

The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
BSSW Program
Fall 2009

SW 417 – Honors Social Work Research (3 credit hours)

Instructor:	Sarah W. Craun, PhD	Class Location:	209 Henson Hall
Office Phone:	(865) 974-3164	Office:	301 Henson Hall
Email:	scraun@utk.edu	Class Time:	T/TH 2:10-3:25
Office Hours:	Tuesday & Thursday 12:45-1:45pm or by appointment		

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 that 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 enables 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 Rationale

Social Work 417 is an honors course in research methodology. This course provides the student with an understanding of 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. Social Work 417 is the first in a sequence where the student will design his or her own research project. Social Work 467 will be the second course where the student will complete his or her

research project and present the findings at the undergraduate research fair. Please note: Students in the honors concentration must complete SW 417 and 467. Students who decide not to complete SW 467 must change their enrollment to SW 410 in accordance with the Registrar's dates and policies for dropping and adding courses.

Course Competencies:

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

- 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 data analysis. For each method, give an example of a social work problem or question which could be appropriately addressed by that method;
- 7) explain the logic of hypothesis testing;
- 8) discuss the relationship between social policy and the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data;
- 9) specify and give examples of ethical issues that are likely to arise in conducting social research;
- 10) 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
- 11) apply the principles of research to the crucial evaluation of journal articles, which report the results of research studies.
- 12) Design and implement a comprehensive research plan that addresses a research need at your field placement agency. This includes formulation of an appropriate research question, development of a research methodology and rationale for selecting these methods as well as initiation of data collection.
- 13) Discuss relevant issues and protocols related to the protection of human subjects in research and engage in the procedures required by the college and university Institutional Review Boards related to senior research projects.

Code of Conduct

Students should 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*)

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 2227 Dunford Hall (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 Text

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E.R. *Research Methods for Social Work, 6th Edition*.

If you don't mind reading from a computer screen or printing out .pdf files, it is cheaper to get the book from www.ichapters.com.

Course Requirements for students in SW 417

- A. Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to be in attendance at each class and to be prepared to discuss assigned topics and readings. Additionally, students should be present and ready to ask thoughtful questions during the group presentations of the critical appraisal. The purpose of attendance is to address competencies #1 through #13.

- B. Senior Research Project: Each student will begin a field agency-based research project to be completed in the spring semester. During the course of this semester, each student will work with their field agency supervisor and the course instructor to develop a research idea. The guidelines for the research proposal/idea, methodology and lit review are attached to the end of this syllabus. This purpose is to address course competencies #1 through #9, #12 & #13.

For this project, students choose a research question, design a research methodology to answer this question, compile a concise review of the existing literature, collect data and then analyze the data. If this option is chosen, the project must be completed in time to be presented at the University of Tennessee's Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement in Spring 2010 (exact date to be announced). **Research projects must be approved by the course instructor, student's field instructor and field placement program director (if necessary) before any data collection or analyses can occur.** An agreement form will be distributed in class and all forms must be signed and returned to the course instructor in order to receive full credit on the research project. All students are also required to complete all forms required by the University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects.

- C. Quizzes: There will be five quizzes. All five quizzes will be posted on Blackboard and done during class time in the computer lab. The four highest scores will be counted toward the final class grade. Missed quizzes will be recorded as a "0". There will be no make-up quizzes – if you miss one quiz it will be counted as your lowest score. The purpose of the quizzes is to address competencies #1 through #8 and #10.

- D. SPSS Assignment: Students will work individually on an SPSS assignment provided by the instructor. SPSS will be taught in specified classes throughout the semester; however, the completed assignment is due at the end of the semester. The assignment will be handed out during class. The purpose of the SPSS assignment is to address competencies #1, #4, #6 and #8.

Deadline extensions are made rarely, at the discretion of the instructor, and in only in extenuating circumstances. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each calendar day past the due date unless alternative arrangements are made with the instructor prior to the due date.

E. College of Social Work IRB Form A/Human Subjects Training: This form needs to be completed and turned into Dr. Craun by the last class of the semester. It should be completed *after* the methodology is set for the senior research project. You must also complete the Human Subjects Training Certificate with the Form A (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>). Please put the URL of your completed certificate in your Form A. The purpose of this assignment is to address competency #9, #10, & #13

The course grade for students in SW 417 will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Senior Research Project	
Research Idea/Proposal (Due October 8th) (credit/no credit)	
Methodology/Literature Review (Due November 19th)	30%
Quizzes (5 quizzes/only 4 quizzes will count)	40%
SPSS Assignment (Due December 1st)	10%
IRB Form A/Human Subjects Training Certificate (Due December 1st)	10%

Grading Scale for SW 410 and SW 417

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	F	Under 60

Extra Credit:

On Blackboard, in the beginning of the semester, there will be a survey titled “Extra Credit Class Survey”. You may take this survey on-line and receive two (2) final grade points for its completion. Additionally, Blackboard will indicate who completed the survey, yet the answers are not tied to your name. In other words, I will not know who provided what answers. I hope to use the data provided by this survey to illustrate research-related concepts to you later in class. No questions that may identify students will be included (age, race, sex, etc.). You may skip questions that you are uncomfortable answering. The survey needs to be taken by August 27th, 2009 to receive credit.

-or

You can participate in one of the social work student organizations. It is the BSSW program’s expectation that all social work majors participate in the BSSW Student Social Work Organization (BSSW-SWO) or the National Association of Black Social Workers Organization (NABSW). All students, regardless of major, who are enrolled in a social work course or considering a major in social work are welcome. BSSW-SWO meets every Tuesday from 11:10 -12:25 in room 209, Henson Hall. This time slot is built into the class schedule as a lab for many social work courses. Given the time of the meetings, students are encouraged to bring their lunch.

The BSSW-SWO and NABSW are student organizations that provide an excellent opportunity for leadership development, community and university service, the enhancement of group skills, research

opportunities, and socialization. The organization and its activities are viewed as an extension of the BSSW curriculum. **Students in this class will have the opportunity to earn 3 points added to their final course grade by attending and participating in the BSSW-SWO or NABSW this semester.**

Your attendance and participation must be documented. Attendance will be taken at each meeting. To be an active member in BSSW-SWO and be eligible for extra credit, students are required to attend at least 7 meetings per semester (officers are required to attend 75% of the meetings each semester) and earn 3-5 participation points. Participation points are earned using the following scale:

- 1 point for attending minimum number of meetings required for membership (see above);
- 1 point for participating in one or more drives;
- 2 points for fundraising participation;
- 2 points for community service or other participation

Criteria for participation in all activities is determined by BSSW-SWO faculty advisor and committee chairs. Students may earn 3-5 extra credit points in designated BSSW courses. Points awarded for extra credit equal BSSWO-SWO participation points for a **maximum of 3 points in SW 417**. No points will be awarded for students earning less than 3 participation points.

Your attendance and participation must be documented. Attendance will be taken at each meeting. You must attend seven (7) or more BSSW-SWO meetings during the term. Also, you must participate in one of the organization's standing committees. Both attendance and participation are required for extra credit. You will need to complete a form listing your activities in the organization throughout the term. The form will be signed by a committee chairperson and the faculty liaison to the BSSW-SWO. Without the signed form verifying your attendance and participation, the extra credit will not be provided.

Note: If you choose to just complete the survey, you are eligible for 2 extra credit points. If you just participate in a social work student organization, you are eligible for 3 extra credit points. If you do both (complete the survey and attend one of the student organizations), you are eligible for a maximum of 5 extra credit points. All students who are enrolled in SW 417 are welcome to attend.

Class Schedule and Readings

August 20th - Introduction to Class/Senior Research Project

August 25th – Topic: Why Study Research?

Chapter 1, Rubin & Babbie

August 27th - Topic: Evidence-based Practice

Chapter 2, Rubin & Babbie

[IF YOU WANT TWO (2) EXTRA CREDIT POINTS FOR TAKING THE CLASS SURVEY IT MUST BE COMPLETED BY TODAY]

September 1st – Topic: Ethics/Politics of Research

Chapter 4, Rubin & Babbie

September 3rd – Topic: Ethics/Politics of Research

Chapter 4, Rubin & Babbie

September 8th – Topic: Culturally Competent Research

Chapter 5, Rubin & Babbie

September 10th – Intro to SPSS #1/Quiz #1

September 15th – Topic: Problem Formulation

Chapter 6, Rubin & Babbie

September 17th – Topic: Operationalization

Chapter 7, Rubin & Babbie

September 22nd – Topic: Measurement

Chapter 8, Rubin & Babbie

September 24th – Topic: Constructing Instruments

Chapter 9, Rubin & Babbie

September 29th – Topic: Constructing Instruments

No assigned reading (if needed catch up on previous readings)

October 1st – Intro to SPSS #2/Quiz #2

October 6th – Topic: Causal Inference/Correlational Designs

Chapter 10, Rubin & Babbie

October 8th – Topic: Experimental Designs

Chapter 11, Rubin & Babbie

[RESEARCH IDEA/PROPOSAL DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY]

October 13th – Topic: Single-case evaluation designs

Chapter 12, Rubin & Babbie

October 15th – **FALL BREAK – ENJOY and BE SAFE**

October 20th – Topic: Program Evaluation

Chapter 13, Rubin & Babbie

October 22nd – Intro to SPSS #3/Quiz #3

October 27th – Topic: Sampling

Chapter 14, Rubin & Babbie

October 29th – Topic: Survey Research

Chapter 15, Rubin & Babbie

November 3rd – Topic: Secondary Data

Chapter 16, Rubin & Babbie

November 5th – Intro to SPSS #4/Quiz #4 (**or possibly no class depending on CSWE**)

November 10th – Topic: Quantitative Data Analysis

Chapters 17 & 19, Rubin & Babbie

November 12th – Topic: Qualitative Data Analysis

Chapters 20 & 21, Rubin & Babbie

November 17th – Topic: Qualitative Data Analysis

No assigned reading (if needed catch up on previous readings)

November 19th – Intro to SPSS #5/Quiz #5

[METHODOLOGY/LIT REVIEW DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY]

November 24th - **No class** – Use this time to complete your Human Subjects Training at <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>. Be aware that this training is estimated to take 2 to 3 hours. I will be available this week by email if you have questions.

December 1st - Class wrap up or Quiz #5 depending on CSWE

[SPSS ASSIGNMENT DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY and FORM A/HUMAN SUBJECTS CERTIFICATE DUE TODAY]

Research Project Guidelines for those students in SW 417

The research project begins in the fall semester and concludes in the spring. If you choose to do this project, you will be required to present your research on a poster at the University of Tennessee's Annual Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement in Spring 2010 (exact dates to be announced). Your research project should be designed and conducted in collaboration with your field supervisor. A signed research agreement form is required before any data collection may begin. These forms are available from Professor Craun or you can get them from the class website on Blackboard.

For confidentiality purposes, your field agency and supervisor will not be identified in your research presentation. All questions, concerns, problems, and issues should be directed to Professor Craun.

1. **Research Ideas/Proposal** (due October 8th)

For this assignment, you are required to turn in a list of your ideas for a research project. This does not need to be structured in formal paragraphs, but should include all description or explanation needed to fully develop your ideas. Please include your agency's name and target population. This is your opportunity to brainstorm all possible research topics and get feedback. When considering the full scope of possible research ideas, consider what you would like to know, what your agency/field instructor would like to know, and what your clients might like to know. Ultimately, your research project topic is your choice. However, please remember that your project should benefit your agency in some way. There is no suggested length for this assignment. It should be as long as needed to list and explain all possible research project ideas. Feedback and discussion of your ideas will be done individually with the instructor.

2. **Literature Review and Methodology**

A) *Methodology* (due November 19th)

For this assignment, you must describe your research project in great detail and as precisely as possible. The suggested length of the methodology section is 5-6 pages. Dr. Craun has examples in her office of well done methodologies and lit reviews from previous years. A complete methodology section addresses the following headings:

Research Question - state the main question(s) that your research will seek to answer. Include a statement about why it is important to answer this question and the potential relevance of this research for your fieldwork agency

Sample— describe the sample or population that you will use and your rationale for using it. Also, describe the population to which you hope to generalize your findings.

Sampling Plan— describe how study participants will be selected for inclusion in your research.

Study Site— describe where the data will be collected. What are the advantages/strengths of collecting data at this site? What are some potential problems, concerns, or limitations of this site?

Operationalization of Concepts— identify and describe the variables you will use in your research and how will they be measured (for example: the use of standardized scales, assessment tools, specific interview questions, etc.). If possible, identify the dependent and independent variables. If you will be developing or assessing an intervention, clearly describe the intervention here (for example: Describe the intervention and its agenda/curriculum. What are the goals or desired outcomes of the intervention? How will your research evaluate specifically if these goals have been met, and so on?) .

Data Collection— describe how the data will be collected and who will be collecting it. Also, discuss any problems that you may encounter and how you will obtain informed consent from study participants.

Data Analysis— describe how you plan to analyze your data. Be sure that your planned analyses are appropriate to answer your research question and that the data you collect fits the chosen analyses. You are not expected to describe specific statistical tests, but

rather describe the types of analyses or comparisons that you plan to do with the data you collect.

Timeline— design a chart illustrating how long you expect your study to take. Focus especially on your activities to the start of the spring semester in January. Tasks to be undertaken (and possibly completed) in the next four months include getting approval for your research from your field agency supervisor, putting together a study sample, collecting data, and data entry. In order to have adequate time to enter your data, analyze it, and design your poster, it is suggested that all data be collected by the end of February.

B) Literature Review (due November 19th)

The second part of this assignment is to develop an up-to-date, concise, and critical review of the literature related to your research project. This is not just a descriptive list or summary of each reference. Instead, the review should organize and synthesize the collected literature related to your research project then assess what is known and what is not known about your topic. Your literature review should identify the strengths and limitations of the literature and describe how your project “fills a gap” in this literature (this is answering the “so what?” question). Be sure to address any controversies surrounding your research topic (competing views, etc.) and to describe the type of research being reported in each piece of literature you discuss (empirical study, published literature review, and so on). Your review should be clearly organized and flow in a logical direction. Please refer to *Planning and Conducting Agency based Research* (Westerfelt & Dietz, 2005) for more guidance and tips on completing a literature review.

The literature review must include at least ten references; only *one* of these references may be from the World Wide Web. All others must be from professional journal articles or books found in the library or located through the library’s on-line catalog and/or databases. Since older references may be dated and not as applicable to social work practice today, the majority of reviewed references should be published after 1997. A list of all cited references should be attached to the literature review (in correct APA style). The suggested length for the literature review is approximately 6-7 pages.