Instructor: Dr. Laura Pitkanen  
Email: laura.pitkanen@utoronto.ca  
Office Hours: Monday 12-2pm, Sidney Smith Hall, Room SS5038  
Class: Monday 2-4pm, Sidney Smith Hall, Room SS5017A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate course introduces students to the philosophical and methodological approaches to research in geography and planning. Through seminar and lecture modules, students will acquire an understanding of different research paradigms, quantitative and qualitative methods, and the knowledge necessary for developing sound and reflective geographic and planning-based research strategies. The goals of the course will be to provide students with the knowledge needed to effectively evaluate research, understand the process of research design, formulate research questions and develop a geographic and/or planning-based research proposal.

This course has an approach to research practice that is grounded in critical social theory. In learning about different approaches to research practice in geography and planning, we will explore how theory, questions and method are intertwined.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

EVALUATION

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Weekly written responses</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaired class session</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal outline</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal presentation</td>
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ASSIGNMENTS

**Participation:** I expect all students to have thoughtful and respectful engagement with everyone in the class, to actively participate in each class, and to approach this course (and your topic) with enthusiasm.

**Weekly written reading responses:** Students are expected to complete all readings and submit weekly reading responses in advance of class, and to attend each class well prepared to engage in critical discussion.

Each week, write a 1-page, single-spaced response to the readings. In the first paragraph, summarize the main contribution of the readings. This is a useful, practical exercise aimed to help you develop skills in writing concise, on-point summaries of scholarly texts. In the second paragraph, write a critical reflection of the readings. I encourage you to be reflective and to consider readings in relation to each other and to broader methodological and theoretical debates in geography and planning.

**Due:** Reading responses must be posted to the course Blackboard page by noon on the Sunday before each class. Late reading responses will not be accepted.
**Chaired class session:** Each student will Chair the discussion for one class. The Chair will co-facilitate the class by leading the initial discussion. The Chair is responsible for preparing key points that extend our critical analysis of the weekly readings or themes (not a mere summary of the readings), and for posing 2-3 questions that will help to guide class discussion. Chairing a class will help to improve your facilitation skills and is another opportunity to learn from each other in a supportive environment.

**Research Proposal outline:** Due Week 4: Please bring a hardcopy to class.
(2 pages, single-spaced)

The Research Proposal outline should include: i) introduction (introduce the topic and justify its importance, including its relevance in geography and/or planning); ii) research question(s); iii) description of proposed methods; iv) the timeline for conducting the research.

**Research Proposal:** Due Week 10: Please bring a hardcopy to class.
(20-25 pages, double-spaced)

Research Proposals should include: i) an introduction to the topic, including a justification for the topic, and its relevance to geography and/or planning; ii) a statement of the research question(s) to be addressed; iii) a discussion of the research context for your topic; iv) an overview of the literature and a statement of the relevance of your research to this body of work; v) a detailed discussion of research methods and a timeline for completion. In addition, the proposal should address issues related to rigor in research, positionality and the politics of representation. Research proposals must engage extensively with theoretical and methodological literature beyond the course reading list.

**Research Proposal presentation:** The last class (or two, depending on class size) will be dedicated to Research Proposal presentations. Each student will give a 10-minute oral presentation on their Research Proposal and have opportunity to answer audience questions. This is a great opportunity to work on oral presentation skills and to obtain constructive feedback on your Research Proposal.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

Note: Readings may change or be substituted depending on the interests of the class. Advance notice will be given of any changes to readings.

**Week 1:** September 11
Introduction to Research Practice in Geography and Planning


**Week 2:** September 18
The Field, Theory and Praxis


Week 3: September 25
Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Research


Week 4: October 2
Research Ethics


University of Toronto: Ethics Review (overview of forms and process).

**OCTOBER 9: THANKSGIVING MONDAY, NO CLASS**

Week 5: October 16
Community-based Research


Supplementary:

Week 6: October 23
Archives


Week 7: October 30
Linking Theory, Questions and Method


Week 8: November 6
Feminist Approaches to Research


Week 9: November 13
Interviews and Focus Groups


Week 10: November 20
Ethnographic Research


Week 11: November 27
Visual Methodologies

Mike Crang. Visual Methods and Methodologies, In: The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography, Edited by: Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang & Linda McDowell.


Supplementary:
Aitken, Stuart and Mei-Po Kwan. GIS as Qualitative Research: Knowledge, Participatory Politics and Cartographies of Affect. In: The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography. Edited by: Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang & Linda McDowell.

Week 12: December 4:
Research Proposal presentations

Supplementary Sources:

There are numerous edited collections, special editions and journal articles that focus on research methodologies and practice. Here are some supplementary sources that you may find helpful, however I encourage you to research further sources that best pertain to your own research interests and practice.

The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (Available as an online book through the U of T Library system).

Geographical Review, Special Issue: Doing Fieldwork, No. ½, (Jan-April, 2001)
Professional Geographer, Special Issue: 1994
Geoforum, Special Issue: 1999
Progress in Human Geography, reports on methodologies


http://iis.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/inpursuitofphd.pdf

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