

The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
BSSW Program
Spring 2006

SW 310 – Social Work Research (3 credit hours)

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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 world without borders. 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, critical thinking, and leadership and prepares students to take appropriate action guided by the best available scientific evidence. We are dedicated to preparing practitioners for the challenges of today's complex pluralistic world. 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:

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

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.

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.

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 levels of measurement, and discuss the assessment of reliability and validity in measurement;
5. specify the distinguishing characteristics of basic types of probability and non-probability 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 appropriately 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 crucial evaluation of journal articles which report the results of research studies.

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 BSSW handbook.

Honor Statement

An essential feature of the University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. By enrollment in this class, you pledge that you will neither knowingly give, nor receive, any inappropriate assistance in academic work in SW 310, thus affirming your own personal commitment to honor and integrity (*Hilltopics*, 2005).

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 (865-974-6087). This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Inclement Weather

Class will be cancelled only if the University is closed due to inclement weather. Campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified, so that appropriate announcement may be made. If class is cancelled, any assignments due that day will be due the next time class meets.

Required Texts

Gilovich, T. (1991). *How We Know What Isn't So: The fallibility of human reason in everyday life*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2005). *Research Methods for Social Work* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Course Requirements

This course will include lectures and class discussions, computer labs, and on-line discussion boards. Graded assignments will include two examinations, a preliminary and a final research proposal, discussion board participation, analytical SPSS exercises, and class attendance and participation. Several BlackBoard features will be used throughout this course. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the BlackBoard features of this course through *Online@UT*. Students unfamiliar with, or in need of assistance with, BlackBoard features should contact helpdesk@utk.edu. Because BlackBoard uses the Tennessee.edu accounts for student/teacher and student/student communications, students that are not reading their UT email may be missing critical information. It is the student's responsibility to reroute his or her UT email to their preferred account. The final grade will be determined as follows:

Exam I	25%
Exam II	25%
Preliminary Research Proposal	10%
Final Research Proposal	15%
Discussion Board Participation	10%
SPSS Exercises	10%
Class Attendance & Participation	5%

Grading Scale

A = 100-90	B = 84-80	C = 74-70	F = 59 or lower
B+ = 89-85	C+ = 79-75	D = 69-60	

Exams

Two exams will be administered over the course of the semester. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, essay and problem solving questions. Exam I will cover required readings and class lectures completed prior to the administration of the first exam. Exam II will focus primarily on material covered in class lectures and required readings between the first and second exam. Some questions on Exam II may come from material covered prior to the first exam. No cell phones or laptop computers may be used during an exam.

Students must take the exams at the scheduled time. Makeup exams will only be given under extraordinary conditions. If a student cannot take an exam because of an extraordinary circumstance, the student must contact the instructor before an exam is scheduled to be administered. Students that do not contact the instructor before the exam is administered may not be granted permission to take a make-up exam.

Research Proposal

Students are required to write a quantitative research proposal on a topic of their choice. In order to assist students in completing a quality final research proposal, a preliminary research proposal will also be required. Both papers must be typed and adhere to the most recent APA guidelines. Students are encouraged to contact the writing center for assistance with technical aspects of their preliminary and final research proposal. For more information on the writing center, visit <http://web.utk.edu/~english/writing.php> or contact them by phone at (865) 974-2611.

Criteria for the Preliminary Research Proposal

1. Introduction 5 points
Introduce your research topic assuming the reader knows nothing about your topic. Explain what you hope to accomplish in this paper and why this endeavor is important for social workers.
2. Research Problem 5 points
Describe your research problem using scholarly literature to support your argument.
3. Annotated Bibliography 25 points
Identify at least ten quantitative research studies that other researchers have conducted on your topic of interest. Write and arrange bibliographic entries as you would write and arrange an APA reference list. Follow each reference with a 150-300 word description of the study. Include in the description:

- a. a description of the research questions or hypotheses tested in the study;
 - b. a description of the sample (who was sampled, what was the sample size);
 - c. how researchers defined and measured key concepts;
 - d. the results of the study;
 - e. the strengths and limitations of the study.
4. Research Questions and Hypotheses 10 points
Based on your review of the literature as outlined in your annotated bibliography, discuss your research questions and associated hypotheses.
 - a. Methodology 25 points
Describe the methodology you would use to study your research questions. Describe your research design. Describe the sample you would use (units of analysis, sample size). Discuss how you would recruit and select your sample. Discuss how representative your sample would be. Discuss how you would collect your data. Identify and discuss internal and external validity issue you might encounter. Talk about ethical issues you might encounter and how you would handle them.
 5. Measurement 25 points
Identify the variables you will measure in your study (IV, DV, additional control variables). Discuss how you will measure your variables. Include a discussion of measurement instruments you will use and the reliability and validity of those measures.
 6. Technical Aspects of the Paper 5 points
Adhere to the APA guidelines in writing your paper. Use headings, subheadings, page numbers, etc. as appropriate. Ensure that your paper is free of spelling and grammatical errors. Be sure to include a reference list. Late papers are generally not accepted. If you are unable to turn in a paper on the day it is due, you must notify the instructor. Three points per day will be deducted from the final score of all late papers.

Criteria for Final Research Proposal

1. Revision of Preliminary Manuscript 5 points
Revise your preliminary research proposal based on comments provided by instructor. Attach a copy of the preliminary research proposal with instructor comments at the back of your manuscript.
2. Introduction 5 points
Introduce your research topic assuming the reader knows nothing about your topic. Explain what you hope to accomplish in this paper and why this endeavor is important for social workers.
3. Research Problem 5 points
Describe your research problem using scholarly literature to support your argument.
4. Literature Review 25 points
Synthesize the literature in your annotated bibliography to justify the need to conduct this study. Summarize the findings and implications of previous research. Explain what has been done in the past, what is known or not known about your topic, how other researchers have studied this problem, who was included in other samples, how have key concepts been defined and measured, what was learned from previous research, what were the strengths and limitations of other studies. A minimum of ten quantitative research articles should be included in your literature review.
5. Research Questions and Hypotheses 5 points
Based on your review of the literature as outlined in your annotated bibliography, discuss your research questions and associated hypotheses.
6. Methodology 10 points
Describe the methodology you would use to study your research questions. Describe your research design. Describe the sample you would use (units of analysis, sample size). Discuss how you would recruit and select your sample. Discuss the representativeness of your sample. Discuss how you would collect your data. Identify and discuss internal and external validity issues. Talk about ethical issues you

might encounter and how you would handle them.

7. Measurement 10 points
Identify the variables you will measure in your study (IV, DV, additional control variables). Discuss how you will measure your variables. Include a discussion of measurement instruments you will use and the reliability and validity of those measures.
8. Analysis 25 points
Describe how you would analyze your data. What statistical tests would you use to answer your research questions and test your hypotheses.
9. Technical Aspects of the Paper 10 points
The final research proposal should be 15-20 pages. This includes your title page, abstract, and references. Adhere to the APA guidelines in writing your paper. Use headings, subheadings, page numbers, etc. as appropriate. Ensure that your paper is free of spelling and grammatical errors. Be sure to include an abstract and a reference list. No late papers will be accepted.

Discussion Boards

Throughout the semester students will be asked to participate in online discussion boards on BlackBoard. The purpose of the discussion boards is to allow students to reflect on course material and consider how to apply the material in practice. Discussion boards will be posted on Thursday and students will have until midnight on the following Wednesday to respond. Students are expected to respond directly to the question posed as well as postings from other students. Civility and respect for all thoughts posted on the discussion board is expected, even if those thoughts differ from your own.

For each discussion board, student participation will be graded on a scale of 0-2. A score of "0" will be granted to students that do not participate in the discussion board or students that fail to treat others with civility and respect on the discussion board. A score of "1" will be granted to students that demonstrate a low level of participation as evidenced by brief comments with little to no explanation for their position. A score of "1" will also be granted to students that post a thread of their own, but fail to respond to threads posted by other students. A score of "2" will be granted to students that demonstrate a high level of participation as evidenced by thoughtful comments that demonstrate an understanding of course content and serve to further enhance or extend the discussion.

SPSS Exercises

In the second half of the semester students will be asked to complete a series of computer lab exercises that have been designed to give students hands-on experience with data management and analysis using SPSS. Software necessary for the completion of these assignments is available on computers in the computer lab located in Henson Hall. Collaboration among students is allowed on SPSS exercises, however each student will be expected to submit his or her own work on the assigned due date. Additional information regarding these assignments will be posted on BlackBoard and discussed in class later in the semester.

Exercises will be graded on a scale of 0-2. A score of "0" will be granted to students that fail to complete the assignment during the assigned time period. A score of "1" will be granted to students that complete the assignment that contains numerous errors. Students receiving a score of "1" will be given one week to correct their errors and resubmit their exercise. A score of "2" will be granted to students that complete the assignment with little to no errors.

Class Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all classes and be prepared to participate in class discussions of required readings and lecture material. Class attendance and participation (as evidenced by taking notes, asking thoughtful questions, contributing to class discussions, etc.) constitute 5% of the student's grade. Every time the class meets, students will receive a score ranging from 0-2. A score of "0" will be assigned when students do not attend class. A score of "1" will be granted to students that attend class, but do not participate. A score of "2" will be granted to students that attend and participate in class discussions and activities. Students that are unable to attend a class because of an extraordinary circumstance should notify the instructor. Students

are responsible for all material and assignments missed during an absence.

In addition, students are expected to behave in a respectful, civil manner in the classroom. Please turn off all cell phones (or place them on vibrate) before entering the classroom. No phone calls or text messages should be answered or sent during class. Laptop computers may be used in class to aide student in taking notes, however students should not use computers for other purposes during class, such as checking emails or surfing the web.

Course Outline

Thursday, January 12

No Class SSWR Conference – San Antonio
Familiarize yourself with BlackBoard features of this course
Create a student page on BlackBoard
Complete Anonymous Survey on BlackBoard

Tuesday, January 17

An Introduction to Scientific Inquiry
Reading: Gilovich, Chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, January 19

How We Know What Isn't So
Reading: Gilovich, Chapters 3 & 4
Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, January 24

Flaws in Human Reasoning
Reading: Gilovich, Chapters 5, 6 & 7

Thursday, January 26

Philosophy & Theory in Research
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 2
Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, January 31

Problem Formulation & Literature Reviews
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 4 & Chapter 22 (pages 649-658)

Thursday, February 2

Using Library Resources
Class will meet in the Computer Lab at Humanities Room 201 and 202
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Appendix A
Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, February 7

Conceptualization & Operationalization
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 5

Thursday, February 9

Measurement
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 6
Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, February 14

Measurement Instruments

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 7

Thursday, February 16

Sampling

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 8

Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, February 21

Survey Research

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9

Thursday, February 23

Experimental Designs

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10

Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, February 28

Quasi-Experimental Designs

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 11

Thursday, March 2

Single-Case Evaluation Designs

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 12

Discussion Board Post

Tuesday, March 7

Program Evaluation

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 13

Thursday, March 9

Qualitative Research Methods

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 14

Preliminary Research Proposal Due

Tuesday, March 14

Culturally Competent Research

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 16

Thursday, March 16

Exam I

Tuesday, March 21

No class – Spring Break

Thursday, March 23

No class – Spring Break

Tuesday, March 28

Introduction to Quantitative Data Analysis

Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 18

Thursday, March 30

Class will meet in the Computer Lab at Humanities Room 201 and 202

Tuesday, April 4

Bivariate Analysis
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 19
First SPSS Exercise Due

Thursday, April 6

Class will meet in the Computer Lab at Humanities Room 201 and 202

Tuesday, April 11

Multivariate Analysis
Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 20 & 21
Second SPSS Exercise Due

Thursday, April 13

Class will meet in the Computer Lab at Humanities Room 201 and 202

Tuesday, April 18

Catch up and Review
Third SPSS Exercise Due

Thursday, April 20

Exam II

Tuesday, April 25

Report Writing & Funding Research

Thursday, April 27

Research Proposal Due