

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
SW 519 SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisite: None

Social Work 519 – Summer 2008
Foundation Research
Credit Hours: 3
Class Hours: MW 3:30 – 6:30 PM (209 Henson Hall)
Office Hours: MW: 2:30 – 3:30 PM (4 Henson Hall)

Instructor: Cynthia Rocha, PhD
212 Henson Hall
Phone: 974-6680
Email: crocha@utk.edu
Teaching Assistant: Courtney Cronley
4 Henson Hall
Email: ccronle1@utk.edu

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 (CT/EBP F.1, F.3,F.4; Practice F.6) [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 (Research: F.1) [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 (Research- F.2, F.3; CT/EBP- F.3) [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 (Diversity- F.1, F.3, F.5, F.6; Pops at- risk & SJ- F.2) [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 (Research- F.4) [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 (Research- F.5) [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 (Values/Ethics- F.1, F.3, F.4) [Content: NASW code of ethics, historical overview of ethics in research, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and cultural competent research]; and
8. Effectively communicate empirically-based knowledge (or lack thereof) (Research- F.6) [Content: writing a research report, APA style, research proposal components; framework for evaluation of research studies].

I. Required Text and Software

Text: Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research Methods for Social Work* (6th Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Software: Microsoft XP with Excel (Students lacking this resource can use computers in the computer lab located in Henson Hall.)

II. Course Instructions and Requirements

- All journal article assigned readings are available on Blackboard. Students are expected to download and read them according to the class outline.

- Submit all written assignments using Blackboard's digital dropbox. Submit each assignment at any time prior to the beginning of the class on which it is due. I will not accept paper submissions. Please contact me if you are unfamiliar with Blackboard or require special accommodations.
- Attendance is mandatory. Please contact me if you cannot attend class.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Please contact me via email and allow 24 hours for a response.

III. Assignments

Readings: Students will complete all required readings (textbook and articles) listed on the outline prior to each class. We will use the readings as the foundation for class discussion. Class participation will be primarily based on the student's ability to contribute to class discussions with knowledge gained in the readings. In addition, completing assigned readings will substantially improve student's performance on the final exam and the research paper.

Ethics exercise: Students will complete an on-line ethics tutorial on protecting human subjects in research. They will complete the tutorial at home and present a certificate to show successful completion of the exercise on Jul. 9.

Research proposal and presentation: Student groups will complete a quantitative research proposal. The exercise requires the use of a specific set of criteria provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. Groups will present their research on Aug. 4. The research proposal is due on Aug. 6.

Article critique: Students will complete a series of article critiques in class throughout the semester to increase their familiarity with research articles and critically assess them based on the concepts learned in class. Students will be asked to read and analyze one research article independently. The exercise involves the use of a specific set of criteria provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. The article critique is due Jul. 28.

Microsoft Excel exercises: Students will complete three computer lab exercises to gain hands-on experience with computer data management and analysis. This exercise involves the use of specific statistical procedures provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. The computer assignments are due on Jul. 23, Jul. 30, and Aug. 4.

Final Exam: Students will complete a multiple choice final exam covering the content of the entire course on Aug. 6.

IV. Evaluation

Grading scale:

A = 94-100

B = 93-85

C = 84-70

D = 69-60

F = <60

Grade distribution:

Class participation: 5%

Ethics certification: 5%

Article critique: 15%

Research proposal: 30%

Microsoft Excel exercises: 15%

Final exam: 30%

V. Class Outline

Class	Date	Topics	Reading and written assignments
1	7/07	Introduction Outline of research process Literature reviews Ethics	R & B: 1-4 Heinemann-Piper, J., Tyson, K., & Piper, M.H. (2002). Boland, K. & Atherton, C. (2002). Unrau, Y. A. & Beck, A. R. (2004). Weick, A. (1999). <i>Identify research groups</i>
2	7/09	Cultural competency Problem formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research questions ▪ Conceptualization and operationalization 	R & B: 5-7 Belcher, J. R., DeForge, B. R., Zanis, D. A. (2005). <i>Submit Ethics certificate</i>
3	7/14	Research designs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-experimental ▪ Quasi-experimental ▪ Experimental 	R & B: 10-11 Gulcur, L., Tsemberis, S., Stefanic, A., & Greenwood, R. M. (2007). North, C. S., Pollio, D. E., Perron, B., Eyrich, K. M., & Edward, L. S. (2005). <i>Identify research questions/hypotheses</i>
4	7/16	Research designs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single-case evaluation ▪ Applied/Evaluation ▪ Survey 	R & B: 12-13; 15 Tompsett, C. J., Toro, P. A., Guzicki, M., Manrique, M., & Zatakie, J. (2006). Kazi, M.A.F. (2000).
5	7/21	Sampling Excel Exercise One <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data entry 	R & B: 14 Hicks-Coolick, A., Burnside-Eaton, P., & Peters, A. (2003).
6	7/23	Measurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Validity and reliability ▪ Scaling and questionnaires 	R & B: 8-9 Glisson, C., Landsverk, J., Schoenwald, S., Kelleher, K., Hoagwood, K. E., Mayberg, S., & Green, P. (2008). <i>Microsoft Excel Exercise One due</i>
7	7/28	Data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Descriptive statistics ▪ Inferential statistics Excel Exercise Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Descriptive statistics ▪ Frequency distribution 	R & B: 20-22 Webb, D. A., Culhane, J., Metraux, S., Robbins, J. M., & Culhane, D. (2003). <i>Article critique due</i>
8	7/30	Qualitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Principles and methods ▪ Data analysis Excel Exercise Three <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-tabulations ▪ Correlations ▪ Comparing group means 	R & B: 17-19 Ringel, S. (2003). Brooks, F., Zuazaga, C., Wolk, J., & Adams, M. A. (2005). <i>Microsoft Excel Exercise Two due</i>
9	8/04	Research presentations Final exam review	<i>Microsoft Excel Exercise Three due</i>
10	8/06	Final Exam	<i>Research proposal due</i>