

University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
SW 506 SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

Summer, 2003

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Class hours: Tuesday- 5:30 PM until 9:15 PM

Office Hours: Tuesday- 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM

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, 2002*).

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 at (191 Hoskins Library, Knoxville, TN 37996 865-974-6087). 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. 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 of 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.

COURSE TEXT:

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2001). Research Methods of Social Work. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole/ Wadsworth.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

The following instructional methods will be employed:

1. In -class lecture and discussion.
2. Library tour & demonstrations of research methods.
3. Assignments of required readings and handouts.
4. Quizzes to monitor student understanding of course content.
5. Actual and simulated research exercises.
6. Team projects and group discussions.
7. Films and videotapes.
8. Useful handouts on various topics.

CLASS POLICIES:

1. Students are expected to attend class regularly. They are expected to arrive on time and to remain in class until the completion of the class period. Any student missing more than 2 classes will receive a failing grade.

2. Incompletes will be given only according to the rules specified in the University of Tennessee. Please refer to the website for additional information.

3. All written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period of the date specified on the course outline. Assignments received after that time will be marked down significantly.

4. Assignments are to be completed correctly at the time of submission. The instructor will be available to discuss papers and group assignments until one week prior

to their due date. After that no assistance will be given. No papers or assignments may be resubmitted once a grade has been given.

5. Cheating and/or plagiarizing will not be tolerated. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be subject to the disciplinary procedures outlined in the Student Handbook.

6. University policy regarding religious holidays will be observed. As stated by the student handbook, any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious day from his/her faith.

7. The research proposal must be written in the style described in the APA Manual (4th edition). Grades will be significantly reduced if the paper does not meet APA (4th edition) guidelines.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly quizzes- 25%

Periodic quizzes will be administered as indicated in the COURSE SCHEDULE below (a total of 12). Quizzes will include material presented in the required reading and class activities for that week. Each quiz will be worth ten points. The lowest two quiz grades for each student will be dropped, resulting in a total of ten quizzes (100 points).

2. Literature Review- 25%

Each student will complete a paper reviewing empirical literature in the area of her/his choice. Although it will be graded separately, this paper will comprise the literature review section of the research proposal and should, therefore, review literature in that area. A total of 100 points are possible for this assignment. The points will be awarded as follows:

Adherence to outline on Literature Review handout- 25 points

Comprehensiveness and clarity - 15 points

Choice of relevant literature- 15 points

Use of empirical literature- 15 points

Appropriate use of grammar and syntax- 15 points

Adherence to APA style- 15 points.

3. 3/4-Term Examination- 25%

The 3/4-Term Examination will be a take-home examination consisting of multiple choice, true-false, and essay questions. It will include information presented during the first 7 weeks of class. It will be distributed at the end of class on the 6th week and will be due at beginning of class on the 8th week. A total of 100 points may be earned

from this assignment.

4. Research Proposal- 25%

Each student will prepare a paper proposing a research project in some area of social work practice. This paper, properly termed a "research proposal", will follow the guidelines attached to this syllabus and will be prepared in APA style. A total of 100 points may be earned from this assignment. These points will be awarded as indicated on the Research Proposal handout.

The final grade for each student will be computed by totaling the points earned for each of the assignments above and dividing by 10.

BASIS FOR GRADING

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A = 93-100%	C = 73-76%
A- = 90-92%	C- = 70-72%
B+= 87-89%	D+ = 67-69%
B = 83-86%	D = 64-66%
B- = 80-82%	D- = 60-63%
C+= 77-79%	F = 59 or below

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Class 1- Tuesday, June 2- Introduction to the course

UGGH! I HATE research!!!

Introductions of class members.

Review of syllabus.

Course overview: A foundation for research (Bricks lecture).

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Prologue, Chapter1: Scientific Inquiry and Social Work, Chapter 2: Philosophical Issues in Science and Research, & Chapter 4: The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research

Class 2- Tuesday, June 10- Social Science Theory and Problem Identification

Developing a knowledge base for social work.

Practice Focused Research.

Methods of Knowing.

"What I like most/least about research."

Reading empirical studies.

The theoretical and the empirical.

Theory construction.

-Inductive Theory.
-Deductive Theory.
The Nature of Causation.
Scientific Revolutions.

Quiz 1

Reviewing the Literature.
Composing a literature review.
Abstracting articles.
Specifying problems & goals.

Quiz 2

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 5: Problem Formulation & Chapter 6: Conceptualization and Operationalization.

Class 3- Tuesday, June 17- Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement

Conceptualization.
Operational Definitions.
Levels of Measurement.
Sources of Measurement Error.
Reliability.
Validity.

Quiz 3

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 7: Measurement

Class 4- Tuesday, June 24- Constructing Measurement Instruments

Questionnaire Construction.
Scaling Methods.
Use of Standardized Measures.
Clinical Measurement Package.

Literature Review due

Quiz 4

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 8: Constructing Measurement Instruments & Chapter 11: Single-Case Designs

Class 5- Tuesday, July 1- Sampling

Populations & Sampling Frames.
Concepts and Terminology.
Probability Theory.
Survey Research.
Secondary Research.

Quiz 5

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10: Causal Inference and Group Design.

Class 6- Tuesday, July 8- Research Designs

Literature review due.
Single System Designs.
-The logic of single system design.
-Application to social work issues.
-The Baseline Phase.
-Multiple baseline designs.

Distribute 3/4-Term Examination.

Quiz 6

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9: The Logic of Sampling.

Class 7- Tuesday, July 15- Research Designs

Experimental Designs.
Quasi-Experimental designs.
Randomization.
External Validity.
Internal Validity.

Quiz 7

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 12: Survey Research & Chapter 13: Qualitative Research Methods.

Class 8- Tuesday, July 22- Qualitative Research Methods

Terminology of Qualitative Methods.
Unobtrusive Research.
Content Analysis.

Quiz 8

3/4-Term Examination due

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 14: Unobtrusive Research, Chapter 15: Processing Data, Chapter 16: Interpreting Descriptive Statistics and Tables, & Chapter 17: Inferential Data Analysis: Part 1.

Class 9- Tuesday, July 29- Data Analysis & Statistics

Visual Analysis of Graphs.
Scatter plots.
Uses & Misuses of Statistics.
Univariate Analysis.
Bivariate Analysis.
Multivariate Analysis.
Computer Assisted Analysis.

Quiz 9

Statistical Significance.

Measures of Association.
Meta-Analysis.
Statistical Power Analysis.

Quiz 10

Research Proposal due

Assignment for next week: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 3: Theory and Research & Chapter 18: Inferential Data Analysis: Part 2.

Week 10- Tuesday, August 5- Research Ethics & Program Evaluation

NASW Code of Ethics.

APA Guidelines for Human Subjects.

UT Guidelines for Human Subjects

Handouts- Case Studies in the Ethics of Research

Quiz 11

Applications of program evaluation

Techniques of program evaluation

Quiz 12

OUTLINE FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

A. INTRODUCTION (10 points)

1. Background of the problem- Provide a brief discussion of the background of the problem, concluding in a clear, concise statement of the research problem. Include such information as:
 - a. Scope of the problem -who is affected? How widespread is the problem?
 - b. How does the problem affect Social Work practice?
2. Role of the current study in solving the problem,
 - a. Explain why the proposed study is important to the problem.
 - b. Explain the theoretical significance of the problem:- How can the study help our understand of the issues? What theories exist to explain the phenomena?
 - c. Provide a clear statement of the purpose of the study. The purpose statement should be phrased as follows: "The purpose of this research study is to....".
3. How will the proposed study contribute to the field of Social Work?

B. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE (20 points)

1. What is the current level of knowledge concerning this problem?
2. Who has studied the problem before?
3. How have they studied it?
4. What conclusions did they reach?
5. What limitations existed in such studies?
6. What will the proposed study add?

C. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (20 Points)

1. What theory, if any, guides your study?
2. State your research hypotheses.
3. Define key theoretical terms and variables.
 - Identify independent, dependent and other variables.
 - What are the empirical indicators of the variables?
 - State the relationships between variables in simple declarative sentences.

D. METHODOLOGY (20 points)

Describe the methods and procedures you will use to test your hypotheses.

1. Sample- Identify your population and what sampling method you will use. Clearly state your expected sample size, characteristics, and representativeness.
2. Research design- Describe the research design (experimental, survey, etc.) that you will use.
3. Measurement- How are you going to observe and/or measure the phenomena of interest?
 - a. Instruments- Identify instruments to be used and the source from which they will be drawn..
 - b. Reliability and validity- Has the reliability and validity of the instruments been reported. Explain why you believe the instruments to be valid for your proposed study.

E. DATA ANALYSIS (15 points)

1. Describe the type of analysis (statistics) that you believe is most appropriate to your data, your question, and your resources.
2. Tables (optional)-give examples of the types of tables that you will use to present your findings.

F. SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES-(optional) (may earn up to 5 additional points, but your overall score cannot exceed 100 points)

Present a time-table or calendar of how your research would proceed. What deadlines or target dates would you set?

G. SUMMARY (5 points)

Present a brief closing argument restating why the study is important and how your study will accomplish its goal. ("Tell them what you told them")

H. BIBLIOGRAPHY (10 points)

List references using APA style.

RESEARCH REPORT ANALYSIS FORM

SCALE

LEVEL

DESCRIPTION

4	Excellent-model of good practice
3	Good-a few minor defects
2	Mediocre-not so good, not bad
1	Poor-some serious defects

CHARACTERISTIC

1. Problem is clearly stated
2. Hypotheses are clearly stated
3. Problem is significant
4. Assumptions are clearly stated
5. Limitations of the study are stated
6. Important terms are defined
7. Relationship of the problem to previous research is made clear
8. Research design is described fully
9. Research design is appropriate to the solution of the problem
10. Research design is free of specific weaknesses
11. Population and sample are described
12. Method of sampling is appropriate
13. Data-gathering methods or procedures are described
14. Data-gathering methods or procedures are appropriate to the solution of the problem
15. Data-gathering methods or procedures are utilized correctly
16. Validity and reliability of the evidence gathered are established
17. Appropriate methods are selected to analyze the data
18. Methods utilized in analyzing the data are applied correctly
19. Results of the analysis are presented clearly
20. Conclusions are clearly stated
21. Conclusions are substantiated by the evidence presented
22. Generalizations are confined to the population from which the sample was drawn
23. Report is clearly written
24. Report is logically organized
25. Tone of the report displays an unbiased, impartial scientific attitude