





Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 640

Grounded Theory, Exploration, and Beyond (Revision 4)

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

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 and Social Sciences](#) 

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

Welcome to Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies 640: Grounded Theory, Exploration, and Beyond. This course 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 and creative endeavour.

What is grounded theory? Simply, it is a social scientific methodology that is designed to generate theory from the “ground”—or information and data—up. Therefore, it is a theory-building methodology, rather than a theory-testing one. As you will see, the methodology is unique within the practice of social research.

For years, grounded theory has been viewed with suspicion, with many wondering what all the fuss is about. After all, theory has to be grounded in data, doesn't it? Otherwise, it is just speculative philosophy or fantasy. Because of these misgivings, the method of grounded theory has sometimes been seen as misguided quackery and therefore dismissed.

Despite such misconceptions, 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. Although you will need to become comfortable with the philosophical justifications for grounded theory and its basic characteristics, everything in this course culminates in your writing a piece of grounded theory in a substantive area of interest to you. At first glance, this might appear to be a daunting prospect—there is no formula for doing this sort of thing and so, ultimately, every grounded theory exploration is a unique learning and discovery experience. But if you are an explorer at heart, we hope you will relish that experience and, when the course is over and you have finished your project, that you will look back on it and say (rather like a kid getting off a rollercoaster for the first time), “Yes! That was great! I want to do it again!”

Outline

There are three stages to this course:

- Stage I: Thinking About Grounded Theory
- Stage II: Doing Grounded Theory
- Stage III: Writing 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 might later lead to a more extensive application.


Learning outcomes

After completing MAIS 640, students will be able to:

- Explain the origins of grounded theory and its advantages and disadvantages in social science research.
- Differentiate between exploratory and confirmatory research approaches in the social sciences.

- Describe the fundamental logic of grounded theory research methods and processes.
- Incorporate the philosophical underpinnings of grounded theory and its practical methodology into the design, execution, and communication of a competent grounded theory and exploration research project.

Evaluation

To receive credit for MAIS 640, you must complete and submit all of the activities and assignments below. You must achieve a minimum grade of **C- (60 percent)**  for the course.

You will be evaluated on your understanding of the concepts presented in the course and on your ability to apply those concepts. Your final grade in the course will be based on the marks achieved for the following activities.

Activity	Weight
Online Reflections	22%
Progress Reports	10%
ePortfolio Journal Assignments	24%
Grounded Theory Research Report	44%
Total	100%

Materials

Stebbins, Robert A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences*

(Qualitative research methods series no. 48). Sage.  (Print)

Woods, Peter. (2022). *Successful writing for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.).





Routledge.  (Print)

Charmaz, Kathy. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage. 

(eText)

All other materials are available online.

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [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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View **previous revision** 
