

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

BSSW Program Spring 2004

SW 310 - Social Work
Research (3 credit hours)
T/Th 2:10-3:25 p.m.
Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 - 3:00PM,
and by appointment

Instructor: William Nugent, Ph.D.
209 Henson Hall
Office: 974-3802
Home: 992-9434
Email: wnugent@utk.edu

Program Mission

The BSSW program at the University of Tennessee exists to fulfill a need for disciplined, highly educated and trained generalist social workers to help people improve their social functioning in a technologically complex, culturally diverse, and rapidly changing society. There is a focus on the reciprocal relationships between persons and their environments. Social workers are doers; they are problem-solvers who are able to intervene in multiple-level systems and perform various professional roles. Their actions are guided and informed by a broad knowledge-base, code of ethics, and professional values. Social workers are educated and trained to do things right as well as to do the right thing.

The mission of the BSSW Program is to develop generalist social workers who are strategic thinkers, life-long learners and opinion shapers. The knowledge-base, skills, and values necessary for generalist practice are taught in an environment that fosters professional development and prepares students for critical thinking throughout their careers. We are dedicated to preparing practitioners for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Since the amount of knowledge doubles approximately every five years, what is taught today may soon be obsolete. Our challenge, therefore, lies in the on-going development and implementation of a curriculum that prepares and energizes students for generalist practice today and in the future.

Program Goals

Provision of education and training that enable students to become generalist social work practitioners who:

- 1) are committed to advancing social and economic justice and the principles, values, and ethics that guide the social work profession;
- 2) are grounded in systems theory and operate within a person-in-the-environment framework;
- 3) use the problem-solving process to intervene in multiple-level client systems;
- 4) have an understanding of human diversity and special populations that informs practice interventions;
- 5) use critical thinking, evaluative, and leadership skills to address the needs of a complex, changing society; and
- 6) are committed to continuous development of professional self.

Course Rationale

Social Work 310 is an introductory course in research methodology. This course provides the student with an introduction to research strategies used to evaluate practice and/or social service delivery. It attempts to develop the critical and analytical skills needed to evaluate social work literature and conduct original research.

Course Description

The objectives of this course are to provide students the opportunities and environment to understand and analyze:

1. the role of social scientific research in the development of knowledge for the profession of social work.
2. the role of program evaluation in the development of social work practice,
3. the basic building blocks of research design,
4. the purpose for and application of qualitative or quantitative social work research methods,
5. the relationship between research and social work practice,
6. the political and ethical issues related to social work research with special concerns for specific groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, women and gay and lesbian clients,
7. current social work literature which report the results of research studies, and
8. the evaluation of generalist practice.

Behavioral Objectives

By the end of the term, students should be able to do the following:

1. discuss the role of social scientific research in developing knowledge for the profession of social work,
2. define and identify the basic building blocks of research: concepts, variables, hypotheses, theories,
3. discuss the relationship between program evaluation and social work practice,
4. define and distinguish among the levels of measurement, and discuss the assessment of reliability and validity in measurement,
5. specify the distinguishing characteristics of basic types of probability and nonprobability sampling designs,
6. for the following research methods, indicate the primary purposes, distinguishing characteristics, principal designs, and major strengths and weaknesses: experiments, surveys, field research, single subject designs, and secondary analysis. For each method, give an example of a social work problem or question which could be appropriately addressed by that method,
7. for a given research problem devise and appropriate design, give a rationale for the choice of design, and indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the design for the particular research question,
8. explain the logic of hypothesis testing,
9. discuss the relationship between social policy and the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data,
10. specify and give examples of ethical issues that are likely to arise in conducting social research,
11. discuss the use of research methods, including issues of ethics and potential biases, with specific groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, women, and gay and lesbian clients, and
12. apply the principles of research to the critical evaluation of journal articles which report the results of research studies.

Disability Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Honor Statement

The University of Tennessee is proud of its students' commitment to academic integrity and their pledge to abide by the Honor Statement found in [Hilltopics](#). This tradition of intellectual honesty is maintained by the cooperation of students and faculty members. Each faculty member, according to [Hilltopics](#), is responsible for defining, in specific terms, guidelines, for preserving academic integrity in a course.

Required Text

Nugent, William R. (Forthcoming). Social Work Research: A Most Unusual Introduction. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub. A pre-publication version of this book will be used as the main text in the course. This will be available from the Kinko's on Cumberland.

Gilovich, T. (1991). *How we know what isn't so: The fallibility of human reasoning in everyday life*. New York: The Free Press.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to:

1. attend all class sessions,
2. participate in class discussions and exercises, and
3. complete all assignments.

Criteria for Research Proposal

1. Research Problem (15 pts.)
Select a research problem which is of interest and concern to you. Describe the problem, using the literature as necessary.
2. Develop a set of research questions which you will use to guide and/or test in your study. (15 pts.)
3. Justify the need to conduct this study with appropriate literature review. (25 pts.)
 - What has been done in the past?
 - What is known and not known?
 - What will drive your study?
4. Methods (20 pts)
 - What type of sample would you use?
 - Units of analysis
 - Sample size
 - How representative would your sample be?
 - How would you collect your data?
 - Design
 - Type of design
 - What internal, external validity issues

- What kind of ethical issues might you encounter, depending on the type of design you use?
5. Measurement (20 pts)
What variables will you use to measure your research question? What demographic variables will you need to control for? Diversity issues? Socioeconomic issues? Do they have independent/experimental/treatment variables? Is there a dependent/outcome variable? How reliable and valid are your measures?
6. Technical aspects of the paper (5 pts.)
-APA style
-Headings, page numbers, spelling, grammar

Human Subjects Project

You will take an online course on human subjects issues in research. This course is provided by the Federal Government and takes approximately an hour or so to complete. You can find this course at the following URL: <http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/cbt/nonNIHpeople.html> . The course instructor will give details in class.

Evaluation

Assignment	Due Date	Percent of Grade
Statement of the problem&Research Question	Feb. 10	5
Online Human Subjects Course	March 9	10
Exam I	Mar. 9 (approximately)	20
Literature Review	Mar. 23	15
Research Proposal	Apr. 13	20
Exam II	April 20 (approximately)	20
Data Analysis Assignment	Apr. 28	10

Grading Scale

A =	90-100
B+=	87-89.9
B=	80-86.9
C+=	77-79.9
C=	70-76.9
D+=	67-69.9
D=	60-66.9
F=	<60

Snow Policy

Class will be canceled only if the University is closed because of inclement weather. Use your own judgement concerning class attendance. Assignments due on a snow day will be due the following class session.

Make-up Policy:

Assignments will not be accepted after the due dates listed above. If class absence is unavoidable, assignments may be mailed to me (postmarked no later than the assignment due date) at the address listed below:

Bill Nugent
UT College of Social Work
308 Henson Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996-3333.

They may also be emailed to me at my email address on the first page. Make-up exams will not be permitted unless absence is due to a family emergency, scheduled business conflict, or inclement weather. Written notice of absence due to business conflict is due 48 hours prior to class meeting whenever possible.

Class Attendance

Unexcused absences are not permitted in this class. The consequences of unexcused absences (3 or more) will be the lowering of the course grade one letter. If the student has a legitimate reason for an absence, the student should contact the instructor prior to the class period.

Course Outline

- I. Introduction into inquiry
 - A. What is Research?
 - B. Professional Difference
 - C. Realities and Politics of Research
 - D. Relationship Between Research, Policy, and Practice
 - E. Research Ethics - Human Subjects On-Line Course

- II. The Logic of Social Work Research
 - A. Sources of Knowledge
 - B. Scientific Method
 - C. Theories
 - D. Concepts
 - E. Deduction and Induction
 - F. Operationalization
 - G. Hypotheses

- III. Building Blocks of Research
 - A. Variables
 - B. Sampling
 - C. Measurement
 - D. Validity and Reliability
 - E. Errors in Measurement

- IV. Methods of Observation
 - A. Qualitative versus Quantitative
 - B. Survey Research
 - C. Secondary Data Analysis
 - D. Observation
 - E. In-depth Interviews
 - F. Experimental Design
 - G. Single Subject Design
- V. Research Practice
 - A. Evaluative Research
 - B. Science and Social Work
- VI. Data Analysis
 - A. Scale Formation
 - B. Descriptive Statistics
 - C. Display of Statistical Data
 - D. Inferential Statistics
- VII. Presentation of Research Results
 - A. Report Writing
 - B. Awareness of Audience

Supplementary Bibliography

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Campbell, D.T., and Stanley, J.C. (1963). Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research. Chicago: Rand McNally,.

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Cherry, A. (2000). *A Research Primer for the Helping Professions*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub.

Friedman, B. (1998). *The Research Tool Kit*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

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Horwitz, L. and Ferleger, L. (1980). Statistics for Social Change. Boston, MA: South End Press.

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Lee, L.J. and Sampson, J. (1990). "A Practical Approach to Program Evaluation," Evaluation and Program Planning, Vol. 13, pp. 157-164.

Lutz, G.M. (1983). Understanding Social Statistics. New York: MacMillan.

Neff, J. & W. Zule, W. (2000). "Development of a Measure of Treatment Readiness for Out of Treatment Drug Users: Psychometric Properties and Construct Validity". Substance Use and Misuse, 35: 585-599.

Phillips, J.L., Jr. (1982). Statistical Thinking (Second Edition). New York: W.H. Freeman and Co.

Reid, W. J. And Smith, A.D. (1981). Research in Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press.

Reynolds, P.D. (1982). Ethics and Social Science Research. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Silverman, D. (1993). Interpreting Qualitative Data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Pub.

Stanley, B. & Sieber, J. (1992). Social Research on Children and Adolescents: Ethical Issues. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.