

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
SW 519 - SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH
Course Outline

2007-2008 ACADEMIC YEAR
SPRING SEMESTER -3 Credit Hours
Prerequisite: None

DR. William (Bill) Nugent
INSTRUCTOR

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.utk.csw.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*, 2007).

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

Course Description

This is a required Foundation course. This course is designed to help students gain an understanding of and appreciation for the use of research as a tool for professional evidence-based practice with and on behalf of at-risk populations and to evaluate programs and practices. Students are introduced to the concepts and skills underlying a systematic approach to social work research, including basic research terminology, the scientific method in social work, the value of research in social work, research ethics and the social work value base, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and relevant information and computer technologies.

Course Rationale

Social workers must be critical consumers of research and possess the knowledge of research and its method in order to use research as a tool for competent and accountable evidence-based practice with and on behalf of at-risk populations. Toward that end, it is essential that social workers have the foundation knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to formulate questions about

practice and policy, access and critically appraise the research literature available to answer such questions, and to prepare for more advanced methods used to evaluate programs and practices.

Course Competencies

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

1. Recognize and explain differences between an evidence-based helping professional and one guided by tradition, authority, dogma, and speculation [*Content: role, history, knowledge acquisition, and current status of research in social work; basic assumptions, concepts, foundations, and limitations of the traditional scientific approach and challenges to these foundations; principles, logic, limitations, and alternative conceptualizations of qualitative and quantitative research designs*];
2. Access relevant data bases for research evidence to support or refute social work practice, program and policy decisions [*Content: evidence based practice, purpose of a literature review, sources of literature, and assess the quality of available literature*]
3. Critically evaluate the methodological rigor of different kinds of qualitative and quantitative research and use this information to prioritize knowledge into a hierarchy of evidence from the most to the least rigorous [*Content: research questions/hypotheses, practice problems (and transitions to research questions and hypotheses from these practice problems), principles and methods of sampling, measurement, design; descriptive and inferential statistics; and framework for evaluating research studies*]
4. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research in reference to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, family structure, relational status, national origin, age, and religion [*Content: principles and methods of sampling, measurement, and design; data interpretation; and culturally competent research*]
5. Prepare, enter, and manipulate data using a spreadsheet or other software programs [*Content: Level of measurement, hypothesis testing, compute and interpret basic descriptive and inferential statistics; and selecting statistical tests*];
6. Apply appropriate empirical techniques to evaluate process and outcomes with program evaluation and single client systems [*Content: case level research designs; univariate and bivariate statistics*]
7. Articulate the core values and ethical standards of the social work profession (based on the NASW Code of Ethics and the International Federation of Social Work Code of Ethics) to research in settings with diverse constituencies across multiple systems [*Content: NASW code of ethics, historical overview of ethics in research, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and cultural competent research*];

8. Effectively communicate empirically-based knowledge (or lack thereof) [Content: writing a research report, APA style, research proposal components; framework for evaluation of research studies]

COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Required Text:

R. Engel and R. Schutt, (2005), *The Practice of Research in Social Work*. Sage.

This is the main course text and can be purchased at the University Bookstore at the University Center.

Supplemental Readings Text (Not to be purchased):

Weinbach, R., & Grinnell, R. (1995). *Statistics for social workers*, (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman. There will be a few assigned readings from this text. It is not necessary to purchase it.

MAJOR COURSE COMPETENCY EVALUATION TOOLS (ASSIGNMENTS) USED FOR GRADING

Exams: There are two exams. You will be given mid-term and end-of-the-term written examinations. Exams test your knowledge bases and practical readiness for all competencies both listed collectively above and under the session headings. Examination contents will be from the required readings, lecture notes, discussions and all exercises. Make-up exams will not be given unless there is an emergency. Exams will be given on Blackboard. The dates of the exams will be given in class.

Weekly Quizzes. There will be weekly quizzes covering assigned readings and material covered in class. These quizzes will be given on Blackboard, and will be discussed in class by the course instructor.

Computer Application assignment: This assignment will require you to use both descriptive and inferential statistics, and to interpret and write up the results of the statistical analyses in the context of a specific research hypothesis. The write up is due the last day of classes.

Research Notebook. Through the semester you will create a "Research Notebook" that contains brief descriptions of important research concepts. This notebook will help you prepare for exams; and can be used in the future to help you remember important research ideas as you take other courses, as well as become an evidence-based Social Work practitioner. This

notebook will be turned in to the course instructor at the end of the term for grading, and then will be returned to you.

Human Subjects Protection Online Course. You will complete an online human subjects protection course at the link:

<http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp> .

You must complete this course online and obtain and present a certificate of completion to the course instructor by the end of the fifth class

In-Class / Homework Learning Activities. There will be in-class / homework exercises designed to help you understand and apply the course material. One activity will be the development in class of a research proposal. A second will involve the critique of research articles published in major professional journals. There will also be in-class exercises in critical thinking.

READING EXPECTATIONS, ATTENDANCE RULES, GRADING PROCEDURES, AND OTHER GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Readings: Your readings are essential for understanding the bases of your competencies for all sessions. **You are required to read chapters in your textbook and assigned articles, book chapters, and other materials.** You are expected not only to read from these sources but also to share your understandings of the readings in the class discussions and exercises. Although your readings are not directly graded, they are clearly reflected in all other assignments listed below. Therefore, you are advised to read regularly and as comprehensively as possible not only from your required readings but also from the supplemental ones of your choice.

Class Attendance and Participation: Class attendance and participation is a requirement, as there will be in-class exercises designed to help you learn and understand course material, and will count a small portion of your grade. Please notify me in case you are not able to attend.

Grading: Your final grade will be computed as a weighted average as follows:

Exams:	40% (Mid-term 20% - End-of-the-term
20%)	
Weekly quizzes	20% combined
Computer / Data Analysis Assignment:	20%
Research Notebook	10%
Online IRB Course	5%
Class attendance and participation	5%

The scale to be utilized for grading is given below. You must make a grade of C or better to pass the course. No incompletes will be assigned unless there is an emergency as interpreted and

judged by the instructor as such.

Below 63	F	
63 – 67.99	D-	
68 - 72.99	D	
73 -77.99	C	
78 -82.99	C+	
83 -87.99	B	
88 -93.99	B+	
94 -100		A

General Instructions: Teaching / instructional tools will be lectures, PowerPoint presentations, in- class activities, and computer and homework exercises.

You are asked to obtain a simple calculator with a square root key for statistical computations needed for in-class exercises and the exams.

Finally, you may **NOT** receive cell phone calls during class sessions except in case of emergencies. Please make alternate arrangements for exam sessions for potential incoming emergency calls. Outgoing calls are not permitted.

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR, OUTLINE (competency and content), AND READINGS (The course instructor may adjust and alter this sequence based upon how well the class is progressing through the material)

WEEK 1 (SESSIONS I and II)

COMPETENCY numbers 1 and 2.

CONTENTS: *Common errors of inquiry; Critical thinking ; What is science? ; What is Social Work research? ; Why is research important to Social Work practice? ; What is a literature search and how is it done? ; What is an iatrogenic outcome? ; Evidence based practice versus practice based upon tradition, authority, dogma, and speculation.*

READINGS: Chapter 1 – 2, appendix D in main text; Gilgun article on evidence-based practice. Online at: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/15/1/52> ; Brief article at: http://www.calcasanet.org/ResourceLibrary/article_Evidence.htm ; Chapter 1 in B. Thyer and J. Wodarski (Eds.), (2007), *Social work in mental health: An evidence-based approach*. Chapter 1 in R. Whitaker (2002), *Mad in America*; K. Sowers, R. Ellis, and N. Myer-Adams, “Literature reviews,” chapter 23 (pp. 401 – 412) in B. Thyer (Ed.), *The handbook of social work research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Homework activity: Web search on name **Candace Newmaker**.

Critical thinking/evidence based practice in-class / homework exercise: Consider the belief, “There a relationship between the phase of the moon and such things as emergency room admissions, violence, and other human behaviors.” How might this belief have arisen and how might it be justified in a person’s mind? Consider this belief in a scientific manner; Conduct literature search for research on relationship between lunar phases and certain human behaviors; Use of Google Scholar, Psych Info, and other search engines.

WEEK 2 (SESSION III)

COMPETENCY numbers 6 and 7.

CONTENTS: *Concept of covariance/correlation and its use in research; NASW Code of Ethics; Human subjects protection.*

READINGS: Appendix G in main text; Weinbach & Grinnell: chapter 8 on correlation.

Do online human subjects protection course at:

<http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp> . You must complete this course online and present your certificate of completion to the course instructor by the end of the fifth class.

Critical thinking/evidence based practice in-class / homework exercise: Relate the notion of correlation to the belief of a relationship between lunar phases and certain human behaviors. What other variables of importance in social work practice may correlate with one another?

WEEKS 2-3-4 (SESSIONS IV, V, VI AND VII)

COMPETENCY number 3.

CONTENT: *Different forms of research questions/hypotheses, practice problems (and transitions to research questions and hypotheses from these practice problems), principles and methods of sampling, measurement, research design ; correlational/associational, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs; descriptive and inferential statistics; and framework for evaluating research studies.*

READINGS: Chapters 3 – 6, 8 in main text; Chapters in Weinbach: chapter 1.

Nugent, W. (2005). The probabilistic nature of diagnosis. In S. Kirk (Ed.), *Mental disorders in the social environment*. (pp. 96 – 119).

Ystgaard, M., Hestetun, I., Loeb, M., & Mehlum, L. (2004). Is there a specific relationship between childhood sexual and physical abuse and repeated suicidal behavior? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28(8), 863-875.

O'Farrell, T., Murphy, M., Alter, J., & Fals-Stewart, W. (2007). Brief family treatment intervention to promote aftercare among male substance abusing patients in inpatient detoxification: A quasi-experimental pilot study. *Addictive Behaviors*, 32(8), 1681 – 1691.

Dimidjian, S., Hollon, S. D., Dobson, K. S., Schmaling, K. B., Kohlenberg, R. J., Addis, M. E., et al. (2006). Randomized trial of behavioral activation, cognitive therapy, and antidepressant medication in the acute treatment of adults with major depression. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74, 658-670.

Cohen, D. Clinical psychopharmacology trials: “Gold standard or fools gold?” Chapter 19 in S. Kirk (Ed.), *Mental Disorders in the Social Environment* (pp. 347 – 367).

Critical thinking/evidence based practice exercises: Consider the belief: “Hypnosis is an effective way of helping someone to remember forgotten things?” Do literature search for evidence for and against this belief. What does the evidence seem to say about this belief? Transforming practice problems/questions into research questions and literature search questions. Do literature search to find evidence on the question, “Is there an effective intervention procedure for working with PTSD in female sexual assault victims?”

WEEK 4 (SESSION VIII) Mid-term Examination (To be taken on Blackboard)

COMPETENCY number 6.

CONTENT: *Use of single case designs to evaluate practice; methods of program evaluation.*

READINGS: Chapters 7 and 10 in main text.

Bradshaw, W. (1997). Evaluating cognitive behavioral treatment for schizophrenia. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 7(4), 419 – 445.

Nugent, W., Champlin, D., & Wiinimaki, L. (1997). The effects of anger control training on adolescent antisocial behavior. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 7(4), 446 – 462.

Critical thinking/evidence based practice exercise: Search the literature for examples of single case design evaluations of interventions with clients; and examples of the evaluation of programs for clients. Plan the single case evaluation of an intervention used with a client.

WEEK 5 (SESSION IX)

COMPETENCY numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

CONTENT: *Understanding systematic research reviews and meta-analysis; doing data base searches for information on treatments, client problems, etc.*

READINGS:

Article: Meta-analysis: Principles and procedures, available online at:
<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/315/7121/1533>

Cuijpers,P, van-Straten,A, & Warmerdam,L. (2007). Behavioral activation treatments of depression: A meta-analysis. *Clinical-Psychology-Review*, 27(3), 318-326.

Rind, B., Bauserman, R., & Tromovich, P. (1998). A meta-analytic examination of assumed properties of child sexual abuse using college samples. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(1), 22-53.
Available online at:

<http://64.233.179.104/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:cVz9ZeIyqscJ:www.haverford.edu/psych/ble/SciSoc/rind98.pdf+allintitle:+++child+OR+sexual+OR+abuse+author:Rind>

Re-read: K. Sowers, R. Ellis, and N. Myer-Adams, "Literature reviews," chapter 23 (pp. 401 – 412)

in B. Thyer (Ed.), *The handbook of social work research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Critical thinking/evidence based practice exercise: Critically examine claim, "The scheduling of activities causes a decrease in depression" Conduct literature search on this claim, and read and discuss meta-analysis. Critically examine claim, "There is a relationship between the experience of sexual abuse as a child and subsequent psychopathology." Read and discuss meta-analysis.

WEEK 5 (SESSION X)

COMPETENCY number 4.

CONTENT: *Race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation issues in social work research.*

READINGS:

Rogers-Farmer, A., & Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2001). Gender, ethnicity, and race matters. In B. Thyer (Ed.), (pp. 445-454), *The handbook of social work research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

LaPan, A., & Platt, T. (2005). "To stem the tide of degeneracy": The eugenic impulse in social

work. In S. Kirk (Ed.), *Mental Disorders in the Social Environment* (pp. 139 – 164). New York: Columbia Press.

Are traditional empirical research methods inherently biased against people of color? Chapter 2
in
W. Hudson & P. Nurius (Eds.), *Controversial Issues in Social Work Research* (pp. 22 – 36). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Critical thinking/evidence based practice exercise: Formulate social work practice problems/questions concerning working with minorities into literature search questions.

Discussion

question: How might minority groups be oppressed by the social work research process?

WEEK 6 (SESSION XI)

COMPETENCY number 5.

CONTENTS: *Statistical hypothesis testing, compute and interpret basic descriptive and inferential statistics; and selecting statistical tests]; univariate and bivariate statistics.*

READINGS:

Weinbach & Grinnell: Chapters 3, 7, and 10 (pp. 172 – 184).

You may also use another basic, introductory statistics textbook of your choice for additional readings.

In class exercise: Data entry, and applied data analysis using SPSS.

WEEK 6 (SESSION XII)

COMPETENCY number 3.

CONTENTS: *Qualitative research methodology.*

READINGS:

Chapter 9 in main text. M. Holosko, “Overview of qualitative research methods,” chapter 14 in B. Thyer (Ed.), *The handbook of social work research methods* (pp. 263 – 272). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. C. Franklin and M. Ballan, “Reliability and validity in qualitative research,” chapter 15 in B. Thyer (Ed.), *The handbook of social work research methods* (pp. 273 - 292). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rosen, D. (1973). *On being sane in insane places*. Online: <http://psychrights.org/Articles/Rosenham.htm> or <http://www.stanford.edu/~kocabas/onbeingsane.pdf>.

In class critical thinking/evidence based practice exercise: What implications does the Rosenhan article have for social work practice?

WEEK 7 (SESSIONS XIII AND XIV)

COMPETENCY number 8.

CONTENT: *Writing a research report, APA style, research proposal components; framework for evaluation of research studies*

READINGS:

Chapter 13 in main text; Appendices B and C in main text.

In-Class activities: Writing a research proposal; Reading and critiquing research.

END-OF-TERM EXAM (XIV th SESSION, OR, ANOTHER DESIGNATED DATE)
(Will be done on Blackboard)

SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARTICLES

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Burkett, S. R., & Warren, B. O. (1987). Religiosity, peer associations and adolescent marijuana use: A panel study of underlying causal structures. *Criminology*, 25(1), 109-130.

- Buttrick, S. M. (1990). The breadth and diversity of research. *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, 26(1), 3-4.
- Combs–Orme, T. D., Orme, J. G., & Guidry II, C. J. (1990). Reliability and validity of the protective services questionnaire. *Journal of Social Services Research*, 14(1/2), 1-20.
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- Cowger, C. D. (1984). Statistical significance tests: Scientific method? *Social Service Review*, 58(3), 358-372.
- Dansinger, M.L., Tatsioni, A., Wong, J.B., Chung, M., & Balk, E.M. (2007). Meta-analysis: The effect of dietary counseling for weight loss. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 147, 41-50.
- DeMaris, A. (1989). Attrition in batterers counseling: The role of social and demographic factors. *Social Service Review*, 142-153.
- Fraser, M. W., Lewis, R. E., & Norman, J. L. (1990). Research education in M.S.W. program: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 4(2), 83-104.
- Galinsky, M. J., & et al. (1993). Confronting the reality of collaborative practice research: Issues of practice, design, measurement and team development. *Social Work*, 38(4), 440-449.
- Grossman, B. (1980). Teaching research in the field of practice. *Social Work*, 25(2), pp. 36-39.
- Gruber, K. J., & Jones, R. J. (1983). Identifying determinants of risk of sexual victimization of youth: A multivariate approach. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 7, 17-24.
- Harper, K. V. (1990). Power and gender issues in academic administration: A study of directors of BSW programs. *Affilia*, 5(1), 81-93.
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- Hoffman, L. (1990). Constructing realities. *Family Process*, 29(1), 1-12.
- Holden, G., Moncler, M. S., Slinker, S. P., & Barker, K. M. (1990). Self-efficacy, children, and adolescents: A modern analysis. *Psychological Reports*, 66, 1044-1046.
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- Hudson, W. W. (1982). Scientific imperatives in social work research & practice. *Social Service Review*, 56(2), 246-258.
- Imre, R. W. (1985). Tacit knowledge in social work research and practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 55(2), 137-149.
- Imre, R. W. (1991). What do we need to know for good practice? *Social Work*, 36(3), 198-200.
- Karger, J. H. (1983). Science research and social work: Who controls the profession? *Social Work*, 28(3), 200-205.
- Krueger, L. W., & Ruckdeschel, R. (1985). Micro-computers in social service settings: Research applications. *Social Work*, 30(3), 219-224.
- Memmott, J., & Brennan, E. M. (1988). Helping orientations and strategies of natural helpers and social workers in rural settings. *Social Work Research & Abstracts*, 15-20.
- Miller, R. (1990). A method for quantifying unstructured data. *Social Work Research & Abstracts*, 26(3), 31-34.
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- O'hare, T. M. (1991). Integrating research and practice: A framework for implementation. *Social Work*, 36(3), 220-223.
- Peile, C. (1988). Research paradigms in social work: From stalemate to creative synthesis. *Social Service Review*, 62(18), 1-19.
- Pieper, M. H. (1989). The heuristic paradigm: A unifying and comprehensive approach to social work research. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 60(1), 8-34.
- Russell, R., & et al. (1993). Dysfunction in the family of origin of MSW and other graduate students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 29(1), 121-129.
- Sherman, L. V. (1988). Meta-analysis of research on social work practice in mental health. *Social Work*, 33(4), 325-330.
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474-480.

Weber, M. (1946). Science as a vocation. In H. H. Gerth, & C. W. Mills (Ed.), *From Max Weber essays in sociology* (pp. 129-156). London: Oxford University Press.

Weick, A. (1990). Knowledge as experience: Exploring new dimensions of social work inquiry. *Social Thought*, 16(3), 36-46.

Werrbach, G. B., & DePoy, E. (1993). Social work students' interest in working with persons with serious mental illness. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 29(2), 200-211.

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- Huck, S. W., et al. (1974). *Reading statistics and research*. New York: Harper & Row. There is a recent edition of this book, also.
- Hudson, W. W., & Hudson, K. L. (1990). *Statistical package for the personal computer*. Tempe, Arizona: Walmyr Publishing Company.
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Longman. Recent edition is also available.

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