

# Diaspora & Transnational Studies

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## **DTS300** **Qualitative and Quantitative Reasoning**

### **Instructor**

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### **Office hours**

Tuesdays, 12:30-2:30 or by appointment

### **Course description**

How do scholars make empirical claims about the world? What do we mean when we declare something to be a 'fact'? Why do we place our trust in numbers, and why do we cleave to objectivity as the goal of empirical inquiry? This course explores the histories and epistemologies that underlie qualitative and quantitative analysis, with a particular emphasis on the ways that intellectual and scholarly disciplines construct, renovate and police claims to truth. In other words, this course thinks through the reasoning that makes truth claims and statements of facts possible, and offers a critical perspective on the construction and validation of knowledge. Objectivity, in short, has a history. The explicit aim of this course is to provide students with a conceptual literacy when it comes to qualitative and quantitative reasoning.

### **Requirements**

All students will be required to attend class, to do all required reading, and to participate actively in discussions. Reading and discussion are the heart of the class, and students should not enroll unless they are able to make a strong commitment to keeping up with the readings and participating actively in discussion. In addition, the following assignments are required. They are short and rather exact writing projects, drawing on course themes and materials, and are intended to replace the standard 15 to 20-page research paper.

## Assignments

Essay 1 (max. 600 words)	Due Week 4: 29 January to 4 February 2024	25%
Essay 2 (max. 800 words)	Due Week 8: 4-10 March 2024	35%
Essay 3 (max. 1,000 words)	Due Week 12: 1-7 April 2024	40%

All three assignments are short - and in the case of the first two assignments, notably short - essays. You can find the essay prompts below.

The essays have semi-flexible due dates. Each essay is due within a week-long class period beginning at the end of one week's class meeting and spanning until the beginning of the next class meeting.

So, for example, Essay #1 is due in Week 3 of the course. Our course meeting in Week 4 is on 2 February 2023 - your essay must be submitted before the next week's meeting, on 9 February 2023 at 10:10. After that, you will be penalised 2% per day.

**If you require an extension, please get in touch earlier, rather than later. Extension requests made after the due date for an assignment will be refused. Please also be advised that because of the flexibility built into submission due dates, appeals for an extension may also be refused. Please make extension requests directly to Prof. Scanlan, from your U of T email account.**

The word limits are hard limits. You will be penalised 2% for every 100 words you exceed the limit. There is value in brevity and concision. These assignments are designed to assess the degree to which you understood the core concepts of the course. You might profitably think of the assignments as opportunities to clarify your own understanding of the course; to work out questions and arguments that we've debated in the course meetings, or that have occurred to you as you have progressed through the material.

For each assignment, you will have a choice writing prompts, based on the readings for the course to date, and the concepts explored in the lectures and discussions. You will write an essay of the required length responding to the prompt. You should not need to do additional research for the essays, but please feel free to refer to course readings as needed. If you quote a course reading, please cite it in either an in-text citation style,

such as APA style, or in a footnote citation style, such as Chicago Manual. Please note that citations and bibliography entries do not count toward the word limit.

**NB, on re-grading:** If you are unhappy with an essay grade, please be advised that no requests for re-grading will be entertained until 24 hours after you have received your mark. All requests must be made directly to Prof. Scanlan, and may result in a lower or higher grade. Revised grades cannot be challenged a second time.

Please also be advised that grade challenges must be made within two weeks of the release of grades, and must be made based on substantive issues related to the essay itself - e.g. you feel that your arguments have been misread. **Grade challenges based on the consequences of a low grade (ex. "My law school applications will not be successful unless this B is raised to an A") will not be considered, nor will grade challenges based on your own sense of perceived effort expended in completing an assignment (ex. "I worked for fifteen hours on this essay, and so my C should be raised to at least a B+").**

**Essay 1 - Due Week 4 (2 to 9 February 2023) - max. 600 words, bibliography and notes excluded.**

Please respond in a short essay of at most 600 words to one of the following prompts:

- 'Scientific findings can be both accurate *and* socially constructed.' Discuss.
- 'There is no such thing as an "objective fact."' Discuss.

**Essay 2 - Due Week 8 (9 to 16 March 2023) - max. 800 words, bibliography and notes excluded.**

Please respond in a short essay of at most 800 words to one of the following prompts:

- 'Population statistics can reinforce structural inequality.' Discuss.
- How do we know what it means to be 'healthy'?

**Essay 3 - Due Week 12 (6 to 13 April 2023) - max. 1,000 words, bibliography and notes excluded.**

Please respond in a short essay of at most 1,000 words to one of the following prompts:

- What is the 'reproduction crisis' and why does it matter?
- Explain the concept of an archival 'silence.'

### **Some notes on formatting:**

- Please do not include a title page. You can choose to give your essays a title if you would like, but please include which prompt you are responding to (the number of the prompt is sufficient).
- Quercus auto-counts your words, but please include your word count not including notes and bibliography.
- Please double-space your essays. Please indent paragraphs.
- Please use Times New Roman or Arial, 12-point.

### **Course materials**

All course readings are available on Quercus, under the 'Library Reading List' tab. Prof. Scanlan will also post slides from each lecture on the 'Modules' page just before the course meets. Any additional readings or media (all optional, but hopefully enriching!) will also be posted on the 'Modules' page.

### **Weekly readings**

#### Week 1: Introduction

Hacking, Ian. "Making Up People." *London Review of Books*, August 17, 2006.

Mackenzie, Donald. "Nuclear Missile Testing and the Social Construction of Accuracy." In *The Science Studies Reader*, edited by Mario Biagioli, 342–57. New York: Routledge, 1999.

#### Week 2: Trust the Science!

Comfort, Nathaniel. "How Science Has Shifted Our Sense of Identity." *Nature* 574, no. 7777 (October 2019): 167–70.

Jasanoff, Sheila. "Is Science Socially Constructed—And Can It Still Inform Public Policy?" *Science and Engineering Ethics* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 1996): 263–76.

### Week 3: Objectivity

Daston, Lorraine, and Peter Galison. *Objectivity*. Paperback edition. New York: Zone Books, 2010. Prologue and Chapter 1.

LaTour, Bruno, and Steve Woolgar. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press, 1986. Chapters 2 and 5.

### Week 4: Power in the Laboratory

Shapin, Steven, and Simon Schaffer. *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. Revised edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011. Chapters 1 and 2.

Pickering, Andrew. "The Mangle of Practice: Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science." *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 3 (November 1993): 559–89.

### Week 5: Population Statistics

Packard, Randall M. *A History of Global Health: Interventions into the Lives of Other Peoples*. Illustrated edition. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. Chapters 1 and 9.

Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America, With a New Preface*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. Introduction and Chapter 1.

### Week 6: Political Numbers

Paley, Julia. "Making Democracy Count: Opinion Polls and Market Surveys in the Chilean Political Transition." *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 135–64.

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Reprint edition. New York: Pantheon, 2002. Chapters 1 and 2.

#### Week 7: What is Health?

Duclos, Vincent. "Algorithmic Futures: The Life and Death of Google Flu Trends." *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6, no. 3 (October 24, 2019): 54–76.

Callahan, Alice. "Is B.M.I. a Scam?" *The New York Times*, May 18, 2021, sec. Style. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/18/style/is-bmi-a-scam.html>.

Schüll, Natasha Dow. "Data for Life: Wearable Technology and the Design of Self-Care." *BioSocieties* 11, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 317–33.

#### Week 8: The Dismal Science

Berman, Elizabeth Popp. *Thinking like an Economist: How Efficiency Replaced Equality in U.S. Public Policy*. Princeton University Press, 2022. Chapters 1 and 5.

Rodgers, Daniel T. *Age of Fracture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012. Chapter 2.

#### Week 9: Encountering the Archive

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. Chapter 3.

#### Week 10: Psychology and Replication

Baker, Monya. "1,500 Scientists Lift the Lid on Reproducibility." *Nature* 533, no. 7604 (May 1, 2016): 452–54.

Moreton, Bethany. "S'More Inequality: The Neoliberal Marshmallow and the Corporate Reform of Education." *Social Text* 32, no. 3 (120) (September 1, 2014): 29–48.

Yong, Ed. "Replication Studies: Bad Copy." *Nature* 485, no. 7398 (May 1, 2012): 298–300.

#### Week 11: Neuroscience and Policy: The 'Reading Wars' and 'Grit'

Hanford, Emily. "At a Loss for Words: How a Flawed Idea Is Teaching Millions of Kids to Be Poor Readers." *APM Reports*, August 22, 2019.  
<https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/22/whats-wrong-how-schools-teach-reading>.

Lemann, Nicholas. "The Reading Wars." *The Atlantic*, November 1997.

Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York: Scribner, 2016. Chapters 1, 2 and 10.

#### Week 12: Encountering Unthinkable Risk

McPhee, John. "Atchafalaya." *The New Yorker*, February 15, 1987.

Perrow, Charles. *Normal Accidents: Living with High Risk Technologies*. Revised edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 3.