

## **K795: Qualitative Methods in Information Systems Research Fall 2020 Course Outline**

**Information Systems Area  
DeGroote School of Business  
McMaster University**

### **COURSE OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this course is to present and discuss *Qualitative Methods in Information Systems Research*. Quantitative research methods are by far the predominant and prevalent research methods used by Information Systems (IS) scholars. Qualitative research methods are rather “new” to the IS field, and have garnered recent attention and interest among IS scholars. This course provides students with a working knowledge of a range of qualitative methods and approaches. The course covers key qualitative IS research papers and common qualitative data collection and analysis methods used in the IS field. Students will obtain hands-on experience coding and analysing qualitative data, using qualitative analysis software, and discussing qualitative research issues.

### **INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Dr. Brian Detlor**

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Tel: (905) 525-9140 x23949

DSB-A201

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>. 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 via Zoom

## COURSE ELEMENTS

Avenue:	Yes	Leadership:	No	IT skills:	Yes	Global view:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	No	Written skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	No	Oral skills:	Yes
Experiential:	Yes	Guest speaker(s):	Yes	Final Exam:	No		

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on developing a working knowledge of a range of qualitative methods and methodological approaches in Information Systems (IS) research. This includes not only reading key qualitative information systems research papers and learning about common qualitative research approaches used in the IS field, but also getting hands-on experience coding and analysing qualitative data.

## 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

Myers, M.D. **Qualitative Research in Business & Management**. Sage Publications, London, 2020. Third Edition. Print ISBN: 9781473912335, 1473912334; eText ISBN: 9781526418302, 1526418304

- 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.
- The instructor recommends purchasing the digital (Kindle edition) version as access is instantaneous and the cheapest (\$45.68 CAD). Hardcopy versions of the book will take weeks to ship from the UK.



## EVALUATION

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

1) Participation	40%
2) Presentation	30%
3) Term Paper	<u>30%</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Participation

It is vital that students attend and take part in each and every one of these classes. It is assumed that students will do more than just attend, but will be active participants through adequate reading, preparation, and contribution to class 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. The average of these three marks will constitute a total participation mark worth 40% of the final grade.

### Presentation

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 of their analysis in **Week 9**. In **Week 3**, 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 3**. 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. 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 3.*

### **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:

- Nosrati, F. (2019). *The Use of Digital Storytelling for Impression Management by City Cultural Organizations*. PhD dissertation. McMaster University.

The dissertation is available at <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/24670>. A PDF copy will also be posted on Avenue.

In the 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 3. 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.

### **GRADE 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.

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90 - 100	12
A	85 - 89	11
A-	80 - 84	10
B+	77 - 79	9
B	73 - 76	8
B-	70 - 72	7
F	00 - 69	0

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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.

For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## ONLINE COURSE COMPONENTS

In this course we will be using email, Avenue-2-Learn, and Dedoose. Students should be aware that when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

## CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. There may be changes to 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.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in this course will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.



COURSE SCHEDULE

**K795: Qualitative Methods in Information Systems Research**

WEEK	DATE	ASSIGNMENT
1	Sept 9	<b>Introducing Qualitative Information Systems Research</b>  <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Outline</li> <li>• Myers, Chapter 2: “Overview of Qualitative Research”</li> </ul>
2	Sept 16	<b>Research Design and Philosophical Perspectives in Qualitative Information Systems Research</b>  <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers, Chapter 3: “Research Design”</li> <li>• Myers, Chapter 4: “Philosophical Perspectives”</li> <li>• Orlikowski &amp; Baroudi (1991). Studying information technology in organizations: Research approaches and assumptions, <i>Information Systems Research</i>, 2(1), 1-28.</li> <li>• Goldkuhl (2012). Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research, <i>European Journal of Information Systems</i>, 21(2), 135-146.</li> <li>• Cecez-Keemanovic et al. (2020). Advancing qualitative IS research methodologies: Expanding horizons and seeking new paths. <i>Journal of the Association of Information Systems</i>, 21(1), 246-263.</li> </ul>
3	Sept 23	<b>Guiding Principles in Qualitative Information Systems Research</b>  <i>Details of the requirements of both the in-class presentation and the term paper will be given in this lecture.</i>  <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venkatesh et al. (2013). Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide: Guidelines for conducting mixed methods research in information systems, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 37(1), 21-54.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venkatesh et al. (2016). Guidelines for Conducting Mixed-methods Research: An Extension and Illustration, <i>Journal of the Association for Information Systems</i>, 17(7), 435 – 494.</li> <li>• Sarker et al. (2013). Qualitative Studies in Information Systems: A Critical Review and Some Guiding Principles, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 37(4), iii-xviii.</li> <li>• Galliers &amp; Huang (2012). The teaching of qualitative research methods in information systems: an explorative study utilizing learning theory, <i>European Journal of Information Systems</i>, 21(2), 119-134.</li> </ul>
4	Sept 30	<p><b>Ethics in Qualitative Information Systems Research / Action Research in Information Systems</b></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers, Chapter 5: “Ethics”</li> <li>• Chapter 10, “Qualitative Research”, TCPS 2 (2018), Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (<a href="https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter10-chapitre10.html">https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter10-chapitre10.html</a>)</li> <li>• Myers, Chapter 6: “Action Research”</li> <li>• Baskerville &amp; Myers (2004). Special issue on action research in information systems: Making IS research relevant to practice – Foreword, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 28(3), 329-335.</li> <li>• Braa et al. (2004). Networks of action: Sustainable health information systems across developing countries, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 28(3), 337-362.</li> </ul>
5	Oct 7	<p><b>Case Study Research in Information Systems</b></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers, Chapter 7: “Case Study Research”</li> <li>• Benbasat et al. (1987). The case research strategy in studies of information systems, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 11(3). 369-386.</li> <li>• Dubé &amp; Paré (2003). Rigor in information systems positivist case research: Current practices, trends, and recommendations, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 27(4), 597-636.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eisenhardt (1989). Building theories from case study research, <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14(4), 532-50.</li> <li>Eisenhardt &amp; Graebner (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges, <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 50, 25-32.</li> </ul>
6	Oct 14	<p><b>Ethnographic Research in Information Systems</b></p> <p><b>Student proposals for the in-class presentations are due prior to the start of class.</b></p> <p><u>Guest Lecturer:</u> Dr. Karen Szala-Meneok. She will speak from 9 am to 10 am about her ethnographic work conducted in Labrador.</p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Myers, Chapter 8: “Ethnographic Research”</li> <li>Klein &amp; Myers (1999). A set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems, <i>MIS Quarterly</i> 23(1), 67-93.</li> <li>Myers &amp; Young (1997). Hidden agendas, power, and managerial assumptions in information systems development: An ethnographic study, <i>Information Technology &amp; People</i>, 10(3), 224-240.</li> <li>Schultze (2000). A confessional account of an ethnography about knowledge work, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 24(1), 3-41.</li> </ul>
7	Oct 21	<p><b>Grounded Theory in Information Systems Research</b></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Myers, Chapter 9: “Grounded Theory”</li> <li>Orlikowski (1993). CASE tools are organizational change: Investigating incremental and radical changes in systems development," <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 17(3), 309-340.</li> <li>Urquhart and Fernández (2013). Using grounded theory method in information systems: The researcher as blank slate and other myths," <i>Journal of Information Technology</i> (28), pp. 224-236.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urquhart et al. (2010). Putting the theory back into grounded theory: Guidelines for grounded theory studies in information systems, <i>Information Systems Journal</i>, 20(4), 357-381.</li> <li>• Charmaz, K. (2014). Reconstructing Theorizing in Grounded Theory Studies. In <i>Constructing Grounded Theory</i>, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Chapter 9, 225-260. Sage Publications: Los Angeles.</li> <li>• Wiesche, M. et al. (2017). Grounded theory methodology in Information Systems Research, <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 41(3), 685-701.</li> </ul>
8	Oct 28	No class
9	Nov 4	<p><b>Student In-Class Presentations</b> - Action Research; Case Study Research; Ethnographic Research; Grounded Theory</p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarker et al. (2018). Learning from First-Generation Qualitative Approaches in the IS Discipline: An Evolutionary View and Some Implications for Authors and Evaluators (Part 1/2), <i>Journal of the Association for Information Systems</i>, 19(8), 752-774.</li> <li>• Sarker et al. (2018). Learning from First-Generation Qualitative Approaches in the IS Discipline: An Evolutionary View and Some Implications for Authors and Evaluators (Part 2/2), <i>Journal of the Association for Information Systems</i>, 19(9), 909-923.</li> </ul>
10	Nov 11	<p><b>Qualitative Data Collection Techniques</b></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers – Chapters 10, 11, &amp; 12</li> <li>• Iyamu, T. (2018). Collection qualitative data for information systems studies: The reality in practice, <i>Education and Information Technologies</i>, 23(5), 2249-2264.</li> <li>• Goldkuhl, G. (2019). The Generation of Qualitative Data in Information Systems Research: The Diversity of Empirical Methods. <i>Communications of the Association of Information Systems</i>, 44, 572-599.</li> </ul>

11	Nov 18	<p><b>Analysing Qualitative Data – Part 1</b></p> <p><u>Guest Lecturer:</u> Jodie Lobana, PhD Candidate (11 am to 12 noon) will share her experience with grounded theory, using NVivo, and carrying out a qualitative dissertation.</p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers – Chapter 13</li> <li>• Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G., &amp; Hamilton, A.L. (2012). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. <i>Organisational Research Methods</i>, 16(1), 15-31.</li> </ul> <p><u>Review</u> (i.e., skim):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detlor, B., Julien, H., Willson, R., Serenko, A. &amp; Lavallee, M. (2011). Learning outcomes of information literacy instruction at business schools. <i>Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology</i>, 62(3), 572–585.</li> <li>• Detlor et al. (2003). Pre-purchase online information seeking: Search versus browse. <i>Journal of Electronic Commerce Research</i>, 4(2), 72-84.</li> <li>• Serenko, A. (2006). The use of interface agents for email notification in critical incidents. <i>International Journal of Human-Computer Studies</i>. 64(11), 1084–1098.</li> <li>• Detlor, B., &amp; Ball, K. (2015). Getting More Value from the LibQUAL+® Survey: The Merits of Qualitative Analysis and Importance-Satisfaction Matrices in Assessing Library Patron Comments. <i>College &amp; Research Libraries</i>, 76(6), 796-810.</li> <li>• Detlor, B., Hupfer, M., &amp; Smith, D.H. (2018). Digital Storytelling: An Opportunity for Libraries to Engage and Lead Their Communities. <i>Canadian Journal of Library and Information Science</i>, 42(1-2).</li> <li>• Detlor, B. (2017). <i>Digital Storytelling and City Cultural Organizations: A Case Study Investigation of the “Love Your City, Share Your Stories” Digital Storytelling Initiative in Hamilton, Canada</i>. Working Paper #101, McMaster University, Available at: <a href="https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/21317">https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/21317</a>.</li> </ul>
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12	Nov 25	<p><b>Analysing Qualitative Data – Part 2</b></p> <p><b>Students will participate in hands-on use of Dedoose software during class-time.</b></p> <p><u>Guest Lecturer:</u> Dr. Fariba Nosrati (from 10:30 am to 12 noon). Fariba will share her experience with using Dedoose, carrying out a qualitative dissertation, and her thoughts of turning your qualitative dissertation into publications.</p>
13	Dec 2	<p><b>Final Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Student Term Papers Are Due Prior To the Start of Class</b></p> <p><u>Guest Lecturer:</u> Bell Eapen (PhD Candidate). He will speak from 11 am to 12 pm. He will discuss his dissertation and his automated solution for coding qualitative data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on student term papers: re: the Nosrati (2019) dissertation.</li> <li>• Discussion on Dr. Detlor's recent qualitative research project on digital skills training</li> </ul>