

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

INSTRUCTOR: Jordan Aslett, MSW **OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays, 4pm-5pm
OFFICE LOCATION: A2208 **CLASSROOM:** A2605
E-MAIL: jaslett@yukoncollege.yk.ca **TIME:** Mondays, 1pm-4pm
TELEPHONE: 668-8845 (HEHS office, message only) **DATES:** Jan 11 - April 11, 2016

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the contributions of research to effective social work practice and policy. Emphasis is placed on understanding and critically assessing social work research, and on how to employ a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and community-based research methodologies to advance social work knowledge and practice.

PREREQUISITES

Admission to BSW program

RELATED COURSE REQUIREMENTS

None

EQUIVALENCY OR TRANSFERABILITY

For information on transferability and equivalency please contact the Bachelor of Social Work Office

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate basic knowledge and critical understanding of the research process, including the interrelationships between research, theory, and practice
- 2) Identify various research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, and discuss their strengths and limitations
- 3) Apply basic skills in a range of research methods applicable to social work or social welfare settings, with particular emphasis on diverse populations relevant to the territory [e.g. First Nations, rural populations, newcomers, children, youth, women, seniors, unemployed, those with health issues or disabilities, etc.]

4) Explain the process of ethical review in the local context [eg. First Nations ethics processes and Northern research ethics] as well as the relevance of the CASW Code of Ethics to human service research

5) Evaluate the quality and applicability of research reports and studies

6) Describe emerging trends in social work research, particularly with regards to anti-oppressive research, indigenous knowledge(s), Northern research, Queer and disability perspectives, anti-racist approaches and the influence of feminism.

7) Compare and evaluate scientific and alternative research approaches and describe how they inform individual, organizational and community based social work practice

COURSE FORMAT:

ASSESSMENTS

Attendance & Participation

Participation Self-Evaluation - April 4th - Handed in in Class (5%)

A portion of each class will be devoted to group participation and discussion. Students are expected to be actively involved in the class by raising questions and joining in the discussion. A Participation Self-Evaluation will be required of each student.

Minor Assignment - Group Reading

Group Reading Assignment - Various Dates (5%)

In pairs or alone students will choose one assigned (non-textbook) reading to discuss in class. In the first class the instructor will demonstrate how such a discussion might be structured by covering the first assigned student directed reading. A full description of this assignment will be provided in the first class.

Major Assignment - Qualitative Research Proposal

For the major assignment students will be expected to complete a Qualitative Research Proposal. This proposal is worth 40% of the final grade and is to be completed in 3 stages. The first stage is the submission of a Research Question that can be approached using Qualitative Research methods. The second stage is a review of the academic literature relevant to the research question. The third stage is a final proposal that includes an updated literature review, the methodology chosen to approach the research question, an overview of the data analysis method and the ethical and cultural considerations/implications of the research. This Assignment can be completed in pairs or alone, each partner will receive the same mark. A full description of the assignment will be provided in week 1. On select weeks 1 hour long 'seminars' will be devoted to a discussion of students' progress.

Research Assignment - Research Question - January 25th - Handed in In-Class (5%)

Through class discussion and meetings with the instructor students will develop a research question that addresses the research topic they wish to address (1-2 pages)

Research Assignment - Literature Review - February 18th - @ HEHS Office (10%)
Develop a review of the literature relevant to the research question (10 Pages)

Research Assignment - Final Proposal - April 11th - Handed in In-Class (25%)
Using the research question and literature review as a foundation, develop a research proposal (20 Pages)

Exams

Midterm Exam - Week 7 - February 29th (20%)
Will cover weeks 1 through 6 (Research Theory, Design & Ethics, and Quantitative Data Collection)

Final Exam - TBA (20%)
Will cover weeks 8 through 12 (Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Data Collection, and Qualitative Analysis)

Quizzes

Quiz 1 - Week 4 - February 1 (5%)
Will cover weeks 1, 2 & 3 (Research Theory and Design)

Quiz 2 - Week 10 - March 21 (5%)
Will cover weeks 8, & 9 (Quantitative Analysis and Qualitative Data Collection)

EVALUATION

Assignments	45%
Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Participation	5%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

Assignments, Exams and Quizzes will be graded using the criteria set out by the University of Regina. See below for the description of how your assignments will be graded.

90-99 An outstanding performance with very strong evidence of:

- *An insightful and comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;*
- *A clear ability to make sound and original critical evaluation of the material given;*
- *Outstanding capacity for original creative and/or logical thought;*
- *An excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.*

80-89 Very good performance with strong evidence of:

- *A comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;*
- *An ability to make sound critical evaluation of the material given;*
- *A good capacity for original, creative, and/or logical thinking;*
- *A very good ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.*

70-79 Above average performance with evidence of:

- *A substantial knowledge of the subject matter;*
- *A good understanding of the relevant issues and a good familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;*
- *Some capacity for original, creative, and/or logical thinking;*
- *An above-average ability to organize, to analyze and to examine the subject material in a critical and constructive manner, and to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.*

60-69 A generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance with evidence of:

- *An acceptable basic grasp of the subject material;*
- *A fair understanding of the relevant issues;*
- *A general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;*
- *An ability to develop solutions to moderately difficult problems related to the subject material;*
- *A moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner, and to express thoughts in writing.*

50-59 A barely acceptable performance with evidence of:

- *Familiarity with the subject material;*
- *Some evidence that analytical skills have been developed;*
- *Some understanding of relevant issues;*
- *Some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;*
- *Partially successful attempts to solve moderately difficult problems related to the subject material and to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner;*
- *Basic competence in writing.*

0-49

- *An unacceptable performance.*

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

PRIMARY REQUIRED TEXT

Neuman, L.W., & Robson, K. (2014). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd Canadian ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada. (Available in the book store)

OTHER REQUIRED READINGS

Baskin, C. (2011). *Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous Knowledges in the helping professions*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press. Chapter 9 pp. 221-244 (Available as a PDF on Moodle).

The First Nations Information Governance Centre (2014). Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™): The path to First Nations information governance. Ottawa, Canada: The First Nations Information Governance Centre.
http://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/ocap_path_to_fn_information_governance_en_final.pdf (pp 1-9) (Available On-Line)

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Chapter 2 - pp. 15- 40 (To be handed out in Class)

Walter, M., & Anderson, C. (2013). *Indigenous statistics: A quantitative research methodology*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. Chapter 4: Methods in Practice: nayri kati (To be handed out in class)

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. Chapter 5 - pp. 94-108 (To be handed out in class)

van de Sande, A., & Byvelds, C. (2015). *Statistics for social justice: A structural perspective*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing (Chapter 2: Statistics for Social Justice). (To be handed out in class)

Atkinson, D. (2005). Research as social work: Participatory research in learning disability. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35(4), 425-434. (Available as a PDF of Moodle)

Strier, R. (2006). Anti-oppressive research in social work: A preliminary definition. *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(5), 857-871. (Available as a PDF on Moodle)

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT CONDUCT

Information on academic standing and student rights and responsibilities can be found in the Academic Regulations:

http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca//downloads/Yukon_College_Academic_Regulations_and_Procedures_-_August_2013_final_v1.pdf

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Plagiarism occurs when students present the words of someone else as their own. Plagiarism can be the deliberate use of a whole piece of another person's writing, but more frequently it occurs when students fail to acknowledge and document sources from which they have taken material. Whenever the words, research or ideas of others are directly quoted or paraphrased, they must be documented according to an accepted manuscript style (e.g., APA, CSE, MLA, etc.). Resubmitting a paper which has previously received credit is also considered plagiarism. Students who plagiarize material for assignments will receive a mark of zero (F) on the assignment and may fail the course. Plagiarism may also result in dismissal from a program of study or the College.

YUKON FIRST NATIONS CORE COMPETENCY

Yukon College recognizes that a greater understanding and awareness of Yukon First Nations history, culture and journey towards self-determination will help to build positive relationships among all Yukon citizens. As a result, to graduate from ANY Yukon College program, you will be required to achieve core competency in knowledge of Yukon First Nations. For details, please see www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/yfnccr.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodations are available for students requiring an academic accommodation to fully participate in this class. These accommodations are available for students with a disability, chronic condition or any other grounds specified in section 8.0 of the Yukon College Academic Regulations. It is the student's responsibility to seek these accommodations. If a student requires an academic accommodation, he/she should contact the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) at (867) 668-8785 or lassist@yukoncollege.yk.ca.

WRITING COMPETENCE/LATE ASSIGNMENTS/STYLE

Writing Competence: Competency in written work is a basic requirement for all students at a college or university level. Wherever possible, instructors are expected to obtain evidence of students' writing skills, and to require that students meet a reasonable standard of competence in their written work before they can be given a passing grade. Students who require additional academic assistance and/or wish to improve their writing skills may find it useful to contact the Writing Centre. Free 30-minute one-on-one coaching sessions are available in the YC Library. Appointments are arranged online dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/writingcentre.

Late Assignments: Five (5) % of the assignment's value will be deducted for every day it is late, up to a maximum of five days, after which the assignment will not be accepted

Style: Assignments must be typed and written using appropriate language. Carefully proof your work. Errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation will affect your mark.

American Psychological Association 6th Edition (APA): You must use APA 6th Edition format when submitting your work. For general information on APA please visit Purdue Owl

[https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/.](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/)

Each instance of an APA error in a written assignment will result in the deduction of .5% of your grade for that particular assignment up to a maximum of 20 errors (10% of grade for assignment). Students will be provided with an opportunity to identify APA errors and receive up to 50% of marks lost.

Course Topics and Assigned Readings

Week 1 - January 11 Social Research: An Introduction

In this class students will have the opportunity to discuss their existing technical and theoretical understandings about social research as well as become oriented to the course objectives and assignments.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 1 (pp 1-22)

Neuman & Robson: Appendix: Doing a Research Project - (pp 367-376)

Student Directed Reading (Instructor to do)

Baskin, C. (2011). *Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous Knowledges in the helping professions*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press. Chapter 9 pp. 221-244 (Available as a PDF on Moodle).

Week 2 - January 18 Ethics and Theory in Social Research *** Research Assignment Seminar ***

Social research practices and ethics are heavily informed by theories about 'how we know what we know' and 'how we decide what we want to know'. In this class students will survey the major theories that inform Quantitative and Qualitative research. Students will also review the ethical considerations of conducting research both with individuals and within communities. Particular attention will be paid to current and historical Indigenous perspectives on social research and the impact of social research on Indigenous communities as well as considerations for research in the North and in rural communities.

*This class will include a discussion of how to develop a research question from a chosen topic/social issue. Students are expected to come to class with a research topic to discuss.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 2 (pp 23-40)

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 3 (pp 42-64)

Student Directed Reading

*The First Nations Information Governance Centre (2014). Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™): The path to First Nations information governance. Ottawa, Canada: The First Nations Information Governance Centre.
http://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/ocap_path_to_fn_information_governance_en_final.pdf (pp 1-9)

Week 3 - January 25th
Ethics and Theory (cont.)
Conducting a Literature Review
*** Research Question Due ***

Literature reviews are the foundation on which nearly all research studies are built. A review of existing knowledge (scholarly as well as non-academic) on a research topic enables researchers to decide what is to be studied, as well as potential ethical and theoretical considerations. In this class students will review and discuss the process of conducting a literature review as well as the relationship between a literature review and a research question. A section of this class will also be dedicated to a review of the 5 traditional approaches in Qualitative research (phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative research, case study and ethnography) as well as an overview of critical discourse analysis.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 4 (pp 64-78)

Student Directed Reading

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Chapter 2 - pp. 15- 40
(To be handed out in Class)

Week 4 - February 1
Designing a Study
**** Quiz 1 (Will cover Weeks 1, 2 & 3) ****

In this class students will review the primary components of qualitative and quantitative research design and their major differences. This includes a review of pre-planned vs. emergent research questions, the three types of variables (independent, dependent and intervening), the characteristics of a hypothesis, and the 5 types of explanation errors.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 5 (pp. 80-101)

No Student Directed Reading

Week 5 - February 8
Measurement & Sampling
*** Research Assignment Seminar ***

In this class students will review the various methods through which a social researcher defines, operationalizes and measures the variables involved in their study. This includes a description of the process by which a researcher moves from developing an abstract concept into a concrete measure as well as a discussion of reliability and validity. Concepts and methods involved in the process of sampling will also be discussed.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 6 (pp. 104-132)

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 7 (pp. 133-160)

No Student Directed Reading

Week 6 - February 15
Surveys & Experimental Research
**** Research Assignment Literature Review due on February 18th @ HEHS Office **** .

Surveys and experiments are the two primary components of quantitative research. In this class students will identify the major characteristics of each. This will include a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of survey research, the difference between open and closed ended questions, basic questionnaire design and the impact of bias. A major topic of discussion will be the ethical and epistemological implications of using experimentation in social research.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 8 (pp. 161-191)

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 9 (pp. 193-215)

No Student Directed Reading

February 22
Reading Week - No Class

Week 7 - February 29
Midterm (Week 1 - Week 6)

The midterm exam will assess students learning on the topics covered in weeks 1 through 6. This exam will be worth 20% of students' final grade and will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions.

Week 8 - March 7
Quantitative Analysis

This class will serve as an introduction to the handling and reporting of Quantitative data. This includes an overview of coding data, the concept of linear regression, inferential statistics and Type I and Type II errors. Special attention will be paid to the historical impact of Quantitative methods and data analysis on marginalized and oppressed groups & communities as well as new perspectives on the value of quantitative data to the pursuit of social justice.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 11 (pp. 237-262)

Student Directed Reading (a)

Walter, M., & Anderson, C. (2013). *Indigenous statistics: A quantitative research*

methodology. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. (Chapter 4: Methods in Practice: nayri kati) (To be handed out in class)

Student Directed Reading (b)

van de Sande, A., & Byvelds, C. (2015). *Statistics for social justice: A structural perspective*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing (Chapter 2: Statistics for Social Justice). (To be handed out in class)

Week 9 - March 14

Qualitative Interviewing

*** Research Assignment Seminar ***

Interviews are the primary method of data collection for qualitative researchers because they tend to gather highly detailed & rich descriptions of peoples experiences, life-histories and understanding of social life. In this class students will review how to determine if interviewing is appropriate for a research study, some of the procedures for conducting a qualitative interview, the different methods of developing interview questions and the difference between an interview and a focus group. Special attention will be paid to Indigenous knowledge(s) and indigenous understandings of interviewing as well as traditional interview practices (including storytelling).

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 12 (pp. 263-280)

Student Directed Reading

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. (Chapter 5 - pp. 94-108)

Week 10 - March 21

Field Research & Non-Reactive Research

**** Quiz 2 (Will cover Weeks 8 & 9) ****

In addition to interviews, qualitative researchers often use field research to gather data (particularly in ethnographic studies and case studies), as well as 'non-reactive' or 'secondary' methods (such as Critical Discourse Analysis). In this class students will review elements of each of these types of data collection including the steps taken to conduct these types of research and their potential ethical implications.

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 13 (pp. 281-306)

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 14 (pp. 307-326)

No Student Directed Reading

March 28

Easter Monday - No Class

Week 11 - April 4

Qualitative Analysis

**** Research Assignment Seminar ****

This class will serve as an introduction to the handling of qualitative research data. This will include a comparison of the 4 traditional strategies for analyzing data, the use of coding and its role in concept formation and the challenges to qualitative analysis presented by traditionally marginalized and oppressed groups, particularly through the development of participatory action research (PAR).

Required Reading

Neuman & Robson: Chapter 15 (pp. 328-345)

Student Directed Reading

Atkinson, D. (2005). Research as social work: Participatory research in learning disability. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35(4), 425-434.

Week 12 - April 11

Research Informed Practice/Critical Issues in Social Research

*** Final Research Assignment Due ***

Social workers and social service organizations are increasingly being asked by governments and funding agencies to justify inputs, practice techniques and to measure the outcomes of their programs. This class will focus on how social workers can use research to inform the techniques of their practice as well as to exhibit the needs, strengths and assets of the communities in which they work. This class will include a debate on the current pressure for social workers to use 'evidence-based practices' as well existing and emergent challenges to the privileging of 'scientific' methods in social research by outsider groups.

Student Directed Reading

Strier, R. (2006). Anti-oppressive research in social work: A preliminary definition. *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(5), 857-871.

Week of April 18 (TBD)

Final Exam

*** Final Exam will cover Weeks 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 ***

The final exam will assess students learning on the topics covered in weeks 8 through 12. This exam will be worth 20% of students' final grade and will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions.