**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE**
**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**SW 519 - Foundation Research**
**3 credit hours**
**Section 301**
**Summer 2019**

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**Office Hours:** Virtual office hours are Mondays @ 12pm-1pm (Zoom link on Canvas site)

**NOTE:** This online course is both **synchronous** (requires you to log in to a virtual classroom at a specified time) and **asynchronous** (does not require you to log in to a virtual classroom at a specified time)

> **Live Online (synchronous) Class Times:**
> June 3, June 17, & July 1,  from 6pm-7pm (Central Standard Time)

**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. Or email them at: sds@utk.edu. 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/hopotheses, practice problems and transitions/translations to research questions and hypotheses from these practice problems) 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).

## Basic Needs Security
Facing challenges to accessing basic needs can make learning stressful. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the UTK Dean of Students for support. You can email the Dean of Students at dos@utk.edu or call 865-974-HELP for assistance. Furthermore, please notify the professor at mcgarity@utk.edu if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him to provide any resources that he may possess.

## Attendance Policy
Attendance will affect grades in this course. Any student missing more than one live online class will need to contact the instructor to discuss implications, regardless of the circumstances that led to the absence. Students who miss more than two live online classes may be assigned a failing grade in this course. If this rare circumstance should occur, the instructor will consult with the MSSW Program Director regarding failing the student on the basis of excessive absences. The decision of the instructor in consultation with the MSSW Program Director shall be final.

## Grading Scale
A = 95-100 (Superior performance, exceeds expectations)
B+ = 90-94 (Better than satisfactory performance)
B = 85-89 (Satisfactory performance, meets expectations)
C+ = 80-84 (Less than satisfactory performance)
C = 73-79 (Performance well below the standard expected of graduate students)
D = 66-72
F = <66

Final grades in this course are based on the number of points you earn of 100 points available:

| | |
|---|---|
| Attendance in live online classes, participation, and exercises | Up to 3 pts per class X 3 online sessions = 9 pts |
| Practice Decision Assignment (June 7) | 11pts |
| Tests (June 14 & July 1) | 15 pts each X 2 tests = 30 pts |
| Literature Review Table (June 17) | 20 pts |
| Data Analysis Project (June 21) | 20 pts |
| Presentation of Research Proposal (July 1) | 10 pts |

**<u>Missing/Late Assignments</u>**
As a budding professional, it is up to you to submit your assignments on time. Unless prior arrangements are made with the professor, 10% of the total maximum points will be deducted for each day an assignment is late (e.g., if an assignment is submitted two days late, 20% of the earnable points will be deducted from the final assignment grade). Submitting an assignment more than one week late could result in no credit.

**<u>Required Textbook</u>**
Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2016). *Empowerment series: Research methods for social work.* Cengage Learning.

**<u>Required Software</u>**
Each student will be required to use Microsoft Excel for one assignment in this course. This program can be downloaded for free from the University of Tennessee.

**<u>Assignment Descriptions</u>**

**1. PRACTICE DECISION ASSIGNMENT: <u>Due on Canvas by June 7</u>**
*(Competencies 1 & 7; Dimensions: Values, Knowledge; Cognitive and Affective Processes)*

**Purpose:** In this assignment, you will have a beginning-level opportunity to use your critical thinking and practice experiences to inform and communicate professional judgments. This assignment will help you prepare for engaging in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

In social work practice we must often make decisions quickly, sometimes with limited background information. Consequently, we will occasionally make errors or think of better ways to handle a situation after the fact.

Sometimes these errors are influenced by an over-reliance on tradition or authority. In other circumstances, the flaws in our practice decisions or actions reflect an error in human inquiry: inaccurate observation, overgeneralization, selective observation, or ego involvement in understanding.

**Directions**: Think of a practice decision that you have made or a situation to which you responded in a social work, human service, or social justice organization that was flawed. Alternately, you can pick a practice decision that someone else made or a practice situation they handled that could have been handled better.

- Describe the decision or the way that the situation was handled.
- Briefly discuss how the situation was related to one or more of the problems listed above.

- Explain how the use of a scientific approach, critical thinking skills, and/or the empirical literature may have improved the practice experience.
- This written assignment should be no more than 2 typed pages, double spaced. Carefully edit your paper to reflect graduate level writing, including attention to grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style.

**2. TEST ONE: <u>Complete Canvas by June 14</u>**
*(Competencies 1, 3, 4, & 7; Dimensions: Knowledge; Cognitive and Affective Processes; Values)*
**Purpose:** This exam will contain content covered in weeks 1 through 2.

**3. LITERATURE REVIEW TABLE: <u>Due on Canvas by June 17</u>**
*(Competencies 2, 3, 4, & 8; Dimensions: Knowledge, Cognitive and Affective Processes; Skill)*

**Purpose:** In this assignment you will: (1) further explore practice interests to inform the development of research questions and (2) critically analyze published research as a guide to social work practice. This assignment is intended to help you develop knowledge and build skills in using existing research evidence to inform your social work practice. More specifically, by completing this assignment, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities in:

- Understanding the scientific process and the use of scientific language in applied social science, as well as a basic understanding of how to use research to inform and guide social work practice.
- Understanding methods used in inquiry related to both the development and testing of theory.
- Formulating research questions that address social work practice and/or the social and economic well-being of clients and communities, and select appropriate methods given those questions.
- Reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing published research, including the ability to identify, compare, and contrast qualitative and quantitative designs and methods.
- Identifying gaps in the knowledge base and critically analyzing the use of practice wisdom to inform future research questions and studies to help fill those gaps.

**Directions:**

1. Select an area of interest in social work practice and develop a research question related to your interest area. Your question may be focused on a specific intervention, e.g. What treatment modalities effectively reduce depressive symptoms in older adults? Or, you may chose to compare two interventions you already know about, e.g. Is permanent supportive housing more cost effective than emergency shelters for families experiencing homelessness? <u>Email me well in advance of the assignment due date with your research question. This assignment cannot be completed without approval of the research question.</u>

2.  Review the empirical literature in your area of interest that addresses your question and has been published in peer-reviewed journals. Focus on studies that have been published in the past five years, include both qualitative and quantitative research, and take an interdisciplinary approach by reviewing research in social work as well as related fields.
3.  Create an excel spreadsheet with the following headings across the top row. APA Citation, Research Design, Data, Measures, Sample, Analyses, Results, Strengths, and Limitations. As you review the research in your chosen area, fill in the spreadsheet. Enter 10-15 articles.
4.  In a word document, provide a brief summary of "what we know" from the research you reviewed. Then identify what we don't know on the basis of the empirical literature to date. For example, does the research you reviewed adequately answer the research question(s) you formulated earlier in this assignment? For some groups of people or everyone? In one place or many places? Under what conditions? What additional studies need to be planned to further our knowledge in your area of interest? This should adhere to APA style, including citations. It should be no longer than two pages.

**4. DATA ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT: Due on Canvas by June 21**
*(Competencies 4, 5, & 6; Dimensions: Values, Knowledge; Cognitive and Affective Processes)*

This assignment requires you to download a dataset and conduct a descriptive and inferential analysis (t-test) using the Data Tools function in Excel. For this assignment, you will use the practice Excel file on Canvas titled "Diversity Training."

Imagine you are working as a director of an agency and you want to implement a new diversity training for staff. Your friend Sally is getting her Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee and she just developed a diversity training that you want to use, but she does not know if it works. Because you want to find out if the training is effective, you develop an evaluation plan. Your plan includes having the staff complete a diversity knowledge test before and after the training, and then comparing the scores.

After downloading the "Diversity Training" practice Excel file, conduct the following analyses:
1.  Descriptives of the sample (i.e., gender, race, education); and
2.  A t-test comparing the diversity knowledge test scores (i.e., diversity 1 and diversity 2) before and after the training.

After running these analyses, answer the following questions in a 2-page brief:

1.  Provide a short introduction describing the diversity training and evaluation plan;
2.  Report the descriptive characteristics of the sample (e.g., what percentage are men/women? what percentage are white/non-white? what's the education levels of staff?)

3. Report the t-test results (including p-values) and discuss how the test scores changed before/after the diversity;
4. Discuss whether or not your analysis offers evidence on the efficacy of the diversity training;
5. Discuss what other relationships would be interesting to examine if you had better data.

**5. TEST TWO: <u>Complete On Canvas by July 1</u>**
*(Competencies 5 & 6; Dimensions: Knowledge; Skill)*

**Purpose:** This exam will contain content covered in weeks 3 through 5.

**6. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL: <u>Due in Online Class on July 1</u>**
*(Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, & 8; Dimensions: Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes; V alues)*

**Purpose:** To help you think through and present each aspect of conducting research, and to give you an opportunity to enhance your professional presentation knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Directions:** This assignment builds on the previous "Literature Review Table" assignment. First, you will prepare an outline that includes: (a) your operationally defined research question and a brief summary of the current research on this topic, pointing out the current gaps in the knowledgebase, (b) a plan for a study you have designed to address this gap. This will include methodology: design, sample, data collection, measurement, and an analytic plan.

You will briefly present your research proposal. For this assignment, you will earn points based on the accuracy of information and quality of the proposal. This presentation is to be no longer than 2 minutes.

## <u>Course Calendar</u>

**\*\*\*Read all class material BEFORE the live online classes\*\*\***

| Date/Format | Topic | Reading/Assignment |
|---|---|---|
| June 3 (Live online) | Introduction to social work research, scientific method, evidence-based social work practice, research design and methods | Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4<br><br>Schoeder, D.A., Johnson, D.E. & Jensen, T.D. (2012). Reading research reports: A brief introduction. In T.C. Lomand, ed., *Social science research: A cross section of journal articles for discussion and* |

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| | | *evaluation*, 7th ed, pp. 254-257. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.<br><br>Grabe, S., Grose, R. G., & Dutt, A. (2014). Women's land ownership and relationship power: A mixed methods approach to understanding structural inequities and violence against women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1177/0361684314533485<br><br>***ASSIGNMENT 1 (PRACTICE DECISION) DUE June 7** |
| June 10 | Ethical issues, and cultural compentency in research, problem formulation, and measurement. | Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9<br><br>Jackson, K.F. (2010). Ethical considerations in social work research with multiracial individuals. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, 7*(1), 10 pps.<br><br>***ASSIGNMENT 2 (TEST ONE) COMPLETE BY JUNE 14** |
| June 17 (Live online) | Survey reseach, sampling, experiments, quasi-experiments, single-case designs | Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13<br><br>Gibelman, M. & Sweifach, J. (2008). Acting on our values: Do social workers volunteer? *Social Work, 53*(1), 53-65.<br><br>***ASSIGNMENT 3 (LIT REVIEW TABLE) DUE ON JUNE 17***ASSIGNMENT 4 (DATA ANALYSIS) DUE JUNE 21** |
| June 24 | Qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and program evaluation | Rubin and Babbie, Chapters 14, 15, 16, 17, 18<br><br>Padgett, Deborah. (1998). Does the glove really fit? Qualitative research and clinical social work practice. *Social Work, 43*(4), 373-381.<br><br>***ASSIGNMENT 5 (TEST TWO) COMPLETE BY JUNE 27** |

| July 1 (Live online) | Research proposal presentations | ***ASSIGNMENT 6 (RESEARCH PROPOSAL & PRESENTATION) |