

Research Principles and Analysis | GLIS 611 | Winter 2015

Tentative course outline, December 18, 2014

General information

Thursdays 10:35-2:25pm, McGill, Education Building (3700 McTavish), rm. 431.

Instructor: Prof. Ilja Frissen, ilja.frissen@mcgill.ca, phone: 398-4684.

Office hours: Thursday 3:00-4:00pm, or by appointment (email).
SIS mansion (3661 Peel), rm. 210.

Always use your McGill address to communicate with us via e-mail (see email policy below).

Learning outcomes

Promote critical thinking about research in library and information studies (LIS).

Enable students to understand and evaluate published research.

Identify the various stages of the research process.

Understand quantitative and qualitative research methods used in LIS.

Provide guidelines on planning, conducting, and reporting research.

Course content

- Foundations of research: theories, observation, assumptions, limitations, and ethics.
- Steps in the research process: select topic, focus question, design study, and collect, analyze and interpret data.
- Research principles in quantitative and qualitative research: hypothesis, variables, measurements, validity, and reliability.
- Quantitative approach
Methods: experimental design, sampling selection, measurements.
Analysis: descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing and basic inferential statistics, interpretation.
- Qualitative approach
Methods: case studies, field research, ethnography, grounded theory.
Analysis: coding data, success approximation, contingency, and interpretation.
- Communicating research: the research proposal, research report, and publication process.

Suggested texts

There is no required text. The following texts are suggested reading. Other readings will be provided or sought out by the student.

Wildemuth, N. M. (2009). *Application of social research methods to questions in Information and Library Science*. Westport, CT: Library Unlimited.

Salkind, N. J. (2011). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics*. (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zinsser, W. (1988). *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Harper.

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Guest lecture: McNally, P.F. (1987). Identical cousins; Richard Pennington and David Peterley: The story of Peterley Harvest. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 26, 66-87.

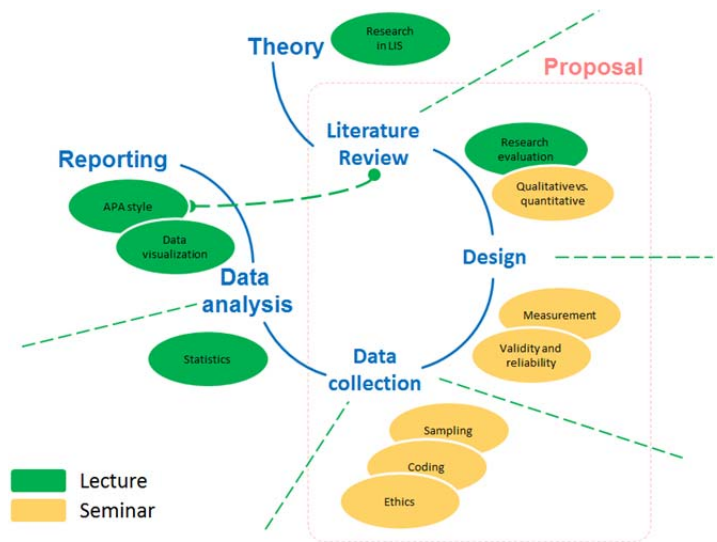
Instructional method

The course features a combination of lectures and seminars (see figure to the right). Lectures are reserved for introductions to major themes, such as writing (APA Style) or statistics. Seminars are meant to create a platform for extended discussion.

Seminars address specific topics within the specific context of a major research method tradition (e.g., Survey studies, Field research, Correlational research, and Experimental research).

The seminar series is based on an iterative process illustrated in the figure below. We first discuss a topic (e.g., ethics) in class and establish what is already known by the group and what is not. Based on this “learning objectives” are formulated which will then guide individual reading and study. In the following class we discuss the studied material.

Every student is expected to work on the learning objectives and to participate in discussion. In addition, a number of students are assigned to give a brief presentation of their findings. Each student takes a different perspective as determined by a particular research tradition. The purpose of the discussion and presentations is to help us identify the commonalities as well as differences between the various traditions. In the second part of the class we repeat the process for a new topic. Individual participation is crucial to the process and will therefore count towards your grade.



In class		Between classes	In class (following week)		Between classes	In class	
Part I	Part II Group discussion on specific topic 1. Identify existing knowledge in the group 2. Identify gaps in knowledge 3. Formulate learning objectives	Find answers to learning objectives	Part I Presentations and group discussion of specific topic	Part II Group discussion on new topic 1. Identify existing knowledge in the group 2. Identify gaps in knowledge 3. Formulate learning objectives	Synthesize results from specific topic Find answers to learning objectives	Part I Presentations and group discussion of specific topic	Part II Group discussion on new topic
Topics 1. Measurement 2. Validity and reliability 3. Sampling 4. Coding/Data processing 5. Ethics 6. ...			Presentations 3-4 students prepare a presentation (5–10 min) in which they report their findings Each student is assigned a different research tradition (e.g., Survey studies, Field research, Correlational research, and Experimental research) Presentations count towards grade				

Assignments and final project

In parallel to the lecture and seminar series there are a number of assignments that are geared toward critical evaluation scientific research and scientific writing.

The final project is a group (3-4 students) assignment, and consists in writing and presenting a research proposal that encompasses a literature review, a research problem statement, and an expose on the research method (how will data be collected and analyzed).

Since one of the most important aspects of research is the communication of findings and ideas, all written assignments will, for a substantial part, be graded based on the quality of writing.

Evaluation

Type	Particular	Code	Weight	When
Seminar	Oral presentation	S1	20%	
	Participation	S2	10%	
Assignments	Mini literature review	A1	10%	Jan 29
	Evaluation of research article	A2	10%	Mar 26
Group project	Group formation	P0a	0%	Jan 22
	Group contract	P0b	0%	Feb 5
	Literature review	P1	15%	Feb 26
	Oral presentation	P2	5%	Apr 2
	Written proposal	P3	25%	Apr 9
	Peer evaluation	P4	5%	Apr 9
Total:100%				

No extensions, delays, or late assignments will be accepted unless a physician's certificate is provided.

Overview

Wk	Date	Lecture	Seminar	In class Activity		Due
				Research proposal	Article evaluation	
1	Jan 8	Course overview		Introductory survey		
2	Jan 15	Lit. review & APA		Literature review		
3	Jan 22	Theory & QI vs. Qn			Eval. article I	P0a
4	Jan 29	Defining research questions	Measurement			A1
5	Feb 5		Validity & Sampling			P0b
6	Feb 12		Survey research			
7	Feb 19		Ethics			
8	Feb 26		QI. interviewing			P1
STUDY BREAK						
9	Mar 12	Guest lecture by Jillian Tomm and Peter McNally on Historical research				
10	Mar 19	Experimental research			Eval. article II	
11	Mar 26	Statistics				A2
12	Apr 2	Summary				P2
	Apr 9					P3/P4

Email Policy

Given the quantity of email I receive, I rely heavily on filters to ensure that important emails are easily accessible and prominent, and less important notices, reminders, and listserv messages do not overwhelm my day. Emails that end up in my generic “read later” folder may not get read for over a week. To ensure that your emails are properly filed for prompt reading, be sure to include [611] in the subject line of your email. If you send your email from myCourses the subject line will be correctly annotated for you.

Questions of a non-confidential nature (e.g., clarification on assignments, quizzes, or course content) should be submitted to the discussion group. Typically many students have the same question. Using the discussion board not only reduces the number of emails I must manage (which indirectly helps you by freeing up my time to better respond to your questions), but also benefits the students in the class who are more shy and do not as readily seek out help.

Note that it is my policy to not read or respond to work related emails over the weekend. Please consider this when preparing for assignments and quizzes.

McGill Policy Statements

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

Additional policies governing academic issues, which affect students, can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available at www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Handbook-on-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-2010.pdf).