

The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
BSSW Program
Spring 2007

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 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 Description

The objectives of this course are to provide students with 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 that reports 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:

- discuss the role of social scientific research in developing knowledge for the profession of social work;
- define and identify the basic building blocks of research: concepts, variables, hypotheses, theories;
- discuss the relationship between program evaluation and social work practice;
- define and distinguish among levels of measurement, and discuss the assessment of reliability and validity in measurement;
- specify the distinguishing characteristics of basic types of probability and non-probability sampling designs;
- 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;
- 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;
- explain the logic of hypothesis testing;
- discuss the relationship between social policy and the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data;
- specify and give examples of ethical issues that are likely to arise in conducting social research;
- 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
- apply the principles of research to the crucial evaluation of journal articles, which report the results of research studies.

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

Schutt, R. K. (2006). *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

Course Requirements

Weekly Quizzes	25%
Weekly Homework Assignments	15%
Final Research Proposal	25%
Cumulative Final Exam	25%
Class Attendance & Participation	10%

Grading Scale

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

Weekly Quizzes (25%)

Each Tuesday at the beginning of class, students will have a quiz covering material from class lectures and readings from the previous week. These quizzes provide both the instructor and students with ongoing feedback concerning knowledge acquisition. Since the administration of quizzes occurs at the beginning of class, it is important that you arrive on time. Once the first quiz is handed in, no one who comes in late will receive a quiz for that week. Weekly quizzes will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and/or short answer questions. Quizzes will be graded, given back to students, and reviewed before the lecture begins. At the end of the semester, students can decide to drop one of their quiz scores. This provision should counterbalance an unforeseen absence or a particularly low score on one quiz.

Weekly Homework Assignments (15%)

SPSS Exercises: These assignments are intended to familiarize students with data analysis techniques using a statistical program. Each Thursday students will hand in the *SPSS Exercise* assignment corresponding with the chapter(s) of weekly lectures. These assignments are located at the end of each chapter in the research textbook for the class.

Developing a Research Proposal: These assignments are intended to help students conceptualize and progress towards completion of their final research proposal. Each Thursday students will hand in the *Developing a Research Proposal* assignment corresponding with the chapter(s) of weekly lectures. These assignments are located at the end of each chapter in the research textbook for the class. **All** homework assignments should accompany the final research proposal.

Cumulative Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and/or short answer questions. The exam will cover **all** required readings and class lectures completed before the administration of the 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.

Final Research Proposal (25%)

Students are required to write a quantitative research proposal on a topic of their choice. The

proposal 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 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 Final 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 10 points
Describe your research problem using scholarly literature to support your argument.
3. 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 key concepts have been defined and measured, what was learned from previous research, and what were the strengths and limitations of other studies. A minimum of **ten** quantitative research articles should be included in your literature review.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Technical Aspects of the Paper 10 points
The final research proposal should be 15-20 pages. This includes your title page, body, and references. Adhere to 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. No late papers will be accepted.

Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

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 10% of the student's grade. Students that are unable to attend a class 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 students 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 11

Course Overview

Why should we study research?

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

Tuesday, January 16

Science, Society, and Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 1 (p. 1–30)

Thursday, January 18

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 29)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 30)

Science, Society, and Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 1 (p. 1–30)

Tuesday, January 23

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 1

Theories and Philosophies for Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 2 (p. 31–52)

Thursday, January 25

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 51)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 52)

Theories and Philosophies for Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 2 (p. 31–52)

Tuesday, January 30

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 2

The Process and Problems of Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 3 (p. 53–90)

Reading: Schutt, Appendix B (p. B1-B3)

Reading: Schutt, Appendix C (p. C1-C28)

Thursday, February 1

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 89)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 89)

The Process and Problems of Social Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 3 (p. 53–90)

Reading: Schutt, Appendix B (p. B1-B3)

Reading: Schutt, Appendix C (p. C1-C28)

Tuesday, February 6

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 3

Conceptualization and Measurement

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 4 (p. 91–131)

Thursday, February 8

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 130)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 131)

Conceptualization and Measurement

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 4 (p. 91–131)

Tuesday, February 13

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 4

Sampling

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 5 (p. 132–170)

Thursday, February 15

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 170)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 170)

Sampling

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 5 (p. 132–170)

Tuesday, February 20

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 5

Causation and Research Design

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 6 (p. 171–199)

Thursday, February 22

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 198)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 199)

Causation and Research Design

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 6 (p. 171–199)

Tuesday, February 27

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 6

Experiments

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 7 (p. 200–232)

Thursday, March 1

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 231)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 232)

Experiments

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 7 (p. 200–232)

Tuesday, March 6

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 7

Survey Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 8 (p. 233–287)

Thursday, March 8

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 284)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 285)

Survey Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 8 (p. 233-287)

Tuesday, March 13

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 8

Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating and Listening

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 9 (p. 286-324)

Thursday, March 15

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 323)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 324)

Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating and Listening

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 9 (p. 286-324)

Tuesday, March 20

No class – Spring Break

Thursday, March 22

No class – Spring Break

Tuesday, March 27

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 9

Qualitative Data Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 10 (p. 325-356)

Thursday, March 29

Homework Due: HyperRESEARCH Exercise (p. 356)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 356)

Qualitative Data Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 10 (p. 325-356)

Tuesday, April 3

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 10

Evaluation Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 11 (p. 357-384)

Thursday, April 5

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 384)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 384)

Evaluation Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 11 (p. 357-384)

Tuesday, April 10

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 11

Historical and Comparative Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 12 (p.385-410)

Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 13 (p. 385-410)

Thursday, April 12

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 409 and 440)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 410 and p. 440)

Historical and Comparative Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 12 (p.385-410)

Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 13 (p. 385-410)

Tuesday, April 17

Quiz: Schutt, Chapters 12 & 13

Quantitative Data Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 14 (p. 441-488)

Thursday, April 19

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 487)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (p. 488)

Quantitative Data Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 14 (p. 441-488)

Tuesday, April 24

Quiz: Schutt, Chapter 14

Reporting Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 15 (p.489-515)

Thursday, April 26

Homework Due: SPSS Exercise (p. 515)

Homework Due: Developing a Research Proposal (with all previous homework assignments- p. 515)

Final Research Proposal Due

Reporting Research

Reading Schutt, Chapter 15 (p. 489-515)

Distribute Study Guide for Final Exam

Evaluations

Wednesday, May 2

Cumulative Final Exam