

University of Toronto
School of the Environment
ENV421Y1 Y: Community Research for Social and Environmental Change
Fall 2024 & Winter 2025

General Information

Time

Tuesdays 10:00am – 12:00pm (first class, Tuesday, September 3)

Location

See ACORN or Quercus for details

Instructor

Michael Classens

Email: michael.classens@utoronto.ca

Office: see Quercus for details

Office hours: Tuesday 12:10 – 2:00, or by appointment

Teaching Assistant

Asana Farshchi

asana.farshchi@mail.utoronto.ca

Course description

The world is facing multiple, intersecting and interconnected socio-ecological crises. In this course we will contemplate the role research can play in addressing these challenges. We will focus specifically on community-based action research and consider questions pertaining to a range of issues, from ontology, epistemology, and power, through to knowledge translation and mobilization as central considerations in understanding what it means to do research to effect positive socio-ecological change. Working in a small group of your peers, you will have the opportunity to further develop your understanding of research and gain valuable experience by undertaking a substantive community-based research project with a community organization.

Course objectives

This course is designed to support students to:

- 1) Develop an appreciation for the implications of different approaches to knowledge generation.
- 2) Explore their various accountabilities and ethical responsibilities as researchers.
- 3) Discover and cultivate skills relevant to undertaking community-engaged research projects.
- 4) Creatively engage with knowledge translation and mobilization.

- 5) Think critically about the ways power is implicated in research.
- 6) Work collaboratively and respectfully with others.

Time Commitment

This class will probably be different from many of your classes. This is not a lecture/seminar style class – while we will have some lecture and seminar-style sessions, most of the course is designed to enable and support your group research projects. As we move through the school year, you should keep in mind that you are expected to devote approximately 120 hours to the course, or roughly 5 hours per week.

Evaluation

TCPS 2 CORE module 5% (September 17) *Individual grade*

You will complete the CORE-2022 module. This module is based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, which provides general guidance on the ethics of conducting research involving human participants. Once you've completed the training you'll be able to download a certificate of completion. You should then submit this certificate through Quercus.

Find the training module here: <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>

Shared literature database 5% (September 24) *Group grade*

Using Zotero (or some similar software) you will generate a shared literature database relevant to your project. We'll provide an overview of Zotero, including how to create shared folders, in class. You should include 10-15 relevant articles / book chapters in your database by the deadline (you can build on this subsequently throughout your project). You will submit this database by sharing it with TA for the course (We'll review how to do this in class).

Preliminary research statement + presentation 15% (October 1) *Group grade*

10% for research statement / 5% for presentation

Each group will submit a preliminary research statement of no more than 500 words. The research statement should include the following: (1) research objectives, (2) key research questions, and (3) proposed methods for achieving the research objectives. You will also give a brief (10-15min) presentation on your preliminary research statement. I'm hoping you can use this as an opportunity to collaboratively troubleshoot and solicit feedback and advice from your peers.

Draft ethics application + presentation 10% (November 5) *Group grade*

As part of your work in this course, you'll need to submit a completed ethics application package through the Delegated Ethics Review Committee ([DERC](#)) process (specifically, as a "student-initiated project"). You'll submit a draft of this form and give a brief (10-15min) presentation on your ethics application package.

Final ethics application 10% (November 19) *Group grade*

Each group will submit a final draft of their ethics application through Quercus. I may request further edits before submitting your package to DERC.

Timeline and workflow 10% (January 14) *Group grade*

Each group will submit a short document (2-3 pages maximum) outlining, minimally, (1) key activities and tasks remaining, (2) key deadlines, (3) timelines, and (4) person responsible. You can use any format you like for the document (including online project management software) – keep in mind that you want this to be a functional document to guide your work. You should also share this document with your community partner.

Final presentation 10% (March 18 / March 25 / April 1) *5% Group grade, 5% Individual grade*

Each group will make a final presentation of their project. You should include an overview of your research findings and include recommendations for future research. The final presentation should be about 30mins long, and then the group will facilitate a Q&A period for about 20mins. I would encourage you to invite your community partner to the final presentation. We'll hold the final presentations in the Experiential Learning Commons – more details to follow.

*Note that presentations will take place on March 18 / March 25 / April 1. Roughly to groups will present each day - we'll figure out a schedule in the spring.

Final output 25% (April 1) *Group grade*

Each group will submit a final research output. The form this output ultimately takes will be negotiated within your group and in collaboration with your community partner. In addition to the final output, you will also submit a document (1 page maximum) summarizing suggested next steps for your research project. This may be used to further support your community partner, and inform the work of other cohorts of students in this class.

Learning reflection (10%) (April 8 – during exam period) *Individual grade*

Reflection is a key part of learning. In order to encourage you to reflect on your learning experience in this class, I ask that you keep a learning journal throughout the course and make at least 6 TOTAL entries of approximately 200 words each. Your journal can either be temporal (that is, documenting learning as it happens, throughout the year), thematic (aggregating learning into key issues or themes), or a mixture of both. The purpose of the journal is to document and reflect on whatever aspects of the course were most impactful, problematic, resonant and/or challenging for you. Reflections in particular on your experience as a community-engaged learner and/or group learner are welcome.

Readings

All course readings are available through the University of Toronto library system and/or the course Quercus site.

Quercus

We'll make extensive use of Quercus in this class, and you'll find a variety of useful resources there. Each week of the course is laid out with the weekly topic and readings. You'll submit all of your work through the appropriate assignment drop box in Quercus. We'll also start various informal discussion boards through which we can communicate between classes.

Schedule

**Note: This schedule is subject to change*

Date	Topic/readings	Deadlines
September 3, 2024	<p><u>Introductions, course overview</u></p> <p>*Note, we will also select groups this class – a link to the sign-up sheet will be in Quercus.</p>	
September 10, 2024	<p><u>Workshop – Community Engaged Learning (CEL)</u></p> <p>Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to Community Engaged Learning • Preparing for your Community Engaged Learning experience <p>Guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD <p>Workshop – Zotero overview</p>	
September 17, 2024	<p><u>Research design</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Maxwell, J. A. (2022). Interactive Approaches to Qualitative Research Design. In <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design</i> (Vol. 1–2, pp. 41–54). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529770278</p> <p>Rapley, T. (2022). Developing Research Questions: The Social Lives of Ideas, Interests and Questions. In <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design</i> (Vol. 1–2, pp. 257–272). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529770278</p> <p>Workshop – Research design [objective(s) / questions(s) / method(s)]</p>	Due: TCPS 2 CORE module
September 24, 2024	<p><u>Research as resistance</u></p> <p>Strega, S., and Brown, L. (2015). “Introduction: From resistance to resurgence”, in Brown, L. A., & Strega, S. (Eds). <i>Research as resistance: revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches</i> (Second edition). Canadian Scholars’ Press (1-16)</p> <p>Potts, K.L. and Brown, L. (2015). “Chapter 1: Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher”, in Brown, L. A., & Strega, S. (Eds). <i>Research as resistance: revisiting</i></p>	Due: Shared literature database

	critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches (Second edition). Canadian Scholars' Press (17-42).	
October 1, 2024	<p><u>Presentations + workshop</u></p> <p>Each group will provide a preliminary presentation of their research statement document (including an overview of their (1) research objectives, (2) key research questions, and (3) proposed methods for achieving the research objectives.</p>	Due: Preliminary research statement + presentation
October 8, 2024	<p><u>Positionality + privilege</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Jacobson, D. and Mustafa, N. (2019). Social identity map: A reflexivity tool for practicing explicit positionality in critical qualitative research. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Methods</i> 18 https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919870075</p> <p>Muhammad, M., Wallerstein, N., Sussman, A. L., Avila, M., Belone, L., & Duran, B. (2015). Reflections on Researcher Identity and Power: The Impact of Positionality on Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Processes and Outcomes. <i>Critical Sociology</i>, 41(7–8), 1045–1063. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920513516025</p> <p>*In addition to readings, I would like you to complete the mapping exercise outlined in Jacobson and Mustafa (2019), and come to class prepared to discuss. You DO NOT need to submit your map, and you should only share as much as you feel comfortable sharing during the class discussion.</p>	
October 15, 2024	<p><u>Research ethics</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Wilson, S. and Hughes, M. (2019). “Introduction: Why research is reconciliation”, in Wilson, S., & Breen, A. V. (Eds.). <i>Research and reconciliation: Unsettling ways of knowing through Indigenous relationships</i> (5-20).</p> <p>Mahoney, T., Grain, K., Fraser, P., Wong, J. (2021). Community Resource Handbook. Community- Engaged Research Initiative, Simon Fraser University. Available here.</p> <p>Review</p> <p>Undergraduate Ethics Review Protocol Form.</p>	
October 22, 2024	<p><u>Ethics application workshop</u></p> <p><u>Watch this video BEFORE class</u></p> <p><u>Review</u></p> <p>Come prepared to work through the ethics application – you can find the form on Quercus.</p>	
October 29, 2024	<u>NO CLASS – READING WEEK</u>	

November 5, 2024	<p><u>Presentations + workshop</u></p> <p>Each group will prepare a short presentation to share with the class a draft of their research ethics application. We will workshop these documents as a group.</p>	Due: Draft ethics application + presentation
November 12, 2024	<p><u>Co-creation + ethics</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Clark, T. (2008). 'We're Over-Researched Here!': Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements. <i>Sociology</i>, 42(5), 953–970. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094573</p> <p>CFICE: Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement. A project development checklist for community-based research. Available here.</p> <p><u>Project management + community partners + group dynamics</u></p> <p>Watch</p> <p>Watch the three short videos found here. Together, we will discuss and work through the learning case study</p>	
November 19, 2024	<p><u>Ethics application workshop II</u></p> <p>Come prepared to finalize the ethics application with your group.</p>	Due: Final ethics application
November 26, 2024	<p><u>Community based research and the university</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Zielke, J., Thompson, M., & Hepburn, P. (2022). On the (im)possibilities of being a good enough researcher at a neoliberal university. <i>Area</i>, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12815</p> <p>Bell, M., & Lewis, N. (2022). Universities claim to value community-engaged scholarship: So why do they discourage it? <i>Public Understanding of Science</i>, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/09636625221118779</p> <p>If you're feeling ambitious...</p> <p>Ball, J. (2014). On thin ice: Managing risks in community-university research partnerships. In, Hall, B.L., Etmanski, C., and Dawson, T. (Eds.), <i>Learning and teaching community-base research: Linking pedagogy to practice</i>, University of Toronto Press, 25-44.</p>	
EXAM/HOLIDAY BREAK		
January 7, 2025	<p><u>Workshop – Methods</u></p> <p>Working in your groups, you will ‘test drive’ your research methods. This could include practicing your interview questions, staging a trial focus group, etc. We will then convene as a whole group to debrief and discuss.</p>	

January 14, 2025	<p><u>When things don't go "right"...</u></p> <p>Guest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD <p>Read</p> <p>Hughes, Jason, Tarrant, Anna, Hughes, Kahryn and Sykes, Grace (2021) <i>F**k ups in social research: learning from what goes 'wrong'. Impact of Social Sciences Blog</i> (02 Aug 2021). Blog Entry.</p> <p>View</p> <p>Bella, A. (2022). [Research poster]. The ups and downs of research: How I learned through everything that went wrong.</p>	Due: Timeline and workflow
January 21, 2025	<p><u>Data analysis + interpretation</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Alcoff, L. (1991). The Problem of Speaking for Others. <i>Cultural Critique</i>, 20, 5–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/1354221</p> <p>Cashman, S. B., Adeky, S., Allen, A. J., Corburn, J., Israel, B. A., Montañó, J., Rafelito, A., Rhodes, S. D., Swanston, S., Wallerstein, N., & Eng, E. (2008). The Power and the Promise: Working With Communities to Analyze Data, Interpret Findings, and Get to Outcomes. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i>, 98(8), 1407–1417. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2007.113571</p> <p>Workshop – NVivo</p> <p>See the link below to download NVivo 12 for free</p> <p>https://mdl.library.utoronto.ca/technology/nvivo-software</p> <p>See here for more resources on using NVivo</p> <p>https://mdl.library.utoronto.ca/tools/nvivo</p>	
January 28, 2025	<p><u>Check-in and troubleshooting</u></p>	
February 4, 2025	<p><u>Knowledge mobilization</u></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Tool: So what the heck is knowledge mobilization and why should I care? https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2014/so-what-the-heck-is-knowledge-mobilization-and-why-should-i-care/</p> <p>Watch</p> <p>What is knowledge mobilization? https://researchimpact.ca/kmb_resource/what-is-knowledge-mobilization/</p>	
February 11, 2025	<p><u>Check-in and troubleshooting</u></p>	

February 18, 2025	<u>READING WEEK NO CLASS</u>	
February 25, 2025	<u>Check-in and troubleshooting</u>	
March 4, 2025	<p><u>How to Leverage your Experience for Future Opportunities</u></p> <p>We'll be joined by people from the Experiential Learning and Outreach Office to reflect on how you can practically apply your learning in this class toward future opportunities.</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ash, S. L., and Clayton, P.H. (2009). <i>Generating, Deepening, and Documenting Learning: The Power of Critical Reflection in Applied Learning</i>. 24, 24-48.</p>	
March 11, 2025	<u>Check-in and troubleshooting</u>	
March 18, 2025	<p><u>Final presentations – to be held in Experiential Learning Commons</u></p> <p>Each group will do their final presentation. You are encouraged to invite your community partners to the final presentations.</p>	Due: Final presentation
March 25, 2025	<p><u>Final presentations – to be held in Experiential Learning Commons</u></p> <p>Each group will do their final presentation. You are encouraged to invite your community partners to the final presentations.</p>	Due: Final presentation
April 1, 2025	<p><u>Final presentations – to be held in Experiential Learning Commons</u></p> <p>Each group will do their final presentation. You are encouraged to invite your community partners to the final presentations.</p>	<p>Due: Final presentation</p> <p>Due: Final output</p> <p>Due: Learning reflection (April 8)</p>

Course Policies

1. **A note on COVID-19:** It is important to recognize the likelihood that COVID-19 will substantively shape our time together in class, as well as our respective lives outside the classroom. The frustrating truth is that we cannot predict the specific impacts of COVID-19 in the coming academic year. However, I hope the following will help guide us.
 - I hope that we are able to conduct community-based research projects this year, and that you all will get to spend time ‘in the field’, so to speak. If this is not possible, we will adjust and find equally meaningful projects to work on and learn from.
 - The pandemic has and will continue to have unequal and differential impacts. I hope that we are all attuned to this fact and resist assuming how the pandemic is being experienced by others in the class.

- Given the profound disruption of the global pandemic over the past 4+ years, many of us are rightfully beleaguered. Given this, I hope we can prioritize being kind, gentle and understanding with each other.
 - I expect that everyone in the class will follow the COVID-19 guidelines established by the university and do their utmost to keep their peers safe and healthy. Updates on COVID-19 protocols can be found here: <https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether>
2. **A note on the use of AI/ChatGPT:** I want us to consider our responsibilities to each other as members within a community of learning and think about how using AI tools may impact/undermine that. I also want us to consider the hidden environmental impacts of all digital tools (particularly those that rely on very large servers). We should also keep in mind the invisibleized labour – often done by racialized people in the majority world – that maintains these digital infrastructures. Finally, drawing on Métis scholar [Max Liboiron](#), I want us to consider the *citational politics* of using AI. Who we cite in our work, who we chose to be in scholarly conversation with, is always a political choice. I want to acknowledge [Sarah Martin](#), whose inspiring thinking on AI I draw on here.
 3. **Deadlines:** Please do your very best to submit your work on time. In this class, perhaps more than most, your peers will be relying on you to complete your work in a timely fashion. Late penalties of up to 2% per day may apply in cases where work is not submitted on time. If you need extra time for an assignment, please do not hesitate to ask – and please try to do so at least a week in advance of the deadline.
 4. **Academic Integrity:** (<http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour>)
The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document.
Potential offences include, but are not limited to:
 - In papers and assignments: Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. Making up sources or facts. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).
 - Misrepresentation: Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes. Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
 If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me, the Writing Centre or the Academic Success Centre.
 5. **In order to provide future students** with useful raw material for their projects in this course, and to allow knowledge to be built up cumulatively over time through this course, we plan to post all final reports on the U of T campus as living lab projects [website](#). The final projects, complete with the names of all students in that group, but not containing any comments or grades from instructors, will be posted. Each group will have the opportunity to adjust their final report after receiving their grades and have the adjusted

report posted instead. If you have any concerns about this (e.g. would prefer your name not to be included), please let me know.

Institutional Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

On Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
3. Making up sources or facts.
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
3. Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>).

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ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility: if you require accommodations for a disability, or have any other accessibility concerns about the course, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

Support

Writing Support: Writing support is available to all students year-round at Writing Centres: <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>. You can visit the writing centre for help with an writing projects.

Writing Workshop Series: <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus/>.

English Language Learning: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>.

Academic Success Centre: www.asc.utoronto.ca

AccessABILITY: (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca) Students with diverse learning styles and needs are very welcome in this course. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services immediately.

Wellness: Wellness refers to maintenance of a balanced life, stress reduction and prevention of serious health issues. You are encouraged to seek support early and often. Find out more here <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>

Support is also available **24/7** for students within and outside of Canada at:

U of T My Student Support Program (U of T My SSP) at **1-844-451-9700** or, outside of North America, **001-416-380-6578**.

More info is available at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/myssp/>

The following are some important links to help you with academic and/or technical service and support

- General student services and resources at [Student Life](#)

- Full library service through [University of Toronto Libraries](#)
- Resources on conducting online research through [University Libraries Research](#)
- Resources on academic support from the [Academic Success Centre](#)
- Learner support at the [Writing Centre](#)
- Information for [Technical Support/Quercus Support](#)