research Proposal Submission 1

Assignment 4: Research Proposal Submission 2

Proposed Class Outline: Weeks 1-4

Note: This outline will develop subject to two factors: the availability of faculty members to discuss their research and methods, and the developing interests of students that may not be covered in the material noted.

Recommended books (not required):

**Sept. 11: Overview of the Course and Intellectual Autobiographies**

*Required Readings:*


**Sept. 18: Models of Knowing**

*Required Readings:*


*Suggested Readings:*


Guba, E.G. (1990) The paradigm dialog Chapter 1
Sept 25  Epistemology, Methodology and Research Design

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Oct 2: Critical approaches and reflexivity

Guest: Dr. Gerald de Montigny


Haver, William (1997) “Queer research; or, how to practise invention to brink of intelligibility” pp.277 – in Sue Golding (ed.) *Eight Technologies of Otherness*


**Oct. 9 Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed Methods?**


**Oct. 16 Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed Methods?**

Guest: Dr. Claudia Lahaie


Oct. 23 Participatory (and) Action Research


Oct. 30 Critical Realism


**Nov. 6 Inclusivity**


National Film Board of Canada Filmmaker-in-Residence Program in St. Michael’s Hospital. (2007). Street health stories. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_m7EK0_3Rs


**Nov. 13 Contested Knowledge/Aboriginal Perspectives**

Guest: Dr. Hugh Shewell


**November 20 Ethics**

Guest: Leslie MacDonald-Hicks


Carleton Ethics Review Guide

Ethics Review Proposal: MCRI Re-imagining Long-term Residential Care and rapid ethnography

Baines, D. and I. Cunningham (2011) “Using comparative perspective rapid ethnography in international case studies” *Qualitative Social Work* on-line

**Nov. 27 Policy Analysis**

Guest: Prof. Allan Moscovitch


Pierson, Paul (2011) *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis*. chapters to be determined

**NOTE**: This outline covers the Fall 2012 semester only. The readings for the Winter 2013 semester will be prepared and circulated at a later date.