

SW 522 - Basic Social Work Research
Winter 2013

Instructor: Perry Silverschanz, PhD, MSW
Meeting time: Monday 9am-12pm
Meeting place: 3816 SSWB
Office location: 3764 SSWB
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Office hours: 12-1 pm Mondays (and *always* available by appointment!)



1. Course Description:

This course is designed to increase students' comfort level with research methods and statistical analyses and to increase their appreciation of the relevance of research and evaluation for social work practice. It will provide content on the logic of inquiry and the necessity for an empirical approach to practice. The process of formulating appropriate research questions and hypotheses, techniques for testing relationships and patterns among variables, methods of data collection, methods to assess and improve the validity and reliability of data and measures, and the ethics of scientific inquiry will be addressed. This course will help students understand practice through the critical examination of methods associated with decision-making, critical thinking, and ethical judgment. The course content will integrate the core themes related to multiculturalism and diversity; social justice and social change; promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation; and behavioral and social science research.

2. Course Content:

This course will cover qualitative and quantitative research methods, commonly used statistical procedures, and approaches to the evaluation of practice. Students will learn how to understand and appreciate a scientific approach to building practice knowledge and for evaluating practice. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing one's ability to critique theoretical foundations of research, form research questions, apply research methods, conduct statistical analysis, and interpret research reports. The latest statistical, graphical, and display technologies will be used.

3. Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1) Critically evaluate the design, methodology, and conclusions of social work and social and behavioral science research publications.

- a. understand research concepts to permit a critical analysis of research and evaluation studies with respect to quality, bias, ethics, and potential applications.
- b. assess the strengths and weaknesses of selected research designs and methodology.
- c. assess the strengths and weaknesses of selected measures and measurement strategies.
- d. assess the cultural sensitivity of measures and measurement strategies.
- e. assess the biases and implications of conclusions drawn in the research studies.

2) Apply appropriate research designs and methodologies of the scientific method to social work practice issues relevant to the diverse populations at risk (dimension: ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation).

- a. frame research questions and develop problem statements that reflect the issues under consideration.
- b. apply research concepts and principles in the development and use of selected qualitative and quantitative methodologies and analytical approaches.
- c. choose appropriate research designs and methodology given a particular research question.
- d. demonstrate the ability to select culturally appropriate measures and measurement strategies given specific populations.
- e. construct simple indices, questionnaires, and measures relevant to the evaluation of practice.
- f. conduct selected analytic and statistical procedures.
- g. demonstrate the ability to interpret and draw conclusions from selected analytic and statistical procedures.

3) Identify the value and ethical considerations of sound social work research.

- a. understand ethical issues in the conduct of research and evaluation.
- b. understand the relevance and applicability of research in working with disadvantaged, disenfranchised, and diverse populations.
- c. examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

4. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity*. This course will include material on methods to improve the cultural inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity of research methods. This content will cover culturally sensitive measures, inclusion of diverse groups of adequate size in sampling, culturally aware interpretations of data, and culturally responsible dissemination of results. The basic purpose of research and practice evaluation will also be analyzed from culturally bound perspectives.

- *Social Justice and Social Change*. Students will gain an understanding of the ways in which research and evaluation have sometimes been used against oppressed groups, for example through unethical practices, distortion of results, or fabrication of data. Examples will be given of ways in which research can be used to empower socially disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities. These examples will include studies in which the research participants were involved in the study during all of its stages.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*. Studies reviewed in the course will include examination of projects aimed at enhancing well-being and preventing problems. The methodological and ethical problems unique to studies of promotion and prevention efforts will be described. The social work values consistent with promotion/prevention research will be analyzed.

• *Behavioral and Social Science Research*. The unique challenges in applying social science knowledge and methods to social work settings will be covered. These challenges include the practical and ethical dilemmas of applied research. Emphasis will be placed on the way established theories and methods influence the selection of research questions and methods. Studies will be critiqued for their ability to advance social science theory and knowledge and to improve social work practice.

6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

The research and evaluation section of the NASW Code of Ethics will be applied throughout this course. Examples of common ethical dilemmas will be presented. Among the areas of ethics to be covered will be informed consent procedures, protection of research participants from harm, confidentiality, and accurate reporting of results. Emphasis will also be placed on the social workers' ethical obligation to use scientifically sound practice and to continually evaluate practice and programs.

5. Course Design:

Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills including: class discussion, **pop quizzes**, instructor lectures, projects, small group exercises, and computer lab work. The exercises complement the lecture and provide opportunities to gain practice in the use of the tools of the scientific method. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings **prior to class** and be prepared to engage in critical thinking and sharing of their ideas.

Required Text

Dudley, J.R. (2011). *Research methods for social work: Being producers and consumers of research* (2nd ed. updated). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

All other Readings

Additional readings will be available on CTools.

Computer lab work

We will be spending time in the computer lab becoming familiar with data (which are just numbers!) and manipulating them (that is, organizing the numbers to make sense of them!) using the statistical program SPSS (which stands for "Statistical Program for the Social Sciences"). Do not become anxious about this aspect of the course – I will guide you through the steps in such a way that you will be able to complete your work and possibly even understand it!

My Responsibility: I know that some of you may have been dreading this course, and I feel it is my job to help you succeed. To that end, please ask questions in class, ask me to explain things again, email me, meet with me outside of class, or let me know of anything else I can do to help you understand the material. There is no "dumb" question – if you are wondering about or confused by something, I can guarantee that someone else in class is thinking exactly the same thing! I'm a research geek 😊 and I love research and the process of research, but I can't help unless I know you don't understand. So interrupt me and ASK! Email me and ASK! Make an appointment with me and ASK!

Your Responsibility: Do all readings before class, attend all class sessions, participate in class discussions and activities, think about how the material is related to your placement/job/interests, and especially, **ask questions!**

Accommodations: If you have needs that are not met by the facilities or methods used in the course, please let me know. I will do my best to make appropriate accommodations.

Your grade will be based on:

#1 Plagiarism test	10
#2 Article analysis	15
#3 (a+b) COPEs question	25
#4 Compare quantitative/qualitative	15
#5 Literature review	50
#6 Citation homework	15
#7 Your Method and procedures	20
#8 Present your own case	10
Computer lab exercises A	30
Computer lab exercises B	30
Computer lab exercises C	30
Attendance	25
In-class exercises/quizzes	15
TOTAL	280 pts
BONUS POINTS	
(opportunities for additional points will be offered)	

A standard grading scale will be used:

280-300 pts	A	231-239	C+
270-279	A-	219-230	C
261-269	B+	210-218	C-
249-260	B	201-209	D+
240-248	B-	189-200	D

SOCIAL WORK 522 – BASIC SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH**Class Schedule – Winter 2013****As of 1-13-13 **Subject to change!****

DATE	WEEK	(Assignments in bold)
Jan 14	One	Topic: What is Research? Why do Social Workers need Research? Ways of Knowing; Philosophy of Science and the Scientific Method; Introduction to terminology <i>(no readings for today; no computer lab)</i> Assigned: #1—Plagiarism quiz
Jan 21		Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
Jan 28	Two	Topic: Ethics in Research; Issues of Bias; Introduction to Research Types Readings: Dudley Ch 1, 2, 3 Computer lab: Assigned: #2 Article analysis Assignment due: #1 Plagiarism quiz
Feb 4	Three	Topic: the Research Topic; Asking Questions that can be Answered; Readings: Dudley Ch 4; Gibbs Ch 3 (on CTools) Computer lab: Searching for Resources w/librarian Assigned: #3a COPES question Assignment due: #2 Article analysis
Feb 11	Four	Topic Research Designs; Measurement Readings: Dudley Ch 6, 7 Computer lab: Literature Searches in Depth Assigned: nada Assignment due: #3a COPES question
Feb 18	Five	Topic: Sampling; Intro to Data Analysis Readings: Dudley Ch 8, 13 Computer lab: Navigating datasets; Practice with datasets; Introduction to data entry Assigned: #5 Compare quant/qual approaches
Feb 25	Six	Topic: The Empirical Paper; Literature Review Readings: Krueger & Neuman Ch 16; Bem, 2004 (on CTools) Computer lab: Introduction to using SPSS for analysis Assigned: #3b Your Final Topic; #6 Literature Review (due Apr 8, but bonus points for turning in by Apr 1!) Assignment due: #5 Compare Quant-Qual
WINTER (SPRING) BREAK! ☺		

Mar 11	Seven	Topic: Where do data come from? Sources of Data; Measurement Readings: Dudley Ch 5, 12 Computer lab: More Data Analysis; Tables and Graphs Assigned: #7 Citation homework Assignment due: #3b Your Final Topic!
Mar 18	Eight	Topic: Survey Research; Operationalization Readings: Dudley Ch 9; Kreuger & Neuman (2006) Ch 10 Computer lab: Review of skills learned so far; practice with SPSS Assigned: (none!) Assignment due: #7 Citation homework
Mar 25	Nine	Topic: Qualitative Research Readings: Dudley Ch 10, 14 Computer lab: Begin Group Exercises #A —turn in Assigned: (none!) Assignment due: (none!)
Apr 1	Ten	Topic: Reliability and validity; Threats to validity Readings: Mark Ch 14 (on CTools) Computer lab: More Group Exercises #B – turn in Assigned: (none, but lit review due next week!) Assignment due: (none – but bonus points for lit review turned in today)
Apr 8	Eleven	Topic: Evaluation research; Logic Models Readings: Dudley Ch 16; Westerfelt & Dietz Ch 9 Computer lab: Final Group Exercises #C – turn in Assigned: #8 Your Method & Procedures Assignment due: #6 Literature Review
Apr 15	Twelve	Topic: Causal Relationships; Writing the Report; Topics on Licensing Exam Readings: Dudley Ch 11, 15 Computer lab: Correct group assignments; essay; student evaluations of the course Assigned: (none!) Assignment due: #8 Your Method & Procedures
Apr 22	Thirtn	Review semester: How far did we come? Where are we going? Student presentations!
