Instructor Name: Dr. Matthew J. Cuellar  
Class Time: 7:00pm – 8:00pm CT (Every Other Thursday in June)  
Classroom: Zoom (Online; Zoom Link: https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/3871857746)  
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University of Tennessee Policies

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.csw.utk.edu). Students are also expected to sign and adhere to the Social Work Field Placement Code of Conduct.

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).

University Civility Statement

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: http://civility.utk.edu/.

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 100 Dunford Hall (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.
Dimensions of Diversity
The College of Social Work and the University of Tennessee welcome and honor all people. In accordance with the U.S. National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement), “the dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including” age, class, color, culture, mental or physical disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, marital status, national origin, political ideology, race, regionality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. The College values intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge, and academic freedom and integrity. “A person’s diverse life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement). The College of Social Work promotes social justice and social change, and strives to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

Course Description
This is a required foundation course for your MSSW program. This course is designed to teach students how to become producers and consumers of research and 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. In this regard, it is essential that social workers have the foundational 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. While students will be provided with the information necessary to understand how to produce social work research, this course aims to provide students with the knowledge by which they can begin to critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative research on social work practice produced by others and incorporate this research into their practice.

Prerequisites
Graduate standing with admission to the MSSW Distance Education Program.

Course Competencies
By completion of this course, students are expected to demonstrate (through course activities, assignments and quizzes):

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];

1. 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]

2. 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, COPES/PICO and other 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]

3. 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]

4. 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; introduction to R; and selecting statistical tests];

5. 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]

6. 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];

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]

Core Competencies

1. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
2. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
3. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
4. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
5. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
6. Evaluate individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
Objectives/ Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

A. Describe the scientific principles upon which social work research is based
B. Describe the various purposes of social work research, particularly as these relate to diverse, oppressed, and underserved populations
C. Critique basic principles of measurement and sampling
D. Assess research designs and data collection strategies
E. Interpret data employing appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics
F. Critically assess qualitative data
G. Critically assess ethical principles regarding the collection and use of data
H. Demonstrate the use of Evidence-Based Practice models as mechanisms for addressing practice questions
I. Apply research principles and techniques to the evaluation of practice and to the accumulation and use of knowledge relevant to policy, practice, advocacy, social change, and social and economic justice for people across the life span

Areas of Content

A. Philosophy of empirical inquiry
   1. History
   2. Critical thinking skills

B. Elements of a critical appraisal of a research report
   1. Rationale for using evidence-based practice
   2. Evidence-based model(s) of practice
   3. Critically evaluating evidence-based practice

D. Ethics in research
   1. Protection of human participants
   2. IRBs and safety committees
   3. Ethical practice standards
   4. Importance of knowing current practice and research literature
E. Research questions and hypotheses

F. Different types of empirical inquiry (research designs…)
1. Single system vs. group designs
2. Qualitative vs. quantitative
3. Exploratory vs. descriptive vs. explanatory

G. Sampling
1. Probability
2. Non-probability

H. Measurement
1. Levels of measurement
2. Systematic & non-systematic bias
3. Threats to validity
4. Reliability

I. Instrumentation
1. Reliability
2. Validity
3. Characteristics of good items

J. Data Collection
1. Quantitative vs. qualitative data
2. Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal data collection
3. Data collection methods
4. Strengths and weaknesses inherent in different methods of data collection

K. Data Analysis
1. Univariate statistics
   . Measures of central tendency
   . Measures of dispersion
   . Interpreting a frequency distribution

   2. Bivariate statistics
      . Relationships between variables (contingency tables)
      . Correlations
      . Comparing means of groups
      . Effect sizes

1. Analyzing data from qualitative studies

2. Clinical significance vs. statistical significance

L. Interpreting and reporting research
Textbooks and other readings:

Required texts:


*The Dudley text can be rented directly from publisher at a discounted student rate here: http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/8452856/9780205011285?__hdv=6.8

*Research methods and statistics texts used at the undergraduate level are highly recommended for this course. Please utilize previous texts you have used in other courses to supplement the required course text, but not to substitute for it! Additional readings are also provided, generally through the Blackboard Collaborate site. Handouts will be available on Blackboard organized by the class session in which it is anticipated the handout will be covered.
Student Expectations:

Student Evaluation Summary

A. Ethics Activity Participation 15%
B. UTK CITI Human Subjects Training 10%
C. Online EBP Training 10%
D. Quizzes 15%
E. Final Assignment Part 1 10%
F. Final Assignment Part 2 10%
G. Final Assignment Part 3 10%
H. Final Assignment Part 4 20%

Total 100%

Student Evaluation Procedures and Grades

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

A (94-100) Outstanding/Superior. Student consistently exceeds expectations.

B+ (90-93) 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.
A. Ethics Activity (CC 7; 2.1.2 & 2.1.4): This grade provides accountability for your viewing of two documentaries: Deadly Deception on the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and The Belmont Report. After viewing both videos and reading the assigned readings, you are then to participate in an online discussion about the videos. Your discussion should include your opinion and interpretation of the two videos and an attempt to discuss the importance of ethics in research with human subjects. To receive full credit for this assignment, each student must post their own response to the videos and comment on at least two other students’ responses (for a total of three posts from each student in the discussion board). You are to view both videos and participate in the discussion within seven days of the date in which the assignment is assigned. This assignment is due June 9th.

Ethical Safeguards for Human Subject Research:

Belmont Report Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wn5qAUC_uZg
Access to the Belmont Report: https://archive.org/details/belmontreporteth00unit

Deadly Deception Documentary:

Deadly Deception Documentary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNa8CnC4sSU
Tuskegee Timeline: http://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/timeline.htm

B. UTK CITI Human Subjects Training (CC 7; 2.1.2 & 2.1.4): This grade provides accountability for completing the UTK CITI Training for research with Human Subjects. This is a basic course in human subjects training, and all researchers must complete this before conducting research with human subjects. You are to register with CITI, complete the basic course in human subjects, and submit a PDF version of your completed certificate on the Blackboard website. Additionally, write up what you learned from the human subjects training and submit a reflection paper. Please submit your PDF certificate and your reflection paper together on or before July 6, 2016 (last day of first-term). You are encouraged to complete this assignment sooner rather than later. You may begin this assignment here: http://research.utk.edu/training-workshops/citi/

C. Online EBP Training (CC 1, 2; 2.1.2): Participate in the training at http://www.ebbp.org/training.html. You need to create the id and password to log in. There are 8 learning modules (1) EBP process module (2) Search for evidence module (3) systematic review module (4) critical appraisal module (5) Stakeholder dialogue about evidence based practice (6) implementation of evidence based practice (7) Randomized controlled trials and either (8) shared decision making with individual clients or collaborative decision making with communities) and you need to complete all. After you complete each module, provide proof of completion and write up what you learned from it and submit a reflection paper on the training. Both the proof of completion and reflection paper should be submitted together on or before the July 6, 2016.
D. Quizzes (CC 1, 2, 3, 4, 8; 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4): To provide accountability for the prescribed readings and viewings as well as the class activities and discussions, there will be a quiz for each week the class is scheduled to meet (three total). Items on quizzes will come directly from the textbook! The quizzes will be available via Blackboard for one week. Quizzes will be cumulative and will cover any material presented to date when the quiz is assigned.

E. Final (Writing) Assignments (CC 1, 2, 3, 4, 8; 2.1.10(b), 2.1.10(d)): A description of the writing assignment for this course is found at the end of this document. The assignment has four parts and will be submitted electronically over the course of the semester. Note also the rubric that will be used to score this assignment.

ATTENDANCE and MAKE UP WORK: You are expected to be in attendance for all scheduled classes unless there is a valid reason for an absence. All class meetings will be recorded and accessible to you in the case that you are unable to attend the scheduled class meetings.

WRITING: In accordance with the course and core competencies, all writing assignments must demonstrate acceptable writing style including the use of Standard English, good organization, acceptable punctuation and grammar, and the use of current APA (American Psychological Association) style reference citation if references are used. All assignments, except any specifically noted by the instructor, must be word processed, using double-spacing with one-inch margins on all sides in a 12-point font. The instructor reserves the right to deduct points for those students who do not follow these guidelines. Late papers will result in a penalty of a decrease of one letter grade for each day late. All writing assignments are to be submitted electronically (to the Blackboard site) under its respective assignment tab with the student’s last name and assignment name as the subject (e.g. “Cuellar_Assignment 1”). This information in the subject line of the email is mandatory and messages arriving without it may not be viewed.

For assignments in which you are using references, direct quotes from the literature should generally NOT be used. You should paraphrase or summarize the content and cite the material using correct APA format. Only in rare circumstances in which the quote is so compelling that you cannot paraphrase it without losing the meaning or impact of the statement should a direct quote be used.
Course Presentation

This course is organized into 6 weekly sessions with 3 scheduled meetings via Zoom; each session will include readings from the textbook (and perhaps other supplemental readings), an in-class lecture or discussion, a quiz, or an additional assignment. In general, students are expected to: 1) do the assigned readings each week; 2) complete class activities related to the week’s assignment; 3) attend the scheduled course meetings; and 4) actively participate in online discussions and class activities/assignments.

A Discussion Board for the course is available in Blackboard. Please join in the Introduction forum to introduce yourself before the second week of class. A thread is also available for general questions. Please use this thread to ask questions regarding the syllabus, assignments, exams, etc. if you are not able to get an answer in a class session or via email. A classmate may be able to answer a question about content more quickly than your instructor. In addition, posting content questions in the Discussion Board will allow everyone to see the answers to common questions. The instructor monitors the Discussion Board with the intention of providing responses in a timely manner when deemed necessary.

Discussions created as assignments (as in peer-review activities) require contributions to the discussion board. According to these guidelines, discussion board postings should be of quality rather than quantity. For example, a response that basically says “I agree” with no additional information or documentation will earn zero credit; responses that possess a higher standard of quality will be graded accordingly.

Common procedural or curricular questions that arise each semester can be answered by the instructor. If you choose to email the instructor at his UTK email address (mcuellar@utk.edu), please include your last name and “SW519 SUMMER 2016” in the subject line. Failure to include such information in the subject line of the email might result in me not receiving your email.
COURSE OUTLINE

The following outline is provided as a tentative guide; however, variations may occur. Lecture content and reading content may not always be congruent for the same session, due to variations in textbook sequencing of material. Usually, lectures and class activities will be intended as supplemental to the reading. (The textbook can present more information than can be presented in a lecture.)

This class is scheduled to meet three times over the course of the mini-semester. Meeting dates are noted below. All class meetings will be recorded in the case that you are unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. If such a conflict arises, or you plan to regularly miss the course meetings as scheduled below, please notify the instructor. While attending the course is not mandatory, there will be assignments each week and you are strongly encouraged to do what you can to attend the course meetings. You are expected to keep up with the recordings, readings, and class activities/assignments regardless of if you are able to attend the course meetings.

Week 1 – Thursday, June 2

*COURSE MEETING*
Content Area Focus: Introduction / Science and Social Work / Ethics
Required Reading: Dudley: Ch. 1, 2, & 3

Class Activities:
Syllabus Review
Lecture: Science and social work: How we can know what we know
Philosophies and Perspectives on Research
The Scientific Method
Producing vs. Consuming Social Work Research
Ethics and Social Work

DUE TODAY:
Introduce yourself to the class via Blackboard under Discussions before next week and complete Quiz 1 and the Ethics Activity by next week

Week 2 – Thursday, June 9

Content Area Focus: Evidence-Based Practice and Developing COPES Questions
Required Reading: Provided in Blackboard

Class Activities:
Lecture (Course Recording): COPES Questions / Research Questions EBP – Hot off the press
Introduction to Writing Assignments

DUE TODAY:
Ethics Activity and Quiz 1

Week 3 – Thursday, June 16
*COURSE MEETING*

Content Area Focus: Research Study Focus / Topic Selection and Literature Reviews / Methodology

Required Reading: Dudley Ch. 4, 6; Pyrczak Ch. 1 – 5; Dudley Ch. 7; Pyrczak Ch. 9.

Class Activities:
Lecture: What issues affect topic selection? What’s out there? What do we know? Evaluating Literature Reviews Developing research questions and hypotheses Research problems, research questions Three Conditions of Causal Relationships Experimental, Quasi-Experimental, and Non-Experimental Research Qualitative vs. Quantitative

DUE TODAY:
Final Assignment Part 1 (Your topic will be approved via instructor feedback when you submit this assignment)

Week 4 – Thursday, June 23rd, 2016

Content Area Focus: Sampling / Measurement and Data Collection

Required Reading: Dudley Ch. 5 & 8; Pyrczak Ch. 6 – 8. Class Lecture (Course Recording): Sampling Measurement and Instrumentation Evaluating Measures How to create survey instruments

DUE:
Quiz #2 Final Assignment Part 2

Week 5 – Thursday, June 30th, 2016

*COURSE MEETING*

Content Area Focus: Data Analysis and Evaluating Empirical Research

Required Reading: Dudley: Ch. 13, 14; Pyrczak Ch. 10, 11. Class Activity:
Lecture: Basic “Stats” Stuff Descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency, dispersion, association, etc.)
Testing hypotheses, significance levels, t-tests, ANOVA, $X^2$, effect size, clinical significance Evaluating Empirical Research A Quick Note on Program and Practice Evaluation

**DUE TODAY:**
Final Assignment Part 3

Week 6 – July 5th, 2016

**Content Area Focus: Evaluating Empirical Research Class Activity (Course Recording):**
Wrapping Up.

**DUE TODAY:**
Final Assignment Part 4 CITI and EBP Training Activities *Please complete Student Evaluations of Instructor and the “post-course” survey via the link provided in Blackboard.

***FINAL ASSIGNMENT PART 4 DUE ON July 5th 2016***
SOWK 519 FINAL ASSIGNMENT DIRECTIONS

This is an individual assignment. Although consultation can be sought from other students and the instructors as you plan your project, the writing must be your own. The instructor is here to help you through this assignment, but you must contact the instructor if you need help. I cannot help you if you do not contact me in a timely manner.

Part 1 Think about clients with whom you have worked at an agency (i.e., at a past field placement or your place of employment if you are employed in a social service agency) and the reasons they seek/sought help. Write a COPES or PICO question (see Week 3 PP) related to those clients to which you would like to know the answer. For the purposes of this assignment, you are restricted to asking only an EFFECTIVENESS type of question. You may need to do some preliminary exploratory work to obtain the type of information you need to write your question. You may need to find out what's going on in the agency and with its clients with regard to current practice, etc., if you don't already know that kind of information or you may need to do some preliminary literature searching.

Part 2 Create a search plan in order to obtain evidence to answer your COPES question. Implement the search plan. You must specify the database(s) you choose to search and provide a short rationale for why you chose to search those particular databases. Remember, your task in this part is to provide a convincing argument that you found the best available information to answer your question-you MUST document the process you went through. Therefore, you should address not only the “what” aspect of your process (what you did), but also the “why” aspect (why you made the choices you did).

Part 3 Report your conclusions to your COPES/PICO question. Based on your reading of articles, chapters, etc., what do you conclude about the effectiveness of the selected intervention to help this client? How would the results of your inquiry influence what you would recommend in intervening with this client/these clients? NOTE: many students have found that providing a brief review of the literature they have read strengthens their conclusions.

Part 4 Select the article that you judge to be most relevant and useful to answer your “effectiveness” COPES question, remembering the restriction to choose an article describing a project that used quantitative methods. Using that article, you will demonstrate your analytical and critical thinking skills as those skills relate to the research methods knowledge you've gained by critiquing the article you've chosen.

One way to address this part of the assignment is to consider writing at least one paragraph covering the primary elements of a research report (title & abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion); for some sections multiple paragraphs will be necessary. (HINT: I have seen some papers in the past that present the “critique” as simply answering the specific questions from the Pyrczak text, e.g., “the title is less than 40 words long”; “The title identifies the target population.” This is NOT good writing, and it does not show your ability to SYNTHESIZE the material and critique it. So, use questions from others to guide your thinking, but don’t use them as a replacement for your thinking. HINT 2: In order to score well on this assignment you need to have an opinion about the article. It is not enough to report what is in the article. You will need to discuss and comment on the article's content—don’t just tell me what is in the article, which I can read myself. I will post a Powerpoint to help with this.)
Consider supporting your critiques with specific examples from the article you are critiquing. Papers will be evaluated based on clarity and accuracy in explaining concepts and appropriate application of concepts to the particular study. (SEE THE RUBRIC UNDER EACH ASSIGNMENT ON BLACKBOARD)

Be sure you include an electronic copy of the article itself when you turn in the assignment. If the article you choose cannot be transmitted electronically, it is your responsibility to find a way to get a copy to the instructor.
The “Down and Dirty” for the Final Assignment

For Part 1 of this assignment you must include: A short description of the “client” and your COPES question. (Page limit-1 page.)

For Part 2 of the assignment you must include: A presentation of the process you used to find the information to answer your question and a list of the material you read to answer your question. This document should provide compelling evidence that you found the best available information regarding the question you asked. (No page limit, but you should be able to accomplish this task within about eight pages.)

For Part 3 of the assignment you must include: Your conclusion about the COPES question and recommendation you would make to the client about how to proceed. (While Part 3 will be scored only on the conclusion and recommendation material, you should include Parts 1 and 2 also in order for the reader to understand your comments.) (Page limit-eight pages. Your conclusion and recommendation themselves should not take more than about half a page…the other pages would be devoted to your review of the literature.)

For Part 4 of the assignment you must include your critique of a research article. Be sure to include the formal citation in the document. The body of this part of the assignment should not exceed seven pages. Do include an electronic copy of the article you critique in your submission of Part 4.

The papers should be written double-spaced in a 12-point font with one inch margins. Use headings to indicate components of the paper. PAGE LIMITS DO NOT INCLUDE THE TITLE PAGE OR REFERENCES. The assignments should be submitted electronically to the instructor through the assignments tab of the class Blackboard website. Please include your last name as part of the name of the electronic files that you attach to your submission email.