

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

**SW 506 SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH
Spring 2003**

*Instructor: Marlys Staudt, Ph.D.
Class time: 9:02-12:05 Mondays*

*Office: 202 Henson Hall
Phone: 974-7502
E-mail: mstaudt@utk.edu*

Office hours: 8-9 Mondays and Thursdays and by appointment

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)

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*).

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 Office of Disability Services. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Course Description

This course focuses on knowledge and practice of social scientific research philosophies and methodologies with respect to their evolution and application to the field of social work and the systematic evaluation of practice. It covers the history and philosophies of science; ethics of research practice; and the research process including problem formulation, research design, instrument use and construction; data collection, analysis and reporting, and evaluation and utilization of research.

Rationale

Social workers must be provided with the knowledge of research and its methods in order to conduct research for informed, effective, and accountable practice within the framework of research ethics. Toward that end, it is essential that social workers have the foundation knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to conduct research as well as retrieve and critically evaluate the existing research literature. It is also important that such a preparation for research practice be reinforced with the use of appropriate statistical procedures and computer technology. This course trains students to meet the increasing demands to develop knowledge and to demonstrate practice effectiveness

with the help of such procedures and technology, in a responsible and ethical manner. It further aims to prepare students for more advanced research methods for clinical as well as management, community, and policy practice.

Objectives

By completion of this course, students are expected to be able to demonstrate (through course activities, assignments and/or exams):

1. Understand the role, history, and current status of research in social work theory and practice;
2. Understanding of how to conduct research within the ethical guidelines of the profession
3. Understand and know how to avoid potential biases in research with minority and disadvantaged groups;
4. Understand and be able to apply the major stages of the research process;
5. Understand the basic assumptions, concepts, foundations, and limitations of the traditional scientific approach and challenges to these foundations;
6. Know how to gain access to substantive and methodological research literature;
7. Understand the principles, logic, limitations, and alternative conceptualizations of qualitative and quantitative research designs;
8. Understand basic evaluation designs for clinical as well as program management, community, and policy practice;
9. Understand and be able to apply basic principles and methods of sampling;
10. Understand basic principles and limitations of measurement;
11. Select and use basic measurement methods for clinical as well as program management, community, and policy practice;
12. Prepare, enter, and manipulate data using a microcomputer;
13. Interpret and compute basic descriptive statistics using a microcomputer;
14. Understand basic principles of inferential statistics;
15. Compute basic inferential statistics using a microcomputer;
16. Critically formulate and interpret research conclusions;
17. Write a research report using proper form and style.
18. Understand beginning level applications of systematic evaluation of practice.

TEXT

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2001). Research methods for social work (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth /Thomson Learning.

Other required readings are on reserve in Hodges library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to:

- 1) Attend all class sessions,
- 2) Participate in class discussion and exercises,
- 3) Complete all assignments on time,
- 4) Complete all quizzes and exams,
- 5) Notify the instructor in a timely manner if extraordinary circumstances interfere with completion of course requirements,
- 6) If any student has a learning or other disability that requires specific learning needs or teaching modifications, please discuss with me early on in the semester.

Major assignments will be as follows :

1. Students will complete a mid-term in-class exam on March 10th at 10 am. Students will have two hours to complete the exam. It is worth 25% of the grade.
2. Students will complete four quizzes. Each is worth 5% of the grade. Twenty percent of the final grade is based on the four quizzes. They will be given on 2/10, 2/24, 4/14, and 4/28 at the beginning of class. Students will have about 15 to 20 minutes to complete these. No extra time will be given if students are late to class.
3. Students will complete an assignment that requires data entry and analysis and reporting the findings. The assignment will be distributed after spring break and is due on May 2. It is worth 20% of the grade.
4. Students will develop a research proposal. We will talk about this early in the semester. See below for an outline of the research proposal. It is worth 25% of the grade. It is due on March 31.
5. Students will be asked to report on the articles that are assigned for readings. Ten percent of the grade is based on the student's willingness to volunteer and participate in this activity, as well as overall participation in class, including attendance, being on time, and handing in assignments on time.

The outline for the research proposal is as follows:

Introduction

This section will include a description of the problem, a review of the literature, knowledge gaps, the research questions/hypotheses (which should flow from the current gaps in knowledge).

- introduce the problem and its significance
- develop the background
- state purpose and rationale of proposed study

Method

This section should describe how you propose to conduct the study. Basically it will tell the reader what you propose and how you propose to do it.

- description of the subjects (who will participate, how many will participate, how will they be recruited, methods used to protect human subjects)
- description of the measures used (what measures will be used, what are their reliability and validity, when and how will measures be taken)
- detailed description of the design and procedures

Data analyses

--how do you propose to analyze the data, specifically what statistical tests will you use to answer the research question(s) and/or test the hypotheses

Strengths and limitations

- what are the strengths and limitations of the proposed study
- in what ways does the knowledge to be gained from the study justify its costs and potential risks to human subjects

Students's performance will be evaluated and final grades assigned according to the following criteria:

- 94-100 A
- 90-93 B+
- 83-89 B
- 79-82 C+
- 73-78 C
- 69-72 D+
- 68 and lower- D

NO incompletes will be given except in extraordinary situations. If you are faced with an unexpected personal or family situation that interferes with timely completion of the assignments and course work, please contact me as soon as possible.

COURSE OUTLINE

1/13, Session 1: Introduction to the course; the scientific method; relationship between research and practice; introduction to the research process and basic terminology.

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 1 "Scientific inquiry and social work"
Chapter 2 "Philosophical issues in science and research"

Barber, J. G. (1996). Science and social work: Are they compatible? Research on Social Work Practice, 6, 379-388.

1/20, MLK Holiday

1/27, Session 2: Theory and conceptualization; Conducting Literature Reviews

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 3 “Theory and research”
Appendix A “Using the Library”

2/3, Session 3: Problem Formulation: Moving from Concepts to Operationalization

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 5 “Problem Formulation”
Chapter 6 “Conceptualization and Operationalization”

2/10, Session 4: **QUIZ**

Measurement

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 7 “Measurement”
Chapter 8 “Constructing Measurement Instruments”

2/17, Session 5: Ethical Issues

Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 4 “The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research”

In-Class Video: The Deadly Deception

2/24, Session 6: **QUIZ**

Sampling

Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 9 “The logic of sampling”

Land, H. & Hudson, S. (1997). Methodological considerations in surveying Latina AIDS caregivers: Issues in sampling and measurement. Social Work Research, 21, 233-246.

3/3, Session 7: Group designs and Single system designs

Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 10, “Causal inference and group designs”
Chapter 11, “Single-case evaluation designs”

Hepler, J. B. (1994). Evaluating the effectiveness of a social skills program for preadolescents. Research on Social Work Practice, 4, 411-435.

Mancoske, R. J., Standifer, D., & Cauley, C. (1994). The effectiveness of brief counseling services for battered women. Research on Social Work Practice, 4, 53-63.

Jensen, C. (1994). Psychosocial treatment of depression in women: Nine single-subject evaluations. Research on Social Work Practice, 4, 267-282.

3/10, Session 8: **Mid-term Exam**

3/17: Spring Break

3/24, Session 9: Survey Research and Qualitative Research

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 12 “Survey Research”
Chapter 13, “Qualitative Research Methods”

Carrese, J. A. & Rhodes, L. A. (1995). Western bioethics on the Navajo reservation: Benefit or harm? Journal of the American Medical Association, 274, 826-829.

Delgado, B. M. & Ford, L. (1998). Parental perceptions of child development among low-income Mexican American families. Journal of Child and Family Studies, 7, 469-481.

Hughes, M. (1998). Turning points in the lives of young inner-city men forgoing destructive criminal behaviors: A qualitative study. Social Work Research, 20, 105-111.

3/31, Session 10: Data entry and cleaning LAB SESSION

Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 15 “Processing data”

4/7, Session 11: Univariate and Descriptive Statistics LAB SESSION

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 16 “Interpreting Descriptive Statistics and Tables”

4/14, Session 12: **QUIZ**

Statistical Significance And Tests of Statistical Significance (Chisquare, Correlation, T-test, ANOVA)

Rubin and Babbie: Chapter 17, "Inferential Data Analysis"

Weinbach, R. W. (1989). When is statistical significance meaningful? A practice perspective. Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 16, 31-37.

4/21, Session 13: LAB SESSION

4/28, Session 14: **QUIZ**
Course evaluations
LAB SESSION