General Information

Course

Title: Introduction to methodology – methods of inquiry in development studies
Code: INTD 397
Term: Winter
Year: 2020
Class Times: Mondays and Wednesdays 11h35 to 12h55
Location: ENGM 279
Number of credits: 3

Instructor

Name: Kattie Lussier
Office: Room 240 Peterson Hall, 3460 McTavish street
Email: kattie.lussier@mcgill.ca
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 14h30 to 16h00
Appointments needed for meetings outside of office hours

Course overview

Synopsis

The study and practice of development is multidisciplinary, which means that development actors often have to work with information from a range of fields. The diversity of people involved in development and the multitude of contexts in which they evolve makes the process of generating knowledge particularly complex. Methodologies, therefore, must be adaptable while remaining rigorous enough to withstand the tests of the various accountability seekers. For this reason, development practitioners and researchers need to be able to draw from a range of methods and tools in order to combine information from various sources.

In this introduction course, students will learn the advantages and limitations of the different methods used in international development and how to combine different data collection tools. This will enable them to make methodological choices better suited to information needs, while taking into account the specific development context and the characteristics of the stakeholders.
The focus of the course will be on mixed methods and how to combine quantitative, qualitative and participatory data. It will be divided in four parts: understanding methodological issues in development studies, collecting data, analyzing data, and making sense of information gathered from various sources. In addition to using more familiar data collection tools such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, students will be required to engage in participatory exercises such as transect walks, participatory mapping, ranking and scoring, participatory diagrams and various forms of brainstorming.

The introduction to methodology course is suited to all development students, regardless of their background, and does not require any prior statistical or mathematical knowledge. Since the international development program already provides students with different courses enabling them to master more advanced quantitative methods, this course will put more emphasis on information gathered with qualitative and participatory methods and how to combine their insights with descriptive statistics from questionnaires or secondary sources of data.

Course's Contribution

This course is important to all development students because methods of inquiry are used by both development researchers and practitioners. Whether a person is more interested in policy making, in knowledge generation, or in finding out information to better intervene in the field and improve development interventions, the understanding and use of methodologies is necessary. This course will also be particularly useful to students wishing to undertake a personal research project, either as part of their program or a post graduate degree, as well as those who want to work amongst a research team one day.

Instructional methods

The course will use a mix of methods including lectures, plenary sessions, small group practical exercises (practicum) and discussions. The material used during the lectures will be uploaded to myCourses weekly. Other important information and material will also be shared through myCourses. Students should therefore consult it regularly. Polling@McGill may be used for formative purposes only. Students are encouraged to download the application (see https://mcgill.ca/polling/ for further information) but the answers they will provide through the app will not be part of the evaluation.

Organization

Mondays will be dedicated to lectures and from week four onward, Wednesdays will be dedicated to practicum and discussions. Attendance to classes is mandatory in order not to penalise other team members by delaying their work. Students are expected to do their readings before each class and, from times to times, will be requested to watch short videos online before class.
**Lectures**  Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the lectures by sharing their ideas and experiences and by asking questions. From week 3 onwards, 1 participation point will be given during each lecture to students who complete the small group task given. These tasks may be a question on the weekly reading or a synthesis of group discussions. Participation to lectures is worth 10% of the final grade.

**Practicum**  Practicum are practical exercises meant to develop the research skills of the students. They will be conducted in class, on Wednesdays. While the majority of practicum will be completed during the course, two group assignment will require completing outside of the class hours.

**Learning**

**Aim**
This course aims to familiarize students with the main methodological approaches used in development study and practice, their characteristics and the common methods and tools that underpins them.

**Objectives**
At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to
- discuss the strengths and limitations of different methods of development inquiry;
- explain the criteria on which a methodology should be assessed;
- select methods of inquiry adapted to particular contexts and stakeholders;
- identify data collection tools best suited to respond to information needs;
- formulate questions that are appropriate to respondents’ characteristics and the context of inquiry;
- make sense of data from various sources.

**Competencies**
- Develop a data collection tool adapted to the situation and stakeholders
- Plan a simple participatory workshop
- Collect data using participatory tools
- Conduct simple data analysis
- Discuss and interpret a mixed data set
- Produce an equity scorecard from quantitative data

**Soft skills**
- Team work
- Inter-personal skills
- Planning skills
- Analytical skills
- Time management skills
Evaluation

Means of evaluation and ponderation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Critical discussion of the methodology of a research paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Data collection tool (Questionnaire or Interview protocol)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Discussion and interpretation of a mixed data set</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum (practical exercises):</td>
<td>10 Practicum</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in class activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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List of Practicum and contribution to final grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Data collection plan - Group</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Simulation of a focus group - Group</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Writing and piloting items</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mapping and Transect walk</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Planning a participatory workshop - Group</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Participatory data collection (video) - Group</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Qualitative data analysis - Group</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Equity Scorecard - Group</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Formulating arguments with Toulmin’s model</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Communicating Findings</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Evaluation criteria for practicum

- Overall quality of the assignment
- Procedures are respected
- Assignment is complete
- Information is relevant
- Information is clear

Information on assignments

Individual assignments

- Critical discussion of the methodology of a development research paper
  Students will select a development research paper of their choice and critically discuss the methodology used in the research. The two-pages report should include discussions on the relevance, advantages and limitations of the method(s) used, the sampling procedure and the research tools as well as a discussion of gender and ethical considerations.
  Submission date: February 3rd (week 5)

- Mid-term assignment → Data collection tool
  For their mid-term assignment, students will have the choice between developing a survey questionnaire or an interview protocol. In both cases students will have to provide the contextual information regarding the study for which the tool is developed such as the purpose of the study, the location, the overarching research questions, the stakeholders and the sampling strategy. The different items (questions) in the tool must be adapted to the characteristics of the respondents and respect the main criteria provided in class.
  Submission date: February 17th (Week 7)
- Final assignment → Discussion and interpretation of a mixed dataset
  For their final assignment, students will receive a set of quantitative, qualitative and participatory data. They will need to make sense of them, discuss their findings, and formulate conclusions and recommendations. The length of the assignment to be submitted should be no longer than 5 pages. Students will receive the data 2 weeks before submission date.
  Submission date: April 8th (Week 13)

Group assignments

- P6 → Video recording of a participatory data collection exercise (10 points)
  Each team will select a purpose of inquiry and from 2 to 4 participatory data collection tools and administer them to a group of at least 5 persons. These activities will be recorded on video. After the data is collected, the team will summarize their conclusions from the exercise, identify what worked well and what they would do differently the next time. These will also be recorded on video. There is no need to submit written material for this assignment. The total data collection time should not exceed 1 hour, and the reflective part should be between 5 and 10 minutes. There is no need to rent or borrow video equipment. The use of a mobile phone is sufficient for this assignment.

- P8 → Equity scorecard (10 points)
  Each team will develop an equity scorecard using the quantitative data provided, discuss their process and explain what they conclude from the scorecard. This assignment will require the use of a quantitative data analysis software. Information on how to access such software will be provided in class.

More details on the assignments will be provided in class and the evaluation grids will be available on myCourses.

Late assignments will be penalized for each day of delay. In cases of force majeure, students should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics covered</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>To do for next course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to development inquiry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>Presentation of syllabus</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Reading 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Terminology</td>
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<td>Jan 8</td>
<td>What is there to know in development?</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Reading 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who needs to know what?</td>
<td>Discussions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Who's knowledge matter and why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Embracing complexity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Actors, knowledge and development inquiry</td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>Data needs (research and practice)</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Reading 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How is information used and for what purpose?</td>
<td>Discussions</td>
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<td>Biases and blind spots</td>
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<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Development actors and epistemology</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Reading 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Types of studies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Categories of methods of inquiry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Research design and methods of enquiry in development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Types of quantitative methods&lt;br&gt;Types of qualitative methods&lt;br&gt;Other methods of inquiry (GIS, etc.)&lt;br&gt;Selection criteria &amp; factors to consider</td>
<td>Lecture Discussions</td>
<td>Reading 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 22</td>
<td>Indicators and variables&lt;br&gt;Context of inquiry and positionality&lt;br&gt;Stakeholders &amp; study participants&lt;br&gt;Sampling strategies&lt;br&gt;Ethical concerns</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Research Ethics Online Tutorial</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Planning for data collection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 27</td>
<td>Stakeholders’ analysis&lt;br&gt;Gender considerations&lt;br&gt;Factors to consider&lt;br&gt;Contextual and logistical concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 29</td>
<td>Data collection plan</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Tools for qualitative data collection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Types of interviews &amp; protocols&lt;br&gt;Collecting data from groups</td>
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<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>Simulation of focus group</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Tools for quantitative data collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Sources of secondary data for development&lt;br&gt;Surveys and Census&lt;br&gt;Characteristic of a good question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>Writing items for a questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Participatory data collection tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Categories of participatory tools&lt;br&gt;Attitude of the facilitator&lt;br&gt;Ethics</td>
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<td>Feb 19</td>
<td>Mapping and Transect walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Participatory workshops&lt;br&gt;Dealing with vulnerability&lt;br&gt;Inclusion of marginalized people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>Planning a workshop</td>
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| Reading week | Explore participation resources |

| March 2 | No class |
| March 4 | No class |

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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Analyzing data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Approaches to data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Different ways of making sense of data</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Making sense of qualitative data</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Manual vs computer-assisted analysis&lt;br&gt;Coding process&lt;br&gt;Avoiding bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>Analyzing qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Making sense of quantitative data</td>
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| March 23 | Type of analysis  
Descriptive statistics  
Intersecting gender with other social 
exclusion factors | Lecture  
Reading 11 |
| March 25 | Developing an equity scorecard | Practicum 8  
Work on ESC |
| Week 12 | Combining multiple sources of data – mixed methods |
| March 30 | Importance of triangulation  
Understanding the audience  
Dealing with contradicting information  
Presenting information - Toulmin model | Lecture  
Reading 12  
Work on data interpretation |
| April 1 | Interpreting and presenting data | Practicum 9  
Submit Equity Scorecard (team) |
| Week 13 | Communicating research findings |
| April 6 | Communicating research findings | Lecture |
| April 8 | Policy briefs | Practicum 10  
Submit data interpretation |

**Course Materials**

All course materials will be available on myCourses or from McGill's online library.

In order to preserve our environment, students are encouraged to print only when necessary.

**Key References:**


Ffrench-Constant, L. (undated) *How to plan, write and communicate an effective policy brief*. Manchester: Research to Action


(Open Access: [http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/726001468331753353/pdf/350340The0Powe1n0RE_V01OFFICIAL0USE1.pdf](http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/726001468331753353/pdf/350340The0Powe1n0RE_V01OFFICIAL0USE1.pdf))


(McGill Ebook [https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/646809046](https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/646809046))


(McGill Ebook https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/458769159)


### Participatory Resources:

- VSO (undated) ‘Participatory Approaches: A facilitator’s guide’.

### Other Resources:


Kranias, G., Participatory Evaluation Toolkit. Toronto: HCLink

Useful Websites:

- Tools4dev: http://www.tools4dev.org/
- Participatory methods.org: https://www.participatorymethods.org
- Research to Action: https://www.researchtoaction.org
- World Bank Open Data: https://data.worldbank.org
- Google Public Data Explorer: https://www.google.com/publicdata/directory
- Eldis: https://www.eldis.org

Weekly readings

Reading 1:

Reading 2:

Reading 3:


**Reading 4:**


Also suggested (not mandatory)


**Reading 5:**


Also Suggested (not mandatory):


**Reading 6:**


**Reading 7:**

Also suggested (not mandatory):


Reading 8:


Also Suggested (not mandatory):

Reading 9:


Reading 10:
Lussier (undated) Intersectionality in development research: the creation and use of equity scorecards. Montreal: ISID

Reading 11:


Reading 12:


Ffrench-Constant, L. (undated) How to plan, write and communicate and effective policy brief. Manchester: Research to Action

Also Suggested (not mandatory):
Institutional Policies

Academic Integrity / Plagiarism

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).

Note that to support academic integrity, your assignments may be submitted to text-matching or other appropriate software (e.g., formula-, equation-, and graph-matching).

Language of Submission

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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

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 (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Course Evaluation

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

Special needs

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009. If you have a hearing, visual and mobility impairment, please contact me immediately (in advance of any evaluations or other class requirements).

1 The content below comes from McGill’s Course outline guide, 2019
Other policies

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students’ Rights (see document).

McGill has policies on sustainability, paper use and other initiatives to promote a culture of sustainability at McGill. (See the Office of Sustainability.)

* Nota Bene

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L’Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissions et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

1 Depending on the weather, this activity may be conducted on another day