K794: Advances in Information Systems Research
Fall 2015 Course Outline

Information Systems Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University

**COURSE OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this course is to present and discuss latest advances and issues in Information Systems (IS) research. This will give IS students an opportunity to examine a number of areas that might provide good opportunities for advanced research.

For the Fall 2015 academic term, this course will concentrate on *Qualitative Methods in Information Systems Research*. Quantitative research methods are by far the predominant and prevalent research methods used by IS scholars. Qualitative research methods are rather “new” to the IS field, and have garnered recent attention and interest among information systems scholars.

**INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Dr. Brian Detlor**
detlorb@mcmaster.ca
Tel: (905) 525-9140 x23949
Office Hours: By Appointment Only

Students who wish to correspond with the instructor via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student.

**COURSE WEBSITE, MEETING TIMES, AND LOCATION**

**Course Website:** [http://avenue.mcmaster.ca](http://avenue.mcmaster.ca). The course website will be the primary mode of information dissemination and communication. Please check this website regularly for posts concerning the course.

**Course Meeting Time & Location:** Wednesdays 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; DSB-227
COURSE ELEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avenue: Yes</th>
<th>Leadership: No</th>
<th>IT skills: Yes</th>
<th>Global view: Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation: Yes</td>
<td>Ethics: Yes</td>
<td>Numeracy: No</td>
<td>Written skills: Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence-based: Yes</td>
<td>Innovation: Yes</td>
<td>Group work: No</td>
<td>Oral skills: Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiential: Yes</td>
<td>Guest speaker(s): Yes</td>
<td>Final Exam: No</td>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on developing a working knowledge of a range of qualitative methods and methodological approaches in information systems research. This includes not only reading key qualitative information systems research papers and learning about common qualitative research approaches used in the Information Systems field, but also getting hands-on experience coding and analysing qualitative data. The course also intends to provide students the opportunity to meet and have discussions with IS qualitative research scholars.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Better understand and appreciate the role of qualitative methods in information systems research.
- Possess a working knowledge of a range of qualitative methodologies and methods used in information systems research.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Avenue registration for course content materials
- [http://avenue.mcmaster.ca](http://avenue.mcmaster.ca) $ FREE

Selected journal articles and readings available via the McMaster University Library.

- Purchase online (e.g., via Amazon.ca)
- Students should purchase this book and read Week 1’s assigned readings PRIOR to the first day of class. $ 60.95 (CAD)
**Evaluation**

Learning in this course primarily results from attending lectures, completing assigned readings, participating in class discussions, and carrying out student assignments. All work will be evaluated on an individual basis. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

1) Participation 30%
2) In-Class Presentation & Report 30%
3) Term Paper 40%

**Total:** 100%

**Participation**

It is vital that students attend and take part in each and every class. It is assumed that students will do more than just attend, but will be active participants through adequate reading, preparation, and contribution to both in-class and online discussions. Specifically, for each class, students are expected to read the assigned readings for that week, make notes on those readings, and actively contribute their ideas to class discussions. Students are encouraged to find other related readings pertaining to that week’s topic and share their thoughts on those readings.

**Participation marks will be assigned at three separate times throughout the term:** September, October and November/December. Each of these marks will be worth 10%, for a total participation mark worth 30% of the final grade.

**In-Class Presentation & Report**

Students are asked to compare and contrast two journal articles in the Information Systems field of their own choosing that utilize one of the four common IS research methods discussed in class (action research, case study, ethnography, grounded theory) and provide an in-class presentation and report of their analysis in **Week 9**. In **Week 4**, the instructor will assign each student with a particular IS research method to ensure that all four common IS research methods are sufficiently covered. If students have a preference for a particular IS research method to work on, they are encouraged to inform the instructor prior to **Week 4**. The instructor will try his best to honour student preferences, but please note that such requests cannot be guaranteed. Prior to starting this assignment, students will be required to submit a short proposal outlining the selection of their two journal articles. These proposals are due by the start of class in **Week 6**. This is to ensure that the same journal article is not covered by more than one student, and that all students can be told which journal articles will be covered so students can read them well in advance of the in-class presentations.

**More details about this assignment will be given in class in Week 4.**
Term Paper – Critique of a Qualitative Information Systems Research Dissertation

Students are asked to read and provide a written critical analysis of the following dissertation:

- Ruhi, U. (2010). *Socio-Technical Determinants of Member Participation in Virtual Communities: An Exploratory Mixed Methods Investigation*

Dr. Ruhi’s dissertation won the General Online Research (GOR) Doctoral Thesis Award in 2012. This award is conferred every two years by the German Society for Online Research (DGOF) to a researcher who has completed his/her thesis on a topic relevant to online research. The dissertation provides an excellent example of using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to investigate the same problem domain and answer the same research questions.

Dr. Ruhi is a graduate of the PhD program in Business Administration from DeGroote in the IS field; Dr. Detlor was Umar’s PhD supervisor. Importantly, Dr. Ruhi will give a guest lecture via Skype on his dissertation to the class in Week 11. Students are strongly encouraged to have read his dissertation before his guest lecture, and be prepared to ask detailed questions.

Dr. Ruhi’s dissertation is available at: http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/docview/871114096/fulltextPDF/EB256A6D47C34215PQ/1?accountid=12347 (a PDF copy will also be posted on Avenue)

In their analysis of this dissertation, students are expected to utilize concepts discussed in class and in the assigned readings for the course to strengthen and justify their arguments that form the basis of their critical analysis.

More details on this assignment will be given in class in Week 4. Term papers are due at the start of class in Week 13.

Late penalty: Term papers handed in late will receive a reduction equivalent to one letter grade each day that the paper is late. For example, an “A” paper would receive an “A-” if it were one day late, a “B+” if it were two days late, etc.

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<tr>
<th>LETTER GRADE</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90 - 100</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85 - 89</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80 - 84</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>75 - 79</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>70 - 74</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>60 - 69</td>
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ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

It is the student’s responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the University Senate Academic Integrity Policy at the following URL:

http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

This policy describes the responsibilities, procedures, and guidelines for students and faculty should a case of academic dishonesty arise. Academic dishonesty is defined as to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. Please refer to the policy for a list of examples. The policy also provides faculty with procedures to follow in cases of academic dishonesty as well as general guidelines for penalties. For further information related to the policy, please refer to the Office of Academic Integrity at:

http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Please discuss any absences from class and/or missed/late academic work with the course instructor at the earliest possible opportunity.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE

The instructor and 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 explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

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http://www.copyright.mcmaster.ca/Access_Copyright_Agreement
STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers 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 must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor normally, within the first three (3) weeks of classes by setting up an appointment with the instructor. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

http://sas.mcmaster.ca
# COURSE SCHEDULE

## K794: Advances in Information Systems Research

*Students are asked to bring their laptops to class as various online activities will be conducted during class time that involve accessing resources on the Web.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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| 1    | Sept 16 | **Introducing Qualitative Information Systems Research**  
Read:  
- Course Outline  
  - *Myers, Chapter 2: “Overview of Qualitative Research”* |
| 2    | Sept 23 | **Research Design and Philosophical Perspectives in Qualitative Information Systems Research**  
Read:  
- *Myers, Chapter 3: “Research Design”*  
- *Myers, Chapter 4: “Philosophical Perspectives”*  
| 3    | Sept 30 | **Ethical and Teaching Perspectives in Qualitative Information Systems Research**  
Read:  
- *Myers, Chapter 5: “Ethics”*  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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*Details of the requirements of both the in-class presentation and the term paper will be given at the start of this lecture.*  
**Read:**  
- *Myers, Chapter 6: “Action Research”*  
| 5 Oct 14 | Myers, Chapter 7: “Case Study Research”  
**Read:**  
- *Myers, Chapter 7: “Case Study Research”*  
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 6</td>
<td>Ethnographic Research in Information Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>Grounded Theory in Information Systems Research</td>
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**Ethnographic Research in Information Systems**

**Student proposals for the in-class presentations are due prior to the start of class.**

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Karen Szala-Meneok (McMaster University) – Ethnographic Methods – Tips & Techniques

Read:
- **Myers, Chapter 8: “Ethnographic Research”**

**Grounded Theory in Information Systems Research**

Read:
- **Myers, Chapter 9: “Grounded Theory”**


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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 Nov</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Methods – Topic To Be Determined</td>
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<td>Guest Lecturer: Dr. Hazel Hall (Edinburgh Napier University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>Student In-Class Presentations</td>
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<td>10 Nov</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Collection Techniques</td>
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<td>Read: Myers – Chapters 10, 11, &amp; 12</td>
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<td>11 Nov</td>
<td>Analysing Qualitative Data – Part 1</td>
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<td>Guest Lecturer – Dr. Umar Ruhi (University of Ottawa) via Skype</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Myers – Chapters 13, 14, 15 &amp; 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Dec</td>
<td>Analysing Qualitative Data – Part 2</td>
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<td>Read: TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>Writing Up and Publishing Qualitative Research in Information Systems Journals</td>
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<td><strong>Student Term Papers Are Due Prior To The Start of Class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-class discussion of Dr. Ruhi’s dissertation will occur during this class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Myers – Chapter 17, 18</td>
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