SW 522, Section 001 – Basic Social Work Research – Winter 2015

Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: None
Meet: Mondays 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in SSWB 3816
Instructor: Daphne C. Watkins, PhD
Office: 3841 SSW
Phone: 734-763-1540
Contact: **"**Message" option via C-Tools *(best way to contact me)*

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 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.

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, 10.b.4, 10.d.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, 10.d.1)

* For more information about how competencies and practice behaviors see
https://ssw.umich.edu/sites/default/files/documents/msw/competencies-and-practice-behaviors.pdf

Why is research important?
As a professional in the social work field you will be expected to make decisions that promote quality for individuals, families and communities. As new knowledge emerges, there is often media coverage of these advances. This creates formal and informal discussion on the merit of new advances. From policy makers to grassroots community providers, you need to (a) separate misinformation or media "hype" from genuine knowledge and (b) distinguish scientific research from poorly supported claims.

Social work professionals use scientific thinking all the time. For example, you may assess and evaluate the health status for a client, develop plans for optimal outcomes, reflect on your practice, and engage in action research to improve the client's health outcomes. Or perhaps you are interested in evaluating a client's previous knowledge on help-seeking. You would first construct hypotheses about the best methods for educating the client, develop an educational curriculum plan based on those hypotheses, observe the results, and base further instruction on the evidence that you collect. These are all important steps in scientific inquiry and what makes research so essential to knowledge acquisition.

Course Design:
Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills in this course, including: discussion, lectures, projects, exercises, and in-class lab work. This course is designed to increase students' comfort level with research methods and analyses and to increase their appreciation of the relevance of research and evaluation for social work practice. The exercises complement the lecture and provide an opportunity to gain practice with using the tools of the scientific method.

Required Text:
Grinnell, R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. (2014). *Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice*. Tenth Edition. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. ISBN13: 978-0199988310
ISBN10: 0199988315

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THE ASSIGNED READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS

I.   **Course Requirements & Evaluation of Performance:**

1) **Research-Practice Brief** [12 points can be earned]
You will prepare a research brief on how you foresee research being applied to your future career as a social worker. Feel free to reflect on your previous research training and experiences, as well as what you hope to learn in this class that will assist you in your future career as a social worker. Email attachment or hard copies of this assignment will not be accepted. **Research-Practice Briefs should be NO MORE THAN 1 page, with 11 point Calibri font, with 1.5 line spacing, and 1" page margins.** The research application brief is due no later than January 26th at 11:59pm.

2) **In-class Labs** [22 points total (2 pts each); Pass/Fail: Satisfactory completion of all assignments]
During the second half of all of our class sessions I will lead an in-class lab that will demonstrate the research concepts and techniques that we cover during the class lectures. These labs will also help you learn information that you will need in order to excel on the mid-term and final exams. I will (at times) collect your work in lab and grade it; however, I will keep written feedback on your lab work to a minimum. I am always happy to discuss lab work in more detail during lab, during office hours, or via the C-Tools message center or Chat room feature. You will be expected to complete all in-class lab assignments.

3) **Research Abstract** [16 points can be earned]
You will submit a 300-word abstract for a quantitative research paper this semester that will use many of the concepts and methodologies learned throughout this course. My hope is that the abstract will bring to life the readings and in-class lab work. The data for your abstract will come from the University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR; https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/). Specifically, you will use the "Data Driven Learning Guides" (DDLG) (https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/instructors/biblio/resources) page to select a topic of your choice. Then, using the information under "Go to Resources" for your topic of choice, you will construct your abstract. I will provide more information for this assignment during in-class lab #2. You can work in teams of 2 or 3 for this assignment, but note that every member of the team will receive the same grade. **Your Research abstracts should be double-spaced, 11 point Calibri font, with 1.5 line spacing, and 1" page margins.** Your abstract should be divided into the following major sections with corresponding subheadings, if applicable.

a. **Title:** Try to capture your research question or hypothesis in the title, e.g. "The Relationship between Depression, Anxiety, and Weight Loss in a National Sample of Asian American Women"

b. **Introduction & Background (Also called "the Literature Review"):** This section includes a literature review, how the current problem has been addressed in past research, and the hypotheses or research questions you plan to explore or test. Include a: (1) Scope of the problem [2-3 sentences may be enough]; (2) Background of the research topic -- Why is the study you are doing important? Review the relevant prior research in this area [1-3 sentences]; and (3) What is your research question or hypothesis? [*2-4 sentences in length*]

c. **Methods:** Since you are using secondary data, you will need to paraphrase the information from an existing publication or report. You may include: (1) Sample—how they were recruited, simple demographic description; (2) Measures – what types of instruments/questions were asked?; (3) Procedures for gathering data— e.g. was it a self-administered questionnaire, or an interview?; and (4) Analytic method— what statistical procedures are being used? [*1-3 sentences in length*.]

d. **Results:** Describe the results of your analysis. Report some simple, univariate statistics, before you report the group comparisons, or associations. At a minimum, you must report a statistic showing the relationship between two variables, and comment on the statistical significance of this relationship. Consider including crosstabs, frequency distributions, and correlations.

e. **Discussion:** In this section you should discuss the conclusions of your research and any implications for practice or further research. [*2-3 sentences*] Answer these questions: (1) Do your results support the hypothesis or inform the research question? (2) What are the implications for practice, policy, and/or further research?

f. **Reference list**: Include a short reference list (2 to 5 references) using the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual* (6th Edition) style. Consider reviewing the Guide to social work research's website on how to cite references using APA style: http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=119622&sid=1030292

4) **Mid-term Exam** [25 points]
Students will take a mid-term exam that will cover chapters one through seventeen in the Grinnell and Unrau text. The mid-term exam will occur during class on Monday, February 23rd.

5) **Final Exam** [25 points]
Students will take a final exam that will cover chapters eighteen through thirty-three in the Grinnell and Unrau text. The final exam will occur on the last day of class, Monday, April 20th.

II. Grading Criteria for Assignments

Summary of Assignments and Grading Points

Research-Practice Brief	12
In-class lab activities (11 x 2 points each)	22
Research Abstract	16
Mid-term Exam	25
Final Exam	+ 25
	100 Total Course Grade

Each assignment will be given a numerical grade that will represent a letter grade determined by:

Grade	Description
A+	The grade of A+ will rarely be used and, in general, students should not expect to receive this grade on an assignment, for it signifies work that goes beyond the content of the course and the expertise students are expected to master. An A+ is rare to obtain, but not impossible.
A or A-	Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in his or her approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades is determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student.
B+	A grade of B+ is given to work which is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than competent understanding of the material.
B	A grade of B is given to student work which meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work and meets basic course expectations.
B-	A grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations.
C+ or C	The grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement
C- to F	Grades between C- and F are applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student's performance on the assignment.

Grades:			
	A+ = 99 - 100	B+ = 87 - 89	C+ = 77 - 79
	A = 95 – 98	B = 84 - 86	C = 74 - 76
	A– = 90 - 94	B– = 80 - 83	C– = 70 – 73

III. Other Things to Note about the Course

A note about attendance: You are expected to attend <u>ALL</u> class and lab sessions. Please note that each class session is 3 hours long and will include a 10-15 minute break halfway through the session. Arriving anytime during or after the break will count as an absence. In order for you to make up an in-class lab that you missed I will need a note signed by a physician indicating the reason for your absence.

A note about email: The best way to reach me is via the message option in our C-Tools site. However, if you decide to send me an email, please place "SW522" in the subject line. Please note that the nature of my work <u>does not</u> allow me to check my email every day, and therefore, I may not respond to your emails the same day that you send them. However, I will try my best to respond to your email within 48 hours of receipt. For urgent matters, please call my office (734-763-1540) and leave a message.

A note about grades: I will endeavor to always be honest about the work that you do. I feel that this will serve you better in the long term than false praise and reward. Likewise, I will always explain my grading clearly and document my explanations. If you ever have questions about a grade that you receive, you are always welcomed to talk with me about it.

A note about work handed in late: I expect all students to submit their work in accordance with the class deadlines. In order to be fair, I have developed the following policy: late work will be graded down by 10 points for (or, 'into') each hour that it is late UNLESS prior arrangements for an extension have been made with me. For example, all assignments are due at 11:59pm; however, if an assignment is submitted between 12:00am and 12:59am, the final grade for the assignment will be reduced by 10 points. If that same assignment is submitted between 1:00am and 1:59am, then the final grade will receive another deduction by 10 points (for a total of 20 points)… and so on. I know that extenuating circumstances may arise which make it difficult to turn in work on time. In such cases, I expect for you to communicate with me if you need an extension so that we can work out an arrangement that is mutually agreeable.

A note about plagiarism: Policies governing plagiarism can be found in the 2014-2015 Student Guide, Volume 1, Section 12.02. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at the University of Michigan and is grounds for expulsion from the University. It is the students' responsibility to become familiar with the information presented at: http://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/resources-students/. Another helpful resource is http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=43469&sid=338261.

Cell phones/pagers/PDAs/laptops: I expect that students will turn off (or mute) any pagers or cell phones, and only respond to pages, text messages, or calls during the break or after class. Laptops may be used during class; however, if they are deemed a distraction by me or your classmates, you will be prohibited from using laptops during the lecture and instead will be allowed to use them before class and during the break.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

Tentative Semester Schedule:

Class #	Date of Class	Topic	Readings: G&U= Grinnell & Unrau text *(Completed BEFORE each class)* **Assignments** *(Completed by 11:59pm)*	In-Class Labs
1	1/12/15	Introduction to Course – Introduction to Research and Theory	G&U Chapters 1 & 2	Lab 1
	1/19/15	*MLK Day*	*No class*	
2	1/26/15	Quantitative, Qualitative, & Mixed Methods Research	G&U Chapters 3, 4, & 5 *- Research-Practice Briefs due-*	Lab 2
3	2/2/15	Ethics, Values & Research with Underserved Groups	G&U Chapters 6 & 7	Lab 3
4	2/9/15	Becoming an Evidence-Based Researcher & Practitioner	G&U Chapters 8, 9, 10 & 11	Lab 4
5	2/16/15	Sampling, Measurement, and Designing Research Studies	G&U Chapters 14, 15, 16, & 17	Lab 5
6	2/23/15		*- Mid-term Exam-*	No lab
	3/2/15	*Spring Break*	*No class*	
7	3/9/15	Quantitative Data Collection	G&U Chapters 19 & 20	Lab 6
8	3/16/15	Qualitative Data Collection	G&U Chapters 21 & 24	Lab 7
9	3/23/15	Quantitative Data Analysis & Interpretation	G&U Chapter 22 & 25	Lab 8
10	3/30/15	Qualitative Data Analysis & Interpretation	G&U Chapter 23, 26, & 27	Lab 9
11	4/6/15	Evaluating Research	G&U Chapter 28, 29	Lab 10
12	4/13/15	Reading and Writing Research Reports & Program Evaluation	G&U Chapter 32 & 33 *- Abstracts due-*	Lab 11
13	4/20/15	*Last Day of Class*	*- Final Exam -*	No lab