Social Work 522, Section 001 – Basic Social Work
Research – Winter 2014

Instructor: William Cabin, PhD, JD, MSW, MPH
Class Meetings: Mondays, 9-12AM, (3816 SSWB)
Email: wcabin@umich.edu and williamcabin@yahoo.com
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES, & RELATIONSHIP TO CSWE REQUIREMENTS

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.

Course Content
This course will cover quantitative and qualitative 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, and to use research to advocate for clients and inform policy. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing one's ability to formulate research questions, apply research methods, conduct statistical analysis, and interpret research reports. The latest statistical, graphical, and display technologies will be used.

Course Competencies and Practice Behaviors
This course addresses the following competencies and practice behaviors:

COMPETENCY 2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:

2.1 recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice;
2.4 apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.

**COMPETENCY 3**—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers:

3.1 distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom;
3.2 analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation; and

**COMPETENCY 4**—Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers:

4.1 recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;
4.3 recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences;

**COMPETENCY 6**—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers:

6.1 use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and
6.2 use research evidence to inform practice.

**COMPETENCY 7**—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers:

7.2 critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.
COMPETENCY 10—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

COMPETENCY 10(b)—Assessment
Social workers:
10.b.4 select appropriate intervention strategies.

COMPETENCY 10(d)—Evaluation
Social workers:
10.d.1 critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.

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

1. Act as a critical consumer and contributor of 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, and of selected measures and measurement strategies.
   c. assess the cultural sensitivity of measures and measurement strategies.
   d. assess the biases and implications of conclusions drawn in the research studies.
   (Practice Behaviors 3.1, 3.2, 6.1)

2. Locate, assess and critique research studies so as to draw appropriate inference, particularly as it affects 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.
(Practice Behaviors 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.3, 6.1, 6.2, 7.2, 11.4, 13.1)

3. Know the NASW Code of Ethics and appropriately apply it in the conduct of 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 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).

c examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.
(Practice Behaviors 2.1, 2.4, 7.2, 13.1)

Course Design:
Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills including: discussion, lectures, projects, exercises, and lab work. 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.

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & 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.

Theme Relation to Social Justice:
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.
Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & 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.

Theme Relation to 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.

Relationship to SW Ethics and Values:

The research and evaluation section of the NASW Code of Ethics and other professional codes 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.

(Course Approved: October 17, 2012)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance & Lateness

Class attendance is a requirement of the program. Absence may affect course grades. Students should discuss any unavoidable absence with instructors and clarify the potential impact of absences on the grade for the course.

Classroom Conduct

PLEASE TURN OFF RING/MUSIC CHIME ON MOBILE PHONES, BLACKBERRIES, OR SIMILAR DEVICES DURING CLASS; NO IPODS ARE PERMITTED DURING CLASS; COMPUTERS MAY BE USED, BUT ONLY FOR CLASS WORK-Students found emailing or surfing the Web, or similar activities, during class time will receive a zero (0) for their class participation and attendance grade regardless of their other performance.

Class Participation

You are expected to participate in class exercises, and in general group discussions. If you are absent for a group exercise, you may be required to submit an extra written assignment covering the material for that session to insure that you grasped the material covered during that particular session.
Grading

The grading system in the UMSSW Student guide will be used in terms of equating numeric scores to letter grades.

Students with Disabilities

Per the UMSSW Student guide, any student feeling they need accommodation for any sort of disability should bring any appropriate/required documentation and notify the instructor asap, ideally the first day of class.

Scholarly Writing & Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit all written assignments on the due day by 5pm. One day grace period may be given for late submissions under special circumstances. The papers can be submitted either in person or by e-mail attachment in a virus-free format that can be read by Microsoft Word. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure the correct format is used and materials are submitted on time. Problems with saving, transmitting, printing, etc. should be resolved in advance to avoid late penalties.

All written assignments must follow the outline provided by the instructor as well as the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association in the APA Publication Manual, 6th ed. (Washington: APA, 2009). Please refer to the APA Publication Manual or consult with tutors from the University’s Writing Center for correct APA style, otherwise points will be deducted from your assignment grade. The University’s policy on academic integrity and the consequences for plagiarism will apply to all written submissions.

COURSE DESIGN

Required Text:


Course Assignments and Grading (Due dates subject to discussion and modification in class):

Individual Literature Review Paper: 30% (Due: Last Class)

Assignment details will be discussed in class. Outline of assignment requirements and a sample paper are posted on CTools.
Individual Single Subject Design Paper: 20% (Due: Last Class)

Assignment details will be discussed in class and are toward end of this syllabus. Sample papers are posted on CTools.

Individual Midterm Exam: 20% (In Class: 7th Class)

Assignment details will be discussed in class.

Individual CBT (citiprogram)Training: 5% (Due: Fourth Class)

This is an individual student completion of Computer-Based Training (CBT). The web-address is: http://www.citiprogram.org or google: citiprogram.org. You will have to register with your institutional affiliation being the University of Michigan. YOU ARE TO COMPLETE THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES training, print out two copies of the completion certificate, keep one and give one to the instructor.

Taubes Article Short Paper: 5% (Due: Third Class)

Assignment details will be discussed in class and are toward end of this syllabus.

UnNatural Causes Film Segment Short Paper: 5% (Due: Second Class)

Assignment details will be discussed in class and are toward end of this syllabus.

Class Participation: 15%

You are expected to participate in class exercises, and in general group discussions. If you are absent for a group exercise, you may be required to submit an extra written assignment covering the material for that session to insure that you grasped the material covered during that particular session.
# COURSE OUTLINE

*(for general guidance only; subject to change)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I - III</td>
<td>Introduction, orientation to social work research, sources of knowledge, focus on the scientific method. Course overview, syllabus review; viewing of UnNatural Causes film segment; pre-test.</td>
<td>E &amp; S, Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV- V</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External Validity &amp; Threats to Validity</td>
<td>E&amp;S, Chapter 6-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Research Design, Experimental Design, Quasi-Experimental Design, SSD</td>
<td>E &amp; S , Chapters 6-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>E&amp; S, Chapter 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII-IX</td>
<td>Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement, including scale and survey design and critiques</td>
<td>E &amp; S, Chapter 4 &amp; 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Probability, Statistical Significance, & Measures of Central Tendency

Quantitative Statistical Packages & Statistical Analysis Techniques (SPS E & S, Chapter 14)
MORE DETAIL ON SOME ASSIGNMENTS

UnNatural Causes *In sickness and in wealth* film segment Individual Assignment

In a minimum of three page (more is good and will yield a better grade, IF cogently presented!!),
do an individual paper which addresses the following issues related to the film segment and
*chapters one and two of E & S*. You also may use related material from the *UnNatural Causes*
website and other sources.

1. Based on viewing the film segment, be specific on how it helps you answer the question:
   Why is research important? **Give specific examples from the film.**
2. What is the core research question(s) or hypothesis(es) addressed in the film segment?
3. Is the approach discussed in the film a scientific approach to the topic? **Be specific (with concrete examples from the film) as to why it is/is not, related specifically to the textbook definitions of the scientific method.**
4. Give at least one example of empirical evidence from the film, in detail.
5. Use one theory that explains all or part of the film. **Name and explain the theory’s basic assumptions (with a source citation) and specifically how it applies to the film, with specific examples from the film.**
6. How might you use **some specific** research methods from the film if you were employed by the Washtenaw County Department of Public Health (or another public health department in Michigan) to design a program to reduce infant mortality in the city by 25% by the end of 2014?
Ethnography OPTIONAL (Extra Credit) Individual Assignment

In a three-four page paper, demonstrate the skills discussed in qualitative research chapters of E & S on ethnography as a form of qualitative research. Be sure to reference the text to support your discussion. For the assignment, spend at least a half hour in the “field” as an ethnographer. This may be in a classroom, at a social event, a meal, a park, playground, café, subway station, or sports arena – any public space where behavior can be unobtrusively observed. Preference is for a field setting where you can note not only physical phenomenon but verbal interactions. As you carry out your observations, take in-depth field notes. Attach your original field notes typed and unedited, as an attachment to the narrative paper. Report, in narrative, on the location; the physical space, numbers & types of people, the setting (day & date, time of day, unusual events, etc), and conversation or external behaviors observed. Next, discuss in the narrative the major themes that emerged from your observations. Base this discussion on your review of your field notes. You should do this by taking another copy of your notes, scrutinizing them closely, and placing brackets around portions (i.e., phrases; keywords) that appear more interpretative than descriptive. In other words, try to separate, in separate sections of the narrative, “straightforward” reporting from your interpretations. Thus second copy of notes should appear as a separately-labeled attachment to the paper. Conclude your paper with a reflection on your thoughts about the potential benefits and risks of qualitative research compared to quantitative research.
Using yourself only, prepare a two-three page (APA style) paper with attached, and properly-labeled, time logs of the baseline (A period) and intervention period (B period), and graph of baseline and intervention period. All students are required to use at least an A/B single subject design method with at least one week for the A period and one week for the B period. More elaborate SSD methods and longer time periods may be used. These issues will be discussed further in class.

1. **Description of Client and Presenting Problem.** Describe the client, including at least gender, age, race/ethnicity, residential location, marital status, job status, and socioeconomic status, and his/her presenting problem.

2. **Target Problem, Goal, Objective, & Tasks.** Identify one target problem for the assignment (i.e., reduce cigarettes smoked; reduce weight; increase exercise; reduce sugared-drink weekly consumption). The problems could concern a mental or physical behavior. Select as a target problem one that: 1) is, was, or will be an important focus of the individual’s life; 2) is capable of progress in the defined assignment time period; if the problem or goal is a long-term one, break it down into actions that can be taken now that will lead to the long-term goal; 3) allows for increments of progress over time (e.g. number of hours of studying each day), rather than a one-time achievement (e.g. graduating from high school); and 4) is quantifiably measurable. For the target problem, specify the broad goal (i.e., improve client well-being; improve client health; improve client mental health; the specific objective (more immediate desired outcome, i.e., reduce angry outbursts by 50% in 30 days); and the specific tasks you will do to reach the objective. The tasks would include anything you will done alone or in conjunction with another person to achieve your objective. One of the tasks (or all tasks inclusive) will be the intervention itself, which you will specify in greater detail in item 4 below. In some cases, the intervention itself may be inclusive of all tasks.

3. **Indicator of Target Problem, Data Source, and Data Collection Procedures.** Identify a measurable indicator for the target problem and describe how you
would go about collecting the data to measure it. For example, what would be
the source of the data?; what type of data collection device would you use (e.g.
standardized instrument, self-report diary, etc. (remember data collection will be
reflected in you're a and B period logs)?; and how often and for how long would
you propose collecting the data (remember at least one week in A and one week
in B period)? Explain why you chose the indicators, sources, and data collection
methods that you did and if you foresee any difficulties or shortcomings
regarding the indicators, sources, or methods.

4. **The Intervention and the Rationale Underlying It.** Describe what you plan to
do with the subject to address the target problem and why it should help. This
involves the link between your understanding of the nature of the problem and
the intervention you have selected to address it. So, for example, if you propose
to reduce your smoking level, will you use the patch, or some other intervention,
and why do you think the intervention will work. Specify the tasks involved in
implementing the intervention. **The broader set of tasks (i.e., those in
addition to the intervention) should have been specified in item 2 above.**

5. **Evaluation Design.** Select either the basic AB Single Subject Design, or
another SSD, identify and describe the design, and explain why you chose it.

6. **Results.** Draw a graph (as an Appendix) depicting the results for the objective
you identified. Provide a title for the graph and all necessary labels and scale
anchoring points so that another person can read and understand what is being
depicted in the graphs. Add a brief narrative section to the paper describing
what the graphs indicate about the effectiveness of the intervention for this client
with regard to each identified target problem. Be specific about the results. For
example: The baseline period (a) was January 1-8, 2011. During this period I
smoked an average of 25 cigarettes per day. The intervention period (B) was
January 9-16. During this period I smoked an average 13 cigarettes per day.
The result was a 52% reduction in my average number of cigarettes smoked
daily, which exceeded my objective of a 50% reduction.

7. **Reflection:** Discuss the ups and downs of your process in addressing this
assignment, including what key information was not included that you feel would
have been relevant to the assignment; any other limitations; any your reflection
on any potential short or long-term risks and benefits.
Taubes Article Assignment on Hormone Replacement Therapy

Winter 2014, Dr. William Cabin

Write a short paper (2-3 pages; more if you desire) addressing the following points. Be specific with supporting examples from the article and text:

1. In 1-2 paragraphs, summarize the article.

2. Using the E & S text or other valid sources, state the specific requirements of EBP and discuss how would you evaluate the studies Taubes presented based on evidence-based practice principles? Give specific examples from the studies in the article.

3. Overall, explain what insights you gained from this article on the relationship between research, policy and practice. Be specific.

4. State at least one new piece of information you learned from the article.