York University  
Graduate Program in Health  
Field: Health Policy and Equity  
Research Methods Seminar  
GS/ HLTH 5405 3.0  
Winter 2019

Thursdays from 2:30-5:30 pm in HNE 101 from January 03 to March 28

Instructor: Prof. Farah Ahmad  
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Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30 pm  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this seminar course, we will critically examine the types of research undertaken by health scholars with social science perspective. We will focus on philosophical foundations of research paradigms, quantitative and qualitative designs, mix method approaches, analytical techniques, and ethical aspects of research. The course material and classes are organized to encourage students’ active participation and critical thinking. The course content will be discussed by the instructor and student-led class discussions. Some sessions will have guest speakers who will present their experiences of conducting quantitative, qualitative or mix method studies. For critical understanding of the learned concepts and research approaches, student assignments will involve class presentations, literature review and development of a research protocol in an area of their interest.

OBJECTIVES
1. Distinguish the key features of major research paradigms (e.g., positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, critical, and participatory), and ways to use theory
2. Describe the characteristics of quantitative (e.g., experimental and survey studies) and qualitative (e.g. ethnography, interviewing, and grounded theory) research designs
3. Demonstrate an understanding of analytical techniques used in quantitative and qualitative research
4. Demonstrate application of systematic approaches to review literature
5. Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research designs and underlying assumptions
6. Illustrate an understanding of the features of high quality research
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of ethical research
8. Apply the learned concepts in discussions and development of a research protocol

REQUIRED READINGS
• Reading Package available from the York Bookstore for other required readings
FORMAT
The course will use multiple formats to actively engage students with diverse experiences and perspectives. The course content will be examined through class discussions, mini-lecture modules, small-group exercises, videotapes and brainstorming, guest speakers, student presentations, and take-home written assignments.

The course structure and process emphasizes adult learning style aiming to inspire the students to think, question and act critically while learning research methodologies in an open, friendly and respectful atmosphere where the instructor and students are co-learners. A list of required reading materials is included in the course outline. A list of recommended readings will be available from the instructor. Students are expected to read the materials for each class in order to actively participate in the class discussions and activities.

EVALUATIONS
Students will be required to prepare a class presentation and submit two papers focused on an aspect of their research interests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Presentation</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Scoping Review (5 pgs single space)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Final Proposal with Detailed Methodology/Methods (7 pgs. single space)</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Accommodation
Any student who requires accommodation due to a disability is encouraged to inform the instructor.

1. Class Presentation
The presentations will start from the 4th week. Two to three students will plan and lead one presentation and group discussion to elaborate on an aspect of the topic for that week (e.g., 'reflexivity' for session on rigour or 'validity/reliability' for session on measurement). Please discuss your plan with the Course Director early on. This presentation will be assigned a group grade. The presenting students are asked to:

- Circulate a relevant article to peers at least one week prior to the class along with key aims and points/questions for discussion.
- **Review and present related literature (beyond the selected article and required readings for the week).** This should inform your in-depth critical analysis of the chosen topic relevant to the scheduled session.

The groups will have 15 minutes to present their critical review to peers, with a 10 minute discussion following the presentation. The presentations should be organized using MS Power Point slides (save in pdf format), at a minimum. Students are encouraged to use other creative ideas as well (e.g. role play, video etc.). A final version of the slides should be sent via email (pdf format) to the instructor before the presentation.
The presentation will be evaluated for its style and format (10%); group organization and cohesiveness (20%); delivery of findings and arguments (50%), question and answer (20%).

2. Paper 1: Scoping Review
Each student will conduct a scoping review on a research topic of his/her own interest with explicit description of the overarching research paradigm. Please come to the first class with a general idea of what topic interests you. Students are then expected to conduct a methodical ‘scoping’ literature-review using Arksey & O'Malley approach to answer a research question in their interest area. You are expected to describe:

- *Overarching paradigm and how it informs your research question, search process, and/or interpretation. The discussion on suitability of a research paradigm should include both the strengths and limitations compared to other paradigms.
- Explicit search strategy applied to electronic databases (e.g. PsycINFO, Scopus, Medline, CINAHL)
- *Methods of abstract selection, full-article review and synthesis of findings
- Findings of the review and discussion

The recommended structure of the paper is: introduction/rationale (5%); *methods/methodology (35%); findings (35%), and discussion (25%). Please note that paradigm can be in the introduction, methods and discussion. The paper should be maximum 5 pages (single-spaced); excluding title page and references. You are encouraged to append your search strategy as an attachment. **The submission date is Feb 21st, 2019.**

The findings of this paper could assist you in developing the rationale (i.e. problem statement) for your next assignment on designing and proposing a research project with human participants.

3. Paper 2: Final Proposal with Detailed Methodology
Building on Paper 1 (whenever possible), students will prepare a full research proposal to conduct a primary study that recruits human participants. The suggested sections are: Rationale (20%), Methodology (paradigm and methods) (50%), and Ethics (30%). Students are encouraged to develop attachments (maximum 5 pages) to present further depth in their approaches (e.g., conceptual frameworks, informed consent form, questionnaires, discussion guides and budgets etc.). Further details will be provided during the course term. The paper should be maximum 7 pages (single-spaced); excluding title page and references. **The submission date is April 03, 2019.**

When preparing written assignment, pay attention to:

- Clarity & conciseness; logical organization of and transition between ideas
- Critical and thoughtful analyses of subject and material
- Editing/ formatting/ citation/ word count
POLICIES ON ASSIGNMENTS

1. Submit your assignments via e-mail to farahmad@yorku.ca. If the due date falls on a day of class, then please submit a hard copy as well.

2. If you are not able to meet the deadline due to a medical or other serious reason, then please notify the instructor before the submission date. Submission of late papers without prior permission will be penalized with 5% off for every day of delay (including weekends).

3. Prepare your assignments using 12 point Times New Roman font, one inch margin, single space, page numbers and a consistent APA citation style. Carefully read and edit your paper for grammar, spellings, punctuation, transition between paragraphs and minimize repetition. For APA style, please visit this link https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_basic_rules.html

4. The first assignment will be returned before the drop date. The second assignment will be returned by end of April. If you want marked assignments mailed to you, then provide a self-addressed and stamped envelope to the instructor with your paper.

5. The instructor may use text matching software (at present, Turnitin.com).

6. Review the Student Survival Guide for guidelines on grading practices, assignments, and late work. This includes details on Assignment Deferred Standing Agreement. Please visit following website:

7. York policies on Grading Systems, Academic Honesty, and the Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities are also described in the Student Survival Guide.
REQUIRED READINGS

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

Session 1: Orientation, Paradigm & Theory
January 03

Recommended
• Barnes C. What a Difference a Decade Make: Reflections on Doing ‘Emancipatory’ Disability Research. Disability & Society 2003 18(1):3-17

Session 2: Systematic Literature Review
January 10

Recommended:

Part II: Quantitative Research

Session 3: Basics of Measurement and Sampling
January 17

**Session 4: Survey Research**  
**January 24**  

**Session 5: Experimental Designs**  
**January 31**  

**Session 6: Quantitative Analysis**  
**February 07**  

*If statistics are new for you, you may read following:*  

**PART III: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

**Session 7: Quality & Rigour**  
**February 14**  
4. Poland B. Transcription Quality as an Aspect of Rigor in Qualitative Research. 1995 Qualitative Inquiry 1(3): 290-310

READING WEEK February 21

Session 8: Qualitative Interviewing, Participant Observation & Ethnography
February 28

Recommended:

Session 9: Grounded Theory & Participatory Research
March 07

Session 10: Qualitative Analysis
March 14
3. Leech NL & Onwuegbuzie. An Array of Qualitative Data Analysis Tools: A Call for Data Analysis Triangulation. School of Psychology Quarterly 2007;(22)4:557-584

Recommended:

**Session 11: Mix Methods**
**March 21**

**Session 12: Boundaries & Ethics**
**March 28**