Qualitative Research Methods in Health
A Design Thinking Approach

Instructor: Sean Park, BHSc., Ph.D.
Email: parks5@mcmaster.ca
Office hours: By request

Course Dates: Wednesday, September 6th – Wednesday, December 6th
Time: 230 PM – 520 PM
Location: MDCL 3017

Course Overview

This course will enable students to learn qualitative research methods in practical and creative ways. Using design thinking as an overall frame to put various methodologies into action, students will investigate health challenges, generate meaningful data, and design and iterate interventions to test with people.

QRM covers a vast range of territory and deals with various methodologies used in health research including action-research, auto/ethnography, narrative, grounded theory, phenomenology, arts-based approaches and more. Students are exposed to a range of methodologies with a light, yet practical touch and are encouraged to explore methodologies of interest beyond the course. To ground this wide range of approaches in a process that illustrates how qualitative research can put knowledge into action (and vice versa), ‘design thinking’ will help students grasp the thinking, feeling and doing of research as a process of creating change.

Design thinking focuses on brainstorming, creating, and testing solutions to problems through a process of framing problems, knowing the context of people’s experience and behaviour, and using data to generate and test potential solutions with people. As a process of innovation applicable in a wide range of settings, design thinking is becoming a highly sought-after set of capabilities in many disciplines. Students who wish to develop their skills in group settings, develop a bias towards action, wrestle with complexity and ambiguity, and learn a practical set of research skills will find this course beneficial.

Learning Objectives

The overall aim of this course is to develop a basic understanding of the theories, tools, practices, frameworks and mindsets of action-oriented qualitative research. Specifically, you will develop skills in:

- Formulating a good design research question
- Using first-person methods for better situating ourselves in thick of here-and-now experience
- Acting generatively and ethically in dialogue and social experiments
- Taking a resource and solution-focused approach to change
- Listening and empathizing with self and others
- Using conversational and observational data to shape future actions
- Using one’s hands, body, imagination, feeling and intuition as part of creative processes
- Playfully and strategically brainstorming/ideating means of creating possible futures
- Creating tangible artifacts and prototypes than can be used to further research
- Testing ideas with people and receiving feedback
- Evaluating and communicating process, outputs and outcomes of the research

Course Schedule (highly subject to revision based on progression of projects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday September 6th</td>
<td>Introduction to Design and QRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday September 13th</td>
<td>Problem Introduction and Framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday September 20th</td>
<td>Conversations and Mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday September 27th</td>
<td>Experiments, Simulations and Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday October 4th</td>
<td>As-Is Scenarios / Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday October 11th</td>
<td>Reading Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday October 18th</td>
<td>(non)sense-Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday October 25th</td>
<td>Ideating and Prototyping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday November 1st</td>
<td>Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday November 8th</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday November 15th</td>
<td>Communication and Revising Prototypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday November 22nd</td>
<td>Open Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday November 29th</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday December 6th</td>
<td>Creating Portfolios and Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most updated course schedule can be found at:

https://app.mural.ly/invitation/mural/mcmasteribd4071/1504276348766?sender=parks53241&key=119365456
Assignments and Evaluation

Team Human (ungraded)

Your first task as a team is to find a time to meet at least once/week for 2 hours and book it for the rest of the term. Then, for your first meeting, have a coffee and get to know each other personally. What are your backgrounds, skills and interests? Talk about what makes an effective, kick-ass team. Be sure to give yourselves a name and take a group photo.

Paired Interview, Conversation Map and Reflection (10%)

You will be paired with a team member to interview them about something important to them in the context of personal health and wellness. You will produce a conversation map on mural and a jointly written reflection.

**Due:** Sunday October 1st, 6PM

Living Inquiry (20%)

Each student will write 10 weekly field notes (worth 2%) of 400 words (minimum). These assignments include an action and reflection component that elucidate the individual ‘lifeworld’ of experience. Focus will be on exploring and enhancing personal experiences of wellness. Questions and guidance for each field note will be given in class. You are marked for completion, not content.

*Entries are due every Monday at 10PM* in the DropBox folder (instructions below).

Student Ethics Module (ungraded)

Each student needs to complete an online ethics module before engaging in research. The Canadian Tri-Council for research ethics oversees ethical conduct for research involving humans. The Tri-Council Policy Statement covers the core principles of:

- Respect for Persons - intrinsic value of persons, autonomy, informed consent
- Concern for Welfare - privacy and confidentiality, risks and benefits
- Justice - fair and equitable treatment

The module can be completed at the following web address. It will take about 2 hours to complete.


Upon completion, submit the certificate in the course DropBox folder as **First Name Last Name – TCPS Ethics certificate** for the file name.

**Due:** anytime before Sunday October 1st, 6PM

Design Challenge - Group Project (30%)
You will work in an assigned team of about five to develop and test a prototype that addresses a health challenge/issue introduced in class. There are a series of stages and deliverables the group must complete.

The design project serves as inspiring and grounded context to learn. The project may fail miserably and this is still considered a good outcome. You are evaluated for your participation, effort, diligence and completion of the activities and demonstrated learning, not the successful outcome of the projects. Group members will share the same final grade.

*How Might We Question and Interaction Guide (5%) – Sunday, October 1st*
*Design Brief (15%) – Sunday, October 22nd*
*Prototype Report (10%) – Sunday November 12th*

**Group Presentation (20%)**

Your group project will culminate in a 30-minute simulation, experience, workshop, performance or presentation. Time must be allotted to for interaction from the audience and feedback. Details to be discussed in class. Group members will share the same final grade.

**Presentations**: Wednesday, December 6th

**Learning Portfolio and Final Reflection (20%)**

Each group member will keep a journal of activities, readings, challenges and successes. You can use a notebook and/or use a digital platform such as EVERNOTE or MURAL. These elements will help you create a portfolio (visual and text document) that integrates your personal reflections, group experiences and lessons learned using the design thinking and research tools in the course. Further instructions will be given in class.

**Due**: Friday December 15th, 6PM

**Submitting Assignments**

Upload in .docx or PDF format to Dropbox (NO text edit, odt formats, pages) to this Dropbox link. This format allows me to make comments and send back easily:
https://www.dropbox.com/request/agKpO7uzW4j3onphTbWH

You do not need dropbox to upload. *Please submit all documents using the following parameters:*
First Name Last Name – Assignment Name Or Group Name – Assignment Name
Grades and Conversion

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme. No extra assignments will be considered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER GRADE</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>LETTER GRADE</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>53-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>00-49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Context and Expectations

This course is in its third iteration and many lessons have been learned from the first two iterations and incorporated. That said, much of the material, exercises, assignments and framework are still being tested. At times, parts of the course may be confusing. Some of this arises from the course material and activities being new to you. Some of it is developmental and your feedback about what makes sense and doesn’t will be solicited and integrated into the formative (on-going) improvement of the course. Some changes will be made in subsequent iterations.

This course will likely challenge you in unexpected ways. An emphasis on thinking, feeling, and doing qualitative research through a design approach is likely quite different from what you are doing in your other courses. Be ready, be open, and expect to work hard. The pace of the course is quick and it can be easy to fall behind. You will need to manage your time well. There is a bias towards action, rather than analysis (still important and included here), and the assignments will challenge you.

Much of your work in this course will be in a small team. Team work is difficult, rewarding, and one of the most important things you can learn to do for almost any work you will find yourself in. At times the struggle of working in a group will seem tangential or even distracting to the ‘progress’ of your project. However, it is helpful to consider what the struggle of the team has to teach you and others about collaboration, how to work with diverse perspectives, and how research is a social process. We will talk about this throughout the course.

PLEASE NOTE: All classes, including the first one, are mandatory as you are being guided in the use of tools and activities that directly relate to your project. Missing class puts both you and your team at a disadvantage. Please ensure that there no foreseeable conflicts with this course. You are expected to be on time for all classes – we have much to do and it is a matter of respect for your own learning and that of others that you are on time and present. Please contact me ahead of time, where possible, if you are not able to attend class, will be submitting an assignment late, or foresee difficulties challenges.
Readings

As posted.

Technology

We will be experimenting with two technology platforms to support our learning with each other: SLACK and MURAL. Both are relatively new and currently popular and powerful tools being used by many innovative organizations at the moment. They’re fun, intuitive and support our work where it really matters (rather than getting in the way). You will receive invitations for both platforms when the semester starts. I will provide a brief introduction to them in the first class. We will evaluate the usefulness of them as we go.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

Requesting Relief for Missed Academic Work

1. Students may request relief from a regularly scheduled individual or group assignment or other course component in the following ways:
2. Please visit the following page for more information about the MSAF: http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=2208#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work.
3. Contact me if you have any concerns

Student Accessibility Services

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offer various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students who require academic accommodation must contact SAS to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca.

For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities at the following URL:
Potential Modifications to the Course

The instructor and McMaster University reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The University may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email accounts weekly during the term and to note any changes.