

Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 640

Grounded Theory, Exploration, and Beyond (Revision 3)

Delivery Mode: [Individualized Study](#) 



Credits: 3

Area of Study: Arts

Prerequisites: This course is intended to help students better prepare for the project stage of the Program, particularly those who are interested in field research, field methods, empirical research, and other applied questions. It is recommended that students contact the [MAIS Office](#) to speak with the course instructor.

Precluded: None

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences](#) 

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Notes: Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

Master of Arts-Interdisciplinary Studies 640: Grounded Theory, Exploration, and Beyond is designed to give you an introductory opportunity to produce your own, original, grounded-theory research. We hope that you will find that grounded-theory research has the potential to be an exciting creative endeavour.

What is grounded theory? Simply, it is a social scientific methodology that is designed to generate theory from the "ground"-or data-up. Therefore, it is a theory-building methodology, rather than a theory-testing one. As you will see, the methodology is fairly unique to the practice of social research. Yet, for years it has not been taken seriously, with many wondering what all the fuss is about-after all, all theory must be grounded in data, or else it just is not good social theory-it is speculative philosophy or fantasy. Because it has been misunderstood, the method of grounded theory has sometimes been seen as some sort of misguided quackery and therefore too often ignored.

However, since its inception, grounded theory has repeatedly proven its worth to many social researchers, researcher-practitioners, and those who have reviewed its results in an increasingly wide array of substantive areas. Further, grounded theory has more recently begun to spin off into exciting new hybrid forms, embracing researcher interests in participatory action research, feminism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical theory, psychoanalysis, and so on. Its potential is truly remarkable. Thus the intention of this course is to provide you with a venue for wherever you, the budding grounded theorist, would like to take the methodology-as long as your research remains true to the basic tenets of grounded theory. So carpe diem!

Ultimately, then, this will be a very practical course. Though you will need to get to know well the philosophical justifications for grounded theory and its basic characteristics, everything in this course culminates in your writing up a piece of grounded theory in a substantive area of interest to you. On first glance, this might appear a daunting prospect-there is no formula for doing this sort of thing and so, ultimately, every grounded theory exploration is a baptism by fire. But if you are an explorer at heart, you will relish this very challenge. And, when the course is over and you have finished your project, it is to be hoped that you will be able to look back on the experience of doing grounded theory and say (rather like a kid getting off a roller coaster for the first time), "Yes! That was great! I wanna do it again!"

Outline

There are three parts to this course, each lasting between four to six weeks:

1. thinking about grounded theory and getting ready to do it
2. doing grounded theory
3. writing up your grounded theory

It is important to remember that, in the end, this course is only an introduction to grounded theory methodology. Thus the aim of this course is not to have you produce a near-publishable piece of grounded theory. Instead, the goal is to give you the opportunity to explore the methodology in a personally engaging and relatively safe way that may later lead to a more extensive application.

➤ Objectives

Objectives

After completing the course, the successful student will have demonstrated:

- an understanding of the philosophical and practical underpinnings of grounded theory and exploration as a social research methodology.
- an understanding of the essential characteristics of grounded theory and exploration methodology.
- the ability to incorporate the above into the design, execution, and communication of a competent grounded theory and exploration research project.

➤ Evaluation

Evaluation


To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 per cent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies [grading system](#) [↗](#). Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.


The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.


| Activity | Weight |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Online Participation | 22% |
| Weekly progress reports | 10% |
| Journal assignments | 24% |
| Grounded theory research report | 44% |
| Total | 100% |

➤ Materials

Materials


Glaser, Barney G., & Strauss, Anselm L. (1999). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.  (Print)

Stebbins, Robert A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences* (Qualitative research methods series no. 48). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.  (Print)

Woods, Peter. (2005). *Successful writing for qualitative researchers*. London: Routledge.  (Print)





The course materials for MAIS 640: Grounded Theory, Exploration, and Beyond include the items listed below. If you find that any items are missing from your course package, please contact the Course Materials Production department at Athabasca University as soon as possible. You may call Athabasca University, toll-free, from anywhere in Canada or the United States at 1-800-788-9041 and ask to speak to someone in Course Materials Production (ext. 6366). Students in the Edmonton and Calgary dialling areas are asked to call the Learning Centres to connect with the automated attendant, and then dial the four-digit extension. You may send e-mail to cmat@athabascau.ca, or write to Course Materials Production at Tim Byrne Centre, 4001 Hwy 2 South, Athabasca AB T9S 1A4.

Course Home Page: You will find Course Information (including the Assignment File and other pertinent information) at the top of the course home page. You will also find your Study Guide presented unit by unit online. You will find your assignments and links to submit your work to your professor on the course home page.

Athabasca University Library: Students are encouraged to browse the Library's Web site to review the Library collection of journal databases, electronic journals, and digital reference tools: <http://library.athabascau.ca> 

 Important Links

Important Links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Area](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized-study counterparts.

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