First-hand research is crucial to scholarly, as well as policy and NGO-based, work on conflict. It is therefore imperative to understand how we can research conflict as a first step in studying it. In this course, we will approach the question of how to do qualitative research from both an exploratory---examining various methods and how we might use them---and a critical---analysing different kinds of research and what they can and cannot tell us---perspective. We will endeavour to understand the myriad of ways one might go about researching conflict, with a special focus on project design and ethics.

Learning Objectives and Approach:

The goal of this course is to provide an overview of qualitative research methods, to enable students to feel comfortable with the basics of conducting their own first-hand research, as well as assessing and interpreting the research of others.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the purpose, methods, and positives and negatives of various major kinds of qualitative research;
- Understand the ethical issues involved in doing research, from both theoretical and practical perspectives;
- Feel confident selecting and making use of qualitative research methods in their future study of conflict, particularly related to conducting human-centered research;
- Be capable of analyzing studies based on first-hand research for how they employ particular methods;
- Present coherent and critical oral and written arguments regarding the course subject.

This course will be split between discussions of theory and practice. We will try to understand both how to do a kind of research, as well as the theoretical issues that underpin it. The latter is crucial for understanding the sorts of issues that arise in the former. This means that even though this is a course based in practice, we will still be doing a lot of reading, which will be integral to the learning process. Expect to read an average of about 75 pages per week.

At the same time, the major thread running throughout the course will be the development of your own small research project, which will be a way of putting what you have read and discussed in class into practice. Doing your own first-hand research can be an intimidating prospect, and we will therefore work to nurture a comfortable, exploratory environment both inside and outside of the classroom. Please do not hesitate to come see me with even the smallest of questions or anxieties about what you are reading, writing or doing. It is all part of the learning process.
Required Readings

Unless noted otherwise, all required readings detailed below can be found in the course pack, available for purchase at Rytec Printers, 404 Dalhousie Street, Tel: (613) 241-2679.

The only readings not in the reader are sources available on the web, which all have their URLs listed where applicable below.

Important dates

Tuesday, September 13, 2011: first class.
Tuesday, September 27, 2011: research proposals due.
Tuesday, October 11, 2011: ethics proposal/literature review due.
Tuesday, November 8, 2011: review paper #1 due.
Tuesday, November 22, 2011: review paper #2 due.
Tuesdays, November 22, 29 and December 6, 2011: student presentations.
Tuesday, December 6, 2011: last class.
Monday, December 12, 2011: final paper due.

Course Schedule

Class 1: Tuesday, September 13, 2011
Introduction to the Course
What do we mean when we talk about “doing research”? What makes research about conflict different?

Class 2: Tuesday, September 20, 2011
Research Design
How does one go about starting a research project? What are different ways of knowing in the social sciences, and how do epistemological questions affect how we design our research projects? What is a research question, and how does one formulate a good one?

Class 3: Tuesday, September 27, 2011
Research Ethics
What are the basic principles of conducting ethical research, such as informed consent and minimizing harm, and why are they important? How do ethical considerations underpin our research agendas?
Class 4: Tuesday October 4 2011
Ethics and Working with Marginalized Peoples

What special ethical issues arise when doing research with marginalized communities? What should our positions as researchers be within such communities?

Readings:

Class 5: Tuesday October 11 2011
Oral History and Interview-Based Research

What are different methods of interviewing, and what can they tell us? How do we deal with issues of truth, power and meaning in oral history?

Readings:
- Lynn Michell (1999) “Combining focus groups and interviews: Telling how it is; telling how it feels.” In R. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (eds.) *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice*;

Class 6: Tuesday October 18 2011
Ethnographic Approaches

What is ethnography and what are the key techniques that it involves? How does ethnography differ from interviewing, and how can it be done ethically and rigourously?

Readings:
- Clifford Geertz (1973) “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” In C. Geertz *The Interpretation of Cultures*;

Note: There will be no class on Tuesday, October 25th, due to the study break.

Class 7: Tuesday November 1 2011
Archival Research

How does one make use of archival sources? How does this kind of research differ and compare to research with human beings; do unique ethical considerations come into play?

Class 8: Tuesday November 8 2011
New Media Research
What potential avenues for research open up with the growth of the internet and digital media? How do we utilize them, and how does this differ from more traditional modes of research?

Class 9: Tuesday November 15 2011
Modelling, simulations, experiments and participatory techniques
How can modelling, experiments and other simulation-based research techniques teach us about the real world? What makes a sound experiment, and what are the basic principles of generalizing date from one?

Class 10: Tuesday November 22 2011
What to do with Research Data
How do various methods of organizing and making sense of collected data affect the research process?
Student Presentations

Class 11: Tuesday November 29 2011
Interpreting and Disseminating Research
How do we interpret the information that we have collected during our research and how do we present it to the world? What are the ethics of interpretive authority?
Student Presentations

Class 12: Tuesday December 6 2011

Is Research "Useful"?

Is scholarly research useful to practitioners and policy makers? If it is, in what specific ways can it influence how we deal with situations of conflict?

Student Presentations

Readings:

Assignments and Evaluation

Introducing a Reading: 10%

In the first week of class, a sign-up sheet will be passed around and each student will sign up to introduce one required reading to the class, during the appropriate week. We will begin each class with these presentations, as a way into the readings. Presentations should be 5-7 minutes long, and you are expected to:

- briefly summarize the reading;
- highlight what you felt were the key issues that it raised;
- comment on the significance of the topic, and whether you agreed or disagreed with the way it was presented, and why.

After presenting their reading, each presenter will be available to answer any questions their fellow students may raise about it. You will be graded on how clearly you present your ideas as well as the depth of your engagement with the reading.

Review Essays: 30%

You will be expected to write two short (1200-1500 words) essays that analyze a piece of qualitative research. Each essay should review one of the articles listed below. There are four categories of research you may choose from, and you must choose your two papers from two different categories. All papers are posted on the course website:

Oral History:

Ethnography:
Modelling and Experimentation:


New Media:


Your review essay should devote only minimal space to summarizing the contents of the paper you have chosen. The majority of the paper should be spent critically analyzing how the paper utilizes its given methodology. You should start by making an argument about it, for example:

"Sheftel's use of oral history methodology to explore the memories of Bosnian refugees allows her to provide a bottom-up perspective of how Bosnians mobilized for war that counters official narratives."

You should then go on to elaborate on your argument and use examples from the paper to demonstrate what you mean. Your review can be positive, negative, or anywhere in between. Tell me how you think the author utilizes the methodology; whether or not you think they interpret their data soundly and successfully, and what the paper tells you about that methodology as a whole.

These essays will be graded with equal weight on: how clearly you write and express your ideas; and on the strength of your analysis of the given readings.

**Review Essay #1 is due: November 8th, 2011 (in class)**

**Review Essay #2 is due: November 22nd, 2011 (in class)**

Research Project:  60%

The majority if your coursework will be spent planning, executing, and then writing up a small research project. You may work alone, or in groups of up to 3 people. We will be discussing these projects at great length in class. You have three options for your research project:

**Option #1: Interviewing Project**

In this option, your research will consist of either 1 life story interview, or 3 short informational interviews. If you choose to interview, your interviewee(s) must be (a) fellow classmate(s). You will come up with a research question, pass an ethics review, find your participant(s), ensure informed consent, interview them, analyze and code your interview(s), and then prepare an oral presentation and research essay interpreting what you learned. You will be expected to also utilize secondary sources, as you would with any other research paper. If you are working in a group, all three of you must participate in the interviewing process.

You can record your interview(s) in audio or video formats. You are responsible for acquiring recording
If you do not own any equipment yourself, you should contact the Multimedia Centre (part of the computing department) to make arrangements to borrow whatever you need.

If you choose this option, you must submit a digital copy of your interview(s) along with your term paper.

**Option #2: Ethnography Project**

In this option, you will spend one full day (at least eight hours, in a row, or split into two), practicing ethnographic observation in the location of your choice, as long as it meets ethical standards (i.e. nowhere with issues surrounding vulnerable peoples, confidentiality, etc.). For example, you could choose a cafe, yoga studio or museum. You will come up with a research question, choose your fieldwork location, pass an ethics review, conduct your fieldwork and take field notes, analyze and code your notes, and then prepare an oral presentation and research essay interpreting what you learned. Your research will consist *entirely* of observation; you will not be allowed to conduct any interviews "in the field". You will be expected to also utilize secondary sources, as you would with any other research paper. If you are working in groups, each of you is expected to do the full 8 hour observation (at the same time, or at different times) and to write your own field notes.

If you choose this option, you must submit your field notes along with your term paper (they will be returned).

**Option #3: Archival Project**

In this option, you will do research based on primary source documents that you find in the collections at Library and Archives Canada: [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/a-z-index/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/a-z-index/index-e.html)

For example, you might work with a peacekeeping report issued by Canadian Forces during the Bosnian War, or a World War II soldier's diary. If you are working alone, then you will find just one document to work with; in pairs, you will choose two documents; and in threes, you will choose three. If you are working with more than one document, they should be part of the same collection and relate to each other.

You will be responsible for obtaining a user card, and visiting the archives by yourself. For more information on how to do this, see: [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/the-public/005-4060-e.php](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/the-public/005-4060-e.php)

You will come up with a research question, visit the archive and find a document in the collection that relates to what you are looking for, analyze and interpret the document you are working with, and then prepare an oral presentation and research essay interpreting what you learned. You will be expected to also utilize secondary sources, as you would with any other research paper.

**Your assignments for this research project will consist of:**

**A Research Proposal: 10%**

You proposal will be a maximum of 1000 words, and it will explain:

- Your research question;
- Your proposed methodology;
- Who you intend to interview/where you intend to conduct your fieldwork/what document you intend to use for your archival work;
- How you intend to analyze your research;
- The "so what" question: why should we care about your research topic, and what will it tell us about the world?
We will talk about how to choose a research question and build a proposal in class. Half of your grade for this assignment will be based on how well thought out and complete your proposal is, and the other half will reflect the clarity and quality of your writing.

Your proposal is due: September 27th, 2011 (in class)
It will be returned to you by the next week's class.

Ethics Proposal OR Literature Review 15%
If you have chosen the interviewing or ethnography option, you will have to pass an ethics review. This means that you will have to write up an ethics proposal, and it will have to be approved by your ethics officer (me), before you can move forward with your research. Your ethics proposal must meet Saint Paul's standards, which can be found here: http://www.ustpaul.ca/upload-files/researchservices/documents/ReglementsEthique_e.pdf
And in order to submit your proposal, you will use the form that all university researchers use when making formal submissions to the ethics committee, which you can find here: http://www.ustpaul.ca/upload-files/researchservices/documents/ethique-ang.pdf
If your ethics proposal is not up to standard, you will have to revise it before being allowed to move forward. It is therefore imperative that you write it out thoughtfully and conscientiously, as you do not want to eat into your researching time!

If you have chosen the archival option, you will have to produce a literature review that assesses the scholarly literature on the topic you have chosen, and contextualizes the project you intend to pursue within it. This should be a coherent, 1200-1500 word paper which critically analyzes the texts you have chosen, and in which you make an argument about the research that has been done to date. You must use at least 6 scholarly sources.

In both options, your will be graded equally on: how thorough and profound your engagement is with the task at hand, whether it is considering all angles of your ethical commitment, or contextualizing the literature that relates to the archival work you will be pursuing; as well as how clearly you organize your ideas and write about them.

Your ethics proposal/literature review is due: October 11th, 2011
It will be returned to you by the next week's class.

Presentation 10%
In weeks 10-12, each team will present their preliminary research findings. Your presentation should be a maximum of 10 minutes long, and it should explain your research question, what you did, show us some of your findings, and share your interpretations of them. You are welcome to use PowerPoint, share excerpts of recordings, images, or any other useful media. You will be expected to answer the questions of your peers, and this will be a good opportunity to get some feedback on your project before submitting your final paper. Half of this grade will be based on the strength of the content of your presentation, namely the research you tell us about and how you are able to interpret it, and the other half will be devoted to how well you communicate your ideas to the class.

Final Paper 25%
Your final paper will be the culmination of all of the above research. You are expected to turn in a complete research paper that makes an argument about your research topic, and uses the research you conducted to prove it. You must use secondary literature to contextualize and back up your findings.
You must use formal citations in your essays; I recommend Harvard style, which you can find in the University of Ottawa Writing and Style Guide here:

- If you are working alone, your paper should be between 2000-2500 words and make use of at least 5 secondary sources.
- If you are working in pairs, your paper should be between 2500-3000 words and make use of at least 7 secondary sources.
- If you are working in threes, your paper should be between 3000-3500 words and make use of at least 9 secondary sources.

This paper will be assessed according to three categories:
- the quality of your research;
- how well you analyse, interpret, and make sense of your research;
- how well you write about your research, starting with a well-formulated argument that you back up with relevant examples and analysis, and that you end with a conclusion highlighting the significance of your study.

Your final paper is due: 1:00-2:00pm, December 12th, 2011
(Hand it in to me in person in my office at that time, or if you would like to submit it beforehand, slip it under my office door.)

Course Rules

Assignments:

All written assignments must be submitted typed and double-spaced. They must be submitted in hard copy; email assignments will not be accepted. If you miss the class in which an assignment is due, you should slip it under my office door; in order for it not to be considered late, it must be there by the end of class time on the day it is due. You are expected to back up all of your work; digital malfunctions will not be an excuse for failing to turn in work except in the most extreme circumstances. Assignments must be handed during class time on the day that they are due unless indicated otherwise. Late assignments will be penalized accordingly:
- -5% of the total grade for an assignment up to 24 hours late;
- -10% of the total grade for an assignment between 24 hours and 72 hours late (excluding weekends);
- -20% of the total grade for an assignment between 72 hours and a week late.
Assignments will not be accepted more than a week late. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and you must ask my permission for an extension at least 48 hours before the due-date for an assignment, unless you have a medical emergency, in which case you will require a doctor’s note.

Asking for help:

You are encouraged to approach me for help with anything related to the course, especially regarding your essays and term paper. It is my pleasure to help you out, so please do not be shy. If you are unsure of what is expected of you for a given task, it is your responsibility to get in touch with me and ask me. It is very tricky to do some of these tasks for the first time, and I am there to help guide you.
through them. You are welcome to come speak to me during my office hours, or to set up an appointment at another time. You are also welcome to email me, although please note that you should not expect instant replies to your emails at all hours; I check my university email account during business hours, Monday-Friday, and will usually reply to you within a business day. For this reason, try not to leave your questions to the last minute.

Respect:
It is expected that all students will be open to and respectful of other students' views. Conflict Studies courses can touch on sensitive issues of religion, politics, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and nationality, among others. Discussions should be kept relevant to the course material and issues at hand; they should not include personally directed comments or attacks, use of negative stereotypes, or broad generalizations about groups of people. Inappropriate use or display of language, including but not limited to name-calling, racial/ethnic/sexual/religious comments, visual images, and offensive use of slang will not be tolerated. Please see me privately if you are feeling uncomfortable for any reason in class.

Academic Integrity:
Any person found guilty of academic fraud will be subject to severe sanctions. Some examples of academic fraud include:

• plagiarism or cheating of any kind;
• submitting work of which the student is not the author, in whole or in part (except for duly cited quotations or references);
• presenting research data that has been falsified or concocted in any way; and
• submitting, without written prior approval from the professors concerned, the same work for more than one course.

If you require further information, please consult the Saint Paul University and University of Ottawa websites, particularly the following links:
http://www.ustpaul.ca/HumanSciences/academicRegulations_graduate_e.asp#Fraud
http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/regist/fraud_e.html
http://www.uottawa.ca/plagiarism.pdf

Other:
You must keep cell phones and all other electronic devices on silent during class. You are expected to abstain from other disruptive behaviour, such as interrupting your peers, eating loudly, making a lot of noise if you arrive late or leave early, etc. Please use your common sense and be respectful of your peers.
## Grading Scheme

You will be graded according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
<th>Explanation of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90 - 100%</td>
<td>Exceptional and superior work, both in the content and the execution of the assignment. You are thinking deeply about the issues you are discussing, and you are able to communicate them flawlessly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85 - 89%</td>
<td>Both content and execution of the assignment were thoughtfully and very competently done. You have done an excellent job of meeting the requirements of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80 - 84%</td>
<td>Much of the assignment is excellent and worthy of an A, but there are some minor issues (e.g. your writing style is repetitive or you made a small factual error) either in content or execution, that are holding you back slightly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>75 - 79%</td>
<td>While most of the work was very well done, at least one aspect of it fell short in some noteworthy way (e.g. you did not properly state your argument in your introduction, or you neglected an important angle in your analysis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70 - 74%</td>
<td>The assignment was competently done and met course requirements, both in content and in execution. Whatever problems the assignment may have had, they did not detract in too serious of a way from the positives of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>65 - 69%</td>
<td>The assignment was in some places competently done, but there were serious problems (e.g. your writing was disorganized and difficult to follow, or you treated your topic with insufficient depth) with either the content or execution that detracted from your overall work significantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60 - 65%</td>
<td>Both the content and the execution of the assignment have significant problems (e.g. your writing was ungrammatical and difficult to understand and you provided almost no examples to back up your argument), such that the work did not adequately meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>55 - 59%</td>
<td>Your work was inadequate in both content and execution (e.g. your paper had no argument at all and was written without paragraphs). You did not pay attention to the assignment instructions and failed to meet the course requirements in significant ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50 - 54%</td>
<td>Your work was so far beyond the minimum requirements for the assignment (e.g. you only cite wikipedia and your topic has no argument at all) that it suggests you have not been properly pursuing your coursework and have not put a reasonable amount of work into it at all. There is nothing in your assignment that speaks to your having given serious thought to the course subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>40 - 49%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>