THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
MSSW Program

SW 519: Social Work Research
Section 001
(3 credit hours)
FALL 2019

Instructor: Dr. S. L. Bowie, Professor
Office: 421 Henson Hall
Phone: (865) 974-0692
E-mail: sbowie@utk.edu

Class Time: Monday, 9 AM – 12 Noon
Class Location: Rm 322 Henson Hall
Office Hours: Mon, 12:15-1:00, and Thur, 11:15-12 Noon

Code of Conduct
It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct Code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook (www.csw.utk.edu). Students are also expected to sign and adhere to the Social Work Field Placement Code of Conduct.

The Honor Statement
An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity (Hilltopics).

University Civility Statement
Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: http://civility.utk.edu/

Disability
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact The University of Tennessee, Knoxville Student Disability Services Office at 100 Dunford Hall (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Dimensions of Diversity
The College of Social Work and the University of Tennessee welcome and honor all people. In accordance with the U.S. National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement), “the dimensions of diversity are
understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, mental or physical disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, marital status, national origin, political ideology, race, regionality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. The College values intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge, and academic freedom and integrity. “A person’s diverse life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement). The College of Social Work promotes social justice and social change, and strives to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

**Course Description**

This is a required Foundation course. This course is designed to help students gain an understanding of and appreciation for the use of research as a tool for professional evidence-based practice with and on behalf of at-risk populations and to evaluate programs and practices. Students are introduced to the concepts and skills underlying a systematic approach to social work research, including basic research terminology, the scientific method in social work, the value of research in social work, research ethics and the social work value base, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and relevant information and computer technologies.

**Course Rationale**

Social workers must be critical consumers of research and possess the knowledge of research and its method in order to use research as a tool for competent and accountable evidence-based practice with and on behalf of at-risk populations. Toward that end, it is essential that social workers have the foundation knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to formulate questions about practice and policy, access and critically appraise the research literature available to answer such questions, and to prepare for more advanced methods used to evaluate programs and practices.

**Course Competencies**

By the completion of this course, the students are expected to be able to demonstrate:

1. Recognize and explain differences between an evidence-based helping professional and one guided by tradition, authority, dogma, and speculation.  
   4.1 (Content: role, history, knowledge acquisition, and current status of research in social work; basic assumptions, concepts, foundations, and limitations of the traditional scientific approach and challenges to these foundations; principles, logic, limitations, and alternative conceptualizations of qualitative and quantitative research designs);

2. Use technology ethically and appropriately to access relevant data bases for research evidence to support or refute social work practice, program and policy decisions. 4.2, 1.4 (Content: evidence based practice, purpose of a literature review, how to use technology to appropriately access data bases and other sources of literature, and assess the quality, credibility and limitations of available literature including research gained from electronic sources; use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy and service delivery)

3. Critically evaluate the methodological rigor of different kinds of qualitative and quantitative research and use this information to prioritize knowledge into a hierarchy of evidence from the most to the least rigorous. 4.2, 4.3 (Content: research questions/hypotheses, practice problems and transitions/translations to research questions and hypotheses from these
principles and methods of sampling, measurement, design; descriptive and inferential statistics; and framework for evaluating research studies).

4. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research in reference to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, family structure, relational status, national origin, age and religion within the context of social, economic and environmental justice 4.2 (Content: principles and methods of sampling, measurement, and design; data interpretation; and culturally competency research)

5. Prepare, enter, and manipulate data using a spreadsheet or other software programs. 4.1, 1.4 (Content: Level of measurement, hypothesis testing, compute and interpret basic descriptive and inferential statistics; and selecting statistical tests)

6. Select and apply appropriate empirical techniques to evaluate process and outcomes with program evaluation and single client systems. Assess the utility of the research to inform practices and programs 4.3 (Content: case level research designs; univariate and bivariate statistics)

7. Articulate the core values and ethical standards of the social work profession (based on the NASW Code of Ethics, the NASW & ASWB Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice and the International Federation of Social Work Code of Ethics) to research in settings with diverse constituencies across multiple systems ensuring that the conduct, evaluation, dissemination and implementation of research using technological approaches do so in a manner that ensures ethical credibility and informed consent of the participant. 1.1, 1.4 (Content: NASW code of ethics, historical overview of ethics in research, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and cultural competent research)

8. Effectively communicate empirically-based knowledge (or lack thereof) and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. 4.2, 4.3 (Content: writing a research report, APA style, research proposal components; framework for evaluation of research studies).

**Required Textbooks:**


**Illustrative Social Work Research Publications:**


**Course Structure and Organization of Learning Modules.**

The class will meet once per week from 9:00 AM – 12 noon. Course content will be derived from assigned readings, interactive lecturettes, and supplemental power point class presentations by the professor. The Power Point slides will include content from the course textbook (Rubin & Babbie, 2017), the bibliography, as well as current content on research methodology from the literature. Students should feel free to use the bibliography provided (at the end of the syllabus) or other scholarly literature on your own volition as dictated by your needs.

Each class period will be structured into two “learning modules” that loosely represent compartmentalized instructional segments on course content. *The professor may adjust the instructional schedule or content if situations dictate such a need.* The duration of each course Learning Module is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Module I:</th>
<th>9:00 - 10:30</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>10:30 – 10:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Module 2:</td>
<td>10:40 – 12 noon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:**

The final grade in the class will be based upon the following criterion and their corresponding grade percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event(s)</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Date/Due</th>
<th>Week #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRB Human Subjects Certification</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology Critique</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS Lab Assignment #1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Internal designation*
Attendance Policy:

Students are not expected to miss any classes. The consequences may be the final course grade being lowered one letter grade. Emergencies, illness, accidents and inclement weather do occur, and you may need to be late or be absent sometime during the semester. The professor must be notified in a timely fashion, and students should be prepared to verify, if requested.

Major Course Assignment and Examination Detail:

Note: All course assignments indicate course competencies they address as well as specific “Dimensions of Competency” (DOC) they target, i.e., Knowledge (KN), values (VL), Skills (SK), or Cognitive/Affective Processes (CA).

IRB Human Subjects Certification (10% of final grade). Course Competencies: 1, 7 DOC: KN, VL

Students are required to take the web-based course on human subjects’ research. This will facilitate the understanding of the ethical issues related to research with diverse groups across multiple systems. The course will provide the basic level of knowledge required for engaging in research that involves human subjects. After completing the 3-hour tutorial video, you will be given a certificate of completion. A copy of the printed certificate must be submitted to the instructor. The deadline is September 23 (Week #6). You are strongly encouraged to do the assignment sooner rather than later. The course can be accessed at http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php. More details will be provided in class.

Research Methodology Critique (10% of final grade). Course Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4 DOC: KN, CA

Students are responsible for completing a Research Methodology Critique (RMC). The RMC is due on September 30 (week #7). The RMC will be a written assessment and critique of an empirical, peer-reviewed social work scholarly journal. Students will receive detailed assignment specifications during the first class sessions, but the RMC will generally report on the standard elements of the Scientific Method in the article and outcomes of the study.

A note on our expectations regarding writing assignments and term papers in the College of Social Work: The University of Tennessee, Knoxville is the “Flagship” University in the state, and we expect students in the College of Social Work to take writing assignments very seriously.

College-level work requires an ability to synthesize one’s experience and knowledge into an explanation that demonstrates an understanding of the course material. Your papers are
expected to be organized, succinct in conceptualization and syntax, and grammatically correct. Even when using spell-check technology, it is imperative that you proofread your work. Your final paper is expected to be well-written and error-free.

The usage of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)(6th ed.) format including the use of headings/subheadings, reference list, and title page is expected to be used as a guide for writing and citing sources. The APA formatting will be closely evaluated for accuracy, and proper APA style will carry significant weight in the final term paper grade. Grading criteria for term papers or writing assignments will include, but not be limited to:

- Adherence to assignment specifications;
- Quality and clarity of writing and organization;
- Comprehensiveness;
- Level of analysis and understanding of course content applied;
- The extent to which course concepts, discussion and readings are appropriately reflected and integrated into the writing;
- Submission of assignments on the dates specified within the guidelines provided, and,
- Extent of adherence to APA writing rules.

Students who may have writing issues or want to improve their writing should consult the UTK writing center in a timely manner.

**Two SPSS Lab Assignments (30% of final grade).** Course Competencies: 4, 5, 6  
DOC: KN, SK, CA

The SPSS “Lab” assignments will provide students with focused, “hands on” instruction on survey construction, data collection and analysis, and data interpretation, as well as real data for analysis. This assignment integrates statistical concepts, univariate and bivariate research questions and concepts, individually, and will submit a written report on findings, which will include univariate and bivariate research questions, SPSS outputs, and statistical analysis summaries. Additional assignment detail will be provided in class. Lab exercise #1 is on October 14 (Week #9), and Lab exercise #2 is on October 21 (Week #10). Additional details will be provided by the instructor.

**Midterm Examination (25% of final grade).** Course Competencies: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7  
DOC: KN, VL, CA

Students will take the midterm examination on October 28 (Week 11). The exam will consist of content from assigned readings, class discussions, and additional material that may be covered by the instructor. Students are strongly encouraged to keep up with the very reasonable reading assignments to avoid getting behind and creating unnecessary stress. More detail will be provided in class.

**Research Proposal and Oral defense (RPOD) (25% of final grade).** Course Competencies: 2, 3, 7, 8  
DOC: KN, SK, CA

The RPOD (in-class) oral presentations and defense begins on November 19 (Week #14) and continues through December 2 (Week #16). The RPOD is designed to establish a working understanding and rational foundation for future research endeavors. The RPOD will require students to identify a specific problem in the social work arena, and to develop an empirical
research proposal to address the identified problem. **This assignment will require individual students to develop and submit detailed research proposals that will be presented (and defended) to the class.** Detailed specifications will be provided in class.

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**Grading Scale**

The following grading scale will be used for final course grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>Very Good – Student consistently meets and occasionally exceeds normal expectations for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>Good – Student consistently meets normal expectations for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Average – There is unevenness in grasping course content. Student is inconsistent in meeting the normal expectations for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Poor - There is a lack of understanding of course content. Student does not meet course expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 69</td>
<td>Very Poor – There is a lack of attendance or incomplete or unacceptable assignments. Course expectations are not met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**SEMESTER TIMETABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS* (*Subject to modification)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week #1</td>
<td>NO CLASS, UTK semester begins August 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week #2, Aug 26</td>
<td>– Student/Instructor introductions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Overview of course syllabus, class protocols, instructor expectations, and assignment/grading specifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Research methods, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Introduction to scientific inquiry and the Scientific Method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Applied research and real-world examples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 1, “Why Study Research?”

__________________________, Chapter 2, “Evidence-based Practice”

*Internal designation*
Course Competencies: #1, #6

Week #3, Sept 2
LABOR DAY HOLIDAY -- NO UTK CLASSES TODAY

Week #4, Sept 10
- Social work research: Process and phases.
- The role of theory, logic, and reasoning.
- Prediction and explanation in research.
- Institutional Review Boards – Purpose and function.
- Politics, ethnicity, and research.
- Issues related to cultural competence in research.

REQUIRED READINGS:

-Chapter 5, “Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research”
-Chapter 6, “Culturally-Competent Research”
 Appendix A, “Using the Library”

Course Competencies: #2, #4, #7

Week #5, Sept 16
- Why conduct social work research?
- Topic selection and refining research questions.
- The literature review: Foundation of good research.
- The dimension of TIME in research.
- Quantitative versus qualitative research.
- Reliability and validity in research.
- Variables in social work research.
- Types of variables.
- Operational definitions in research.
- Use of behavioral rating scales in research.
- Levels of measurement in research and why this is important.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Chapter 8, “Conceptualization in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry”
Chapter 9, “Measurement”

Course Competencies: #2, #3, #4, #6
Week #6, Sept 23  
*** MON, SEPT 23 -- HUMAN SUBJECTS CERTIFICATION DUE TODAY ***
DOC: KN, VL

- Data collection guidelines, instruments, and construction.
- Introduction to sampling in research.
- Probability and non-probability sampling.
- Survey research protocols.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

__________________, Chapter 15, “Sampling”
__________________, Chapter 16, “Survey Research”

**Course Competencies: #3, #4**

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Week #7, Sept 30

*** RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CRITIQUE DUE TODAY, OCT 30 ***
DOC: KN, CA

- Analyzing existing data analysis strategies.
- Secondary data analysis.
- Qualitative research and analysis Strategies.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 17, “Analyzing Existing Data: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods”
__________________, Chapter 18, “Qualitative Methods: General Principles”
__________________, Chapter 19, “Qualitative Methods: Specific Methods”

**Course Competencies: #2, #3, #4**

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Week #8, Oct 7

- Univariate data analysis.
- Bivariate data analysis.
- Multivariate data analysis.
- Correlations: Strength of relationships between variables.
- The idea of statistical significance.
**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 21, “Descriptive Data Analysis”
__________________, Chapter 22, “Inferential Data Analysis”

Course Competencies: #5

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**Week #9, Oct 14**

**INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USING SPSS**

**Statistics Lab Session #1**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 21, “Descriptive Data Analysis”
__________________, Chapter 22, “Inferential Data Analysis”

Course Competencies: #2, #3, #5 DOC: KN, SK, CA

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**Week #10, Oct 21**

**INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USING SPSS, Cont.**

**Statistics Lab Session #2**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 21, “Descriptive Data Analysis”
__________________, Chapter 22, “Inferential Data Analysis”

Course Competencies: #2, #3, #5 DOC: KN, SK, CA

*** MIDTERM EXAMINATION REVIEW ***

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**Week #11, Oct 28**

*** MIDTERM EXAMINATION TODAY ***

DOC: KN, VL, CA
Week #12, Nov 4

- The logic of causality.
- Pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs.
- Internal and external validity.
- Threats to validity in research.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Rubin & Babbie (2017), Chapter 11, “Causal Inference and Experimental Designs”
________________________, Chapter 12, “Quasi-Experimental Designs

Course Competencies: #1, #3, #4, #6

Week #13, Nov 11

- Overview of single subject designs and protocols.
- Historical perspectives, processes, and types of program evaluation.
- Mechanics of research proposal-writing.

REQUIRED READINGS:

________________________, Chapter 14, “Program Evaluation”
________________________, Chapter 23, “Writing Research Proposals and Reports”

Course Competencies: #1, #3, #4, #5

Week #14, Nov 18

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ORAL DEFENSE (RPOD)

Day One of Three

Course Competencies: #1, #2, #3, 4, #7, #8
Week #15, Nov 25

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: RESEARCH PROPOSAL
AND ORAL DEFENSE (RPOD)  
DOC: KN, SK, CA

Day Two of Three

Course Competencies: #1, #2, #3, #4, #7, #8

Week #16, Dec 2  
(FINAL CLASS SESSION)

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: RESEARCH PROPOSAL
AND ORAL DEFENSE (RPOD)  
DOC: KN, SK, CA

Day Three of Three

Course Competencies: #1, #2, #3, #4, #7, #8

SELECTED RESEARCH METHODS BIBLIOGRAPHY


