

**Social Work 522: Basic Social Work Research
Winter 2013**

Section 002: Monday 1-4 pm, Rm. B684 SSWB
Instructor: Prof. Lydia Li.
Office: Rm. 3839, SSWB
Phone: 734-936-4850
Email: lydiali@umich.edu
Office Hours: Wed 2-5 pm

1. Course Description:

This course 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. Course Design:

Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills including: lecture, in-class team activity, group project, homework and lab work. We will use instructional technology to facilitate communication and collaboration. 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.

5. 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.

7. Accommodations / Special Needs:

If you have a disability or impairment that requires an accommodation, and/or if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments, please contact the instructor within two weeks after the class starts to discuss what modifications or appropriate arrangements are necessary. Any information you give will be treated as private and confidential.

8. Assignments (see a separate handout):

- (1) Weekly response to Forum topics in CTools (5%. Due: 8 pm the night before the corresponding class session.)
- (2) Topics and bibliography of your research study (5%. Due: 2/2)
- (3) Research questions, literature review summary and hypothesis (5%. Due: 2/9)
- (4) Sample and data collection plan (5%. Due: 2/16)
- (5) Measures and instrumentation (5%. Due: 2/23)
- (6) In-class mid-term exam (15%. Due: 2/25)
- (7) Critique of empirical studies (10%. Due: 3/11)
- (8) Dataset set up / Research question and hypothesis based on GSS data (5%. Due: 3/16)
- (9) Class presentation (25%. Due: 4/15)
- (10) Final exam (20%. Due: 4/22)

9. Attendance and citizenship:

All students are expected to arrive on time and stay throughout all class sessions. If you are unable to attend a particular class for some reason, please take responsibility to update yourself by (a) doing the assigned reading and respond to Forum in CTools, (b) studying the lecture notes on CTools, (c) asking other students to fill you in, and (d) making up your contribution to the team project. I strongly encourage you not to miss any class session as the materials covered in each session are connected to each other. Full attendance will be rewarded when calculating the final grade.

Students in this class are likely to have different levels of experience in research methods. As a member of this class, I ask you to do the followings.

- (a) Prepare for each class session by reading the assigned reading (with the help of study guide), posing questions and/or responding to others' questions about the reading materials in Cools Forum. The instructor will tailor her lecture based on the questions and discussion there.
- (a) Have a good attitude about learning something that maybe new and challenging. You should expect feeling frustrated at some points, so learn to deal with such emotions as a mature adult.
- (c) Support your classmates in and out of the classroom. A supportive environment enhances learning effectiveness. Please be generous to offer instrumental and emotional support to your peers.
- (d) Seek help from the instructor as early as possible if you experience difficulties in this class.

9. Honor Code:

Academic integrity should not be taken lightly. If you have any questions or comments regarding the class or assignments, please feel free to contact the instructor.

11. Grading Scale: Points from all assignment are summed. The minimum percentage required for each grade is as follow.

A+ (100)	B+ (87)	C+ (77)	D+ (67)	E (50 or lower)
A (95)	B (83)	C (73)	D (63)	
A- (90)	B- (80)	C- (70)	D- (60)	

12. Required Text:

Rubin, A & Babbie, E. (2010). *Research Methods for Social Work* (7th Edition). Wadsworth/Thomson.

Recommended Reference:

George D. & Mallery, P. (2011). *SPSS for windows step by step: A simple study guide and reference*, 18.0 update (11th Edition). (on reserve in the undergraduate library)

** Additional readings will be assigned throughout the term.

13. Software:

SPSS for windows will be used for data analysis .

Schedule

Date (Session)	Content	Required Reading	In-class Team Activity
Jan. 14 (Session 1)	Introduction to course Scientific Inquiry Evidence-based practice	Chapters 1 & 2	-Explore research interest -Form teams -Set tentative topic areas
<i>Jan. 21</i>	<i>MLK Day (no class)</i>		
Jan. 28 (Session 2)	Philosophical issues Qualitative inquiry Research ethics	Chapters 3, 17, & 4	-Literature search skills training -Lit search for research study
Feb. 4 (Session 3)	Problem formulation Conceptualization & operationalization	• Chapters 6 & 7	-Specify research question -Lit review -Formulate hypothesis
Feb. 11 (Session 4)	Survey research Sampling	• Chapters 15 & 14	-Develop sampling plan -Data collection plan
Feb. 18 (Session 5)	Measurement Instrumentation Culturally competent measurement	Chapters 8, 9 & 5 (pp. 118-126)	-Specify variables and their measures -Develop a questionnaire
Feb. 25 (Session 6)	Group designs Mid-term exam	Chapters 10 & 11	
<i>March 4</i>	<i>Spring Break (no class)</i>		
Mar. 11 (Session 7)	Quantitative data analysis (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro to SPSS • Coding • Data entry and cleaning 	SPSS Guide	-Coding, data entry and cleaning -Set up dataset of your research study (or Specify research question & hypothesis based on GSS dataset)
Mar. 18 (Session 8)	Quantitative data analysis (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of measurement • Univariate & bivariate analysis 	Chapter 20 (pp. 501-504, pp. 509-522)	-Identify (construct) variables to be analyzed & their level of measurement -Run univariate & analyses of these variables -Conduct bivariate

			analyses
Mar. 25 (Session 9)	Quantitative data analysis (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inferential statistics • Selecting test of significance 	Chapters 21 & 22 (pp. 553-569)	-Data analysis for your research study
Apr. 1 (Session 10)	Quantitative data analysis (4)		-Data analysis for your research study
Apr. 8 (Session 11)	Quantitative data analysis (5)		-Prepare for class presentation
Apr. 15 (Session 12)	Presentation of your research study		
Apr. 22 (Session 13)	Final exam		