

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE**  
**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**SW 520 EVIDENCE BASED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**  
**Summer 2008-Online Class**  
**Instructor: Dr. Cindy Davis**  
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Credit hour: 1

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](http://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*).

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This is an online class using Blackboard. Students are expected to complete four modules online and assignments associated with each module. Class participation is expected and will be determined by your participation in online discussions. A student who wishes an extension of time for an assignment due to medical or personal emergency should consult the instructor in advance. However, an extension is not automatic and there may be a grade penalty.

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

There is no required text for this course. All readings and handouts can be found under “Course Documents” in Blackboard.

### **EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND GRADES**

The following scale will be used for the final course grade:

**A (95-100)** Outstanding/Superior. Student consistently exceed expectations.

**B+ (90-94)** Above Average. Student consistently meets, and occasionally exceeds, normal expectations for the course.

**B (85-89)** Average. Student consistently meets normal expectations for the course.

**C+ (80-84)** Below Average. There is unevenness in grasping course content. Student is inconsistent in meeting normal expectations for the course.

**C (70-79)** Poor. There is lack of understanding of course content. Student does not meet course expectations.

**F (69-Below)** Very Poor. Course expectations are not met. There is a lack of attendance or incomplete assignments.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Quizzes (4 quizzes at 15% each)	60%
Discussion Board Participation (4 discussion boards at 10% each)	40%
Total:	100%

- *Quizzes:* Students will have a quiz for each module in the class for a total of 4 quizzes. All quizzes are located under the modules in "Course Documents". The quizzes are open note, but you are not permitted to share answers or discuss the quiz with other students. Sharing answers or helping each other

constitutes cheating and will result in disciplinary action. The quiz will be timed and you have 5 hours to complete the each quiz. Once you open a quiz, you must complete the quiz within 5 hours. Do not open the quiz until you have reviewed the material for that module and you are ready to take the quiz. If you fail to take the quiz during the designated time, you will receive a penalty of two points for a make-up quiz. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit your answers for the quiz.

- *Discussion Boards:* Students are expected to participate in a discussion board with their classmates for each module covered in this course in a timely fashion. All discussion boards are located under the modules in "Course Documents". You are required to actively engaging in thoughtful discussions with your classmates. Your comment(s) can either be a new thread or a detailed response to other students' comments. A simply "Yes, I agree" or "No, I don't agree" is not an acceptable comment. Your grade for the discussion board will be dependent on the quality and appropriateness of your comments. It is important to remember that this is a classroom environment. Therefore, your language and tone on the discussion board should reflect this environment. I want to encourage you to challenge and disagree with each other, but this must be done in a respectful manner.

***Further information about all assignments is located under “Assignments” in Blackboard.***

## Course Outline

Date	Topic/Readings
Week 1	Reach Social Work Module 1: Defining Research Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach Social Work Module 1 Materials</li> <li>• Gambrill, E.D. (2003). Evidence-based practice: Sea change or the Emperor’s new clothes? <i>Journal of Social Work Education</i>, 39, 3-23.</li> <li>• Gambrill, E. (1999). Evidence based practice: An alternative to authority-based practice. <i>Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services</i>, 80, 341.</li> </ul>
Week 2	Reach Social Work Module 2: Finding Research Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach Social Work Module 2 Materials</li> <li>• Yeager, K.R. (2006). A practical approach to formulating evidence-based questions in social work. In A.R. Roberts &amp; K. R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 47-58). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work Practice</i>. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.</li> <li>• Directory of internet resources on evidence-based practice and research in health care and human services. In A.R. Roberts &amp; K.R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 349-360). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work Practice</i>. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.</li> <li>• Shlonsky, A. &amp; Gibbs, L. (2006). Will the real evidence-based practice please stand up? In A.R. Roberts &amp; K.R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 349-360). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work Practice</i>. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.</li> </ul>
Week 3	Reach Social Work Module 3: Assessing Research Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach Social Work Module 3 Materials</li> <li>• Durlack, J.A. &amp; Wells, A.M. (1997). Primary prevention mental health programs for children and adolescents: A meta-analytic review. <i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i> (Special issue: Meta-analysis of primary prevention programs), 25, 115-152.</li> </ul>
Week 4	Reach Social Work Module 4: Applying Research Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach Social Work Module 4 Materials</li> <li>• Rubin &amp; Babbie (2007). Chp #5: Culturally Competent Research</li> <li>• Mullen, E. J. (2006). Facilitating practitioner use of evidence-based practice. In A.R. Roberts &amp; K. R. Yeager (Eds.) (pp. 152-159). <i>Foundations of Evidenced-Based Social Work</i></li> </ul>

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  - Gira, E. C., Kessler, M. L., & Poertner, J. (2004). Influencing social workers to use research evidence in practice: Lessons from medicine and the allied health professions. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14(2), 68-79.
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## **ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Briggs, H. E., & Rzepnicki, T. L. (Eds.). (2004). *Using Evidence in Social Work Practice: Behavioral Perspectives*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, Inc.

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Gambrill, E. (1999). Evidence-based practice: an alternative to authority-based practice. *Families in Society: The*

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