

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

Sw 520 Foundations of Evidence-Based Practice
(1 credit hour)
Spring, 2008

Instructor: Rebecca (Becky) Bolen, Ph.D.
203 Henson Hall
865-974-3209
rbolen@utk.edu

Room 209
Wednesday 5:45 – 9:45
Section 1

Office Hours: By appointment

Pre-requisites: 510, 512, 513, 517, 519, 522, 538.

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 Advanced curriculum course. The course examines how to (1) convert information needs related to practice decisions into well-structured answerable questions; (2) efficiently locate the best evidence with which to answer such questions; (3) critically appraise such evidence; (4) apply results to practice and policy decisions; and (5) evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the application of such results to practice and policy decisions.

COURSE RATIONALE

In order to maximize services to client systems that are effective in achieving valued outcomes, and to minimize ineffective and harmful services, social workers must have the knowledge and skills to formulate well-structured answerable questions about practice and policy decisions, and locate, critically appraise, apply, and evaluate the best evidence for making practice and policy decisions within a culturally affirming generalist social work context.

COURSE COMPETENCIES

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

1. Define, articulate, and apply principles of critical thinking, by learning how to recognize, define, and avoid practice fallacies, to improve care given and care received with diverse clients/client systems. (*content: assertions and assumptions of practice; common logical fallacies when examining evidence; common errors in reasoning that violate principles of science called "practitioners' fallacies"; steps in evidence based practice; controversies and misconceptions about evidence based practice*).
2. Formulate well-structured answerable questions about practice and policy decisions through engagement with the client, a mutual understanding of expectations, and a careful assessment of service needs and availability, the client/client system's culture, context, and motivation. (*content: Client Oriented Practical Evidence Search" (COPES) questions; evaluation, prevention, assessment, description, and risk questions*).
3. Employ a scientific analytic approach using qualitative and/or quantitative methods to rigorously, critically and open-mindedly investigate, analyze, synthesize, and interpret available primary and secondary data and research findings, evaluation outcomes and other information toward formulation of professional judgments and conclusions (*content: steps in evidence based practice; utilizing electronic searches and information technology using methodological filters; quality of study rating forms and frameworks for evaluating research studies; meta-analysis*).
4. Analyze the influence and implications of cultural, geographic, community, gender-based, religious, political, ideological and other identities and orientations on thinking about social issues, concerns, ethics and values. (*content: identity formation; experiences of individuals in these contexts; formation of multiple identities; case studies of life experiences in identity formation and their relationships with the thoughts on contemporary social issues; critical analysis of self with respect to the above identity designations; history of cultural insensitivity in research; generalization of research findings to other groups; recruitment and retention of minority and oppressed populations in research studies; problematic issues in making research more culturally competent*).

REQUIRED BOOKS AND READINGS

Gibbs, L.E. (2003). *Evidenced-based practice for the helping professions: A practical guide with integrated multimedia*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thompson Learning.

All readings other than those from the required text are on the BlackBoard site for this class and can be downloaded or read from there.

ORGANIZATION OF COURSE AND BLACKBOARD

This course is designed to be primarily web-based. This course is largely about learning a fairly straight-forward methodology. As such, it can easily be done online. The class will only physically meet the first time. Brief weekly podcasts, the text, other readings, and handouts will be the primary basis for understanding the material, which will then be practiced via individual and group assignments that are due weekly.

All content and course materials for this course (with minor exceptions) are on BlackBoard. Content on BlackBoard is organized by week. For each week, a podcast that is a review of essential content is included, as are accompanying PowerPoint slides and handouts. ALL group and individual assignments are available on BlackBoard and are to be completed on BlackBoard. NO paper assignments will be accepted without prior approval of the professor. The one exception is the binder that is due at the end of the semester.

On the first day of class students will self-divide into groups of no more than 3 or 4 and will retain those groups throughout the semester. Problems within the group should be reported to the professor promptly. Student groups are responsible for completing their assignments on BlackBoard by the required due date. There will be a place on BlackBoard for groups to “meet” online to discuss and complete assignments. Alternatively, groups can meet at some other location, including the classroom, to complete their weekly work.

The professor will be on campus either in the classroom or in her office during the time scheduled for each class session. No content will be taught by the professor during this time, but she will be available to answer questions or provide guidance for individuals or groups on their assignments. Other than for the first class session, students are under no obligation to be in the classroom during the designated class time.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grading Criteria

Group assignments	35 points (5 points each)
Individual assignments	56 points (8 points each)
Binder	9 points

Final Grade

The University of Tennessee does not award minus grades at the graduate level. Therefore, the following grading scale is used for the final grade:

93 – 100	A
88 – 92	B+
83 – 87	B
78 – 82	C+
73 – 77	C
68 – 72	D+
63 – 67	D
<63	F

SYLLABUS SUMMARY

Session	Content	Assignments	Dates/ Due Dates
1	Course overview; EBP; Critical thinking	Class meets at 2:10 PM	Mar. 3
		Week 1 Group Assignments	9 AM, Mar. 4
2	Answerable research question	Week 1 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Mar. 10
		Week 2 Group Assignments	9 AM, Mar. 11
SPRING BREAK			Mar. 17
3	Track down evidence	Week 2 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Mar. 24
		Week 3 Group Assignments	9 AM, Mar. 25
4	Evaluating evidence: Multiple study reviews	Week 3 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Mar. 31
		Week 4 Group Assignments	9 AM, Apr. 1
5	Evaluating evidence: Multiple study reviews	Week 4 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Apr. 7
		Week 5 Group Assignments	9 AM, Apr. 8
6	Applying research evidence	Week 5 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Apr. 14
		Week 6 Group Assignments	9 AM, Apr. 15
7	Pulling it all together	Week 6 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Apr. 21
		Week 7 Group Assignments	9 AM, Apr. 22
		Week 7 Individual Assignments	2 PM, Apr. 28

NOTE: Readings may change slightly before class.

Session 1: Course Overview; Critical Thinking

Content	Course overview; overview of evidence-based practice (EBP); critical thinking; fallacies in thinking and reasoning; EBP and NASW Code of Ethics
Required Readings	Gibbs, Chapter 1. Evidence-based practice: Definition and what it offers to you and to your clients (pp. 1 – 24) Gibbs, Chapter 2. Become motivated to apply the current best evidence to practice (pp. 25 – 52). Critical Thinking Handbook

Session 2: Posing an Answerable Research Question

Content	Posing an answerable research question
Required Readings	Gibbs, Chapter 3. Pose a specific question of importance to your client's welfare (pp. 53 – 87). Yeager, K.R. (2006). A practical approach to formulating evidence-based questions in social work. In A.R. Roberts & K. R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 47-58). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work Practice</i> . New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

Session 3: Tracking down evidence

Content	Strategies for locating the best external evidence
Required Readings	Gibbs, Chapter 4. Locate the best evidence to answer question (pp. 88 – 146). Directory of internet resources on evidence-based practice and research in health care and human services. In A.R. Roberts & K. R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 349-360). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work Practice</i> . New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

Session 4: Evaluating treatment effectiveness: Multiple study reviews

Content	Evaluating treatment effectiveness research: multiple study reviews: systematic reviews; meta-analyses; practice guidelines
Required Readings	Gibbs, Chapter 5, Treatment effectiveness research: Evaluating study quality and applying results to practice (pp. 147 – 155) Gibbs, Chapter 6. Meta-analysis: Evaluating review quality and applying findings to practice (pp. 185 – 187)

After doing Group Exercise 1 (below), read the systematic review, meta-analysis, and practice guidelines you located. If you could not locate one of these, read the corresponding paper below.

Systematic review: If you have not located a systematic review in your area, go to the following web site and choose one that appears related to your area:

<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/SWCG/titles.asp>

Meta-analysis: Durlack, J.A. & Wells, A.M. (1997). Primary prevention mental health programs for children and adolescents: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology (Special issue: Meta-analysis of primary prevention programs)*, 25, 115-152.

Practice guidelines: APSAC

Session 5: Evaluating treatment effectiveness: Single studies

Content Evaluating treatment effectiveness research: randomized controlled trials (RCT), quasi-experimental study; case control study; pre-experimental study

Required Readings **Using this week's Group Exercise 1, read the (RCT), quasi-experimental study, case control, and pre-experimental study you located.**

Session 6: Applying research evidence; other types of research

Content Applying evidence-based practice to your client population; Considering client characteristics and culture; Evaluating other types of research: surveys; qualitative studies.

Required Readings Gibbs, Chapter 8. Descriptive and qualitative studies: Evaluating study quality and applying results to practice (**pp. 218 – 219, 227 – 228**)

Gone, J. P. & Alcantara, C. (2007). Identifying effective mental health interventions for American Indians and Alaska Natives: A review of the literature. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13, 356-363.

Using this week's Group Exercise 1, read the survey and qualitative study you located.

Session 7: Research into Practice; Becoming a Life-long Learner

Content Implementing the EBP; informed consent; becoming a life-long learner

Required Readings

Gibbs, Chapter 10. Teaching others (pp. 250, 258 – 262)