



Social Work 522: Basic Social Work Research
Winter 2015

Section 003: Tuesday 6-9 pm, Rm. B684 SSWB
Instructor: Ninive Sanchez, MSW
Email: ninive@umich.edu
Office: Rm. 2760 SSWB
Office Hours: Thursday 3-6pm or by appointment

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 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;

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.

4. 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)

5. Course Design:

Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills including: lecture, in-class 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

REQUIRED TEXT:

Rubin, A & Babbie, E. (2013). *Research Methods for Social Work* (8th Edition). Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series. ISBN: 978-1285173467. (On reserve at Shapiro library).

Students are expected to read the assigned readings *prior* to class. Additional readings and electronic materials are assigned throughout the term. These are available on Canvas by week. Navigate to ctools.umich.edu and click Canvas - LMS Pilot Users Only under Helpful Links, or log in to CTools and click the link provided to access your Canvas course. You can also log in directly at umich.instructure.edu.

OPTIONAL TEXT:

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Edition).

SOFTWARE:

Stata will be used for data analysis. Purchase of a statistical program is *not* required for the purpose of this course. We will use laptops to access Stata for the in-class statistical lab. Access is also available in various labs on campus. You can also use the software by connecting to **vitualsites.umich.edu** anywhere as long as you have internet connection.

1. COURSE PARTICIPATION: 5% Course Grade (13 points: 1pt/day including the first day) Class Attendance and Participation.

2. PLAGIARISM MODULE: 5% Course Grade: **DUE 2/3 by 6 PM**

<http://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/>

- (1) Go to the above website and select "How to Recognize Plagiarism"
- (2) Take the certification TEST (for master's or doctoral students in graduate school)
- (3) Print out the plagiarism certificate, sign it, and give me a hard or electronic copy

3. PAPER 1 (INTRODUCTION): 10% Course Grade: **DUE 2/10 by 6 PM.**

You will design a study on a social problem that interests you (e.g. child abuse, mental health, community violence). Write an abbreviated literature review that convinces the reviewer that this is an important topic (of relevance to social work or social workers). Be sure to point out what is missing from the body of research and how you can address this gap. Identify a research question and hypothesis relevant to the problem (~5-6 pages double-spaced).

4. ETHICS (PEERRS): 10% Course Grade. **DUE 2/24 by 6 PM**

Complete the Human Subjects –Behavioral Science module from the Program for Education and Evaluation in Responsible Research and Scholarship (**PEERRS**) located at <http://my.research.umich.edu/peerrs/>.

5. PAPER 2 (METHODS): 10% Course Grade: **DUE 3/17 by 6 PM.**

Describe the details of your hypothetical research study: Participants (Ethics), Procedures (Research Design), and Measures (Operationalization and Scoring) (~3-5 pages double-spaced).

6. PAPER 3 (DATA ANALYSIS PLAN & EXPECTED RESULTS): 10% Course Grade: **DUE 3/31 by 6 PM.**

Describe your design and what statistical tests you will be using. Describe the independent and dependent variables. What statistics would you use to analyze these data (e.g. t-test, correlation, ANOVA)? Describe your predicted results and include a figure (APA Style) that shows your predicted results (~2-4 pages double spaced).

7. IN-CLASS PEER-REVIEW: 10% Course Grade: **DUE: 4/14 by 6 PM**

Please bring a hard copy of your grant proposal for an in-class peer-review activity. This will help you develop your proposal draft before submitting the final version.

8. FINAL GRANT PROPOSAL: 25% Course Grade. **FINAL DUE 4/21 by 6 PM.**

This paper will represent the cumulative efforts of papers 1-3. This paper should also include references (at least 6 research articles). Books, dissertations & internet information do NOT count as research articles, but they may be included as extra references.

*Guidelines and grading rubrics will be provided for the writing assignments.

9. QUIZZES: 15% Course Grade (5% per Quiz).

The three, 15 item, multiple-choice quizzes are designed to ensure that you are familiar with the basic concepts. They will be straightforward and based on course lectures and readings prior to the quiz.

Quiz 1: **2/17**

Quiz 2: **3/24**

Quiz 3: **4/7**

ADDITIONAL COURSE DETAILS

Accommodations / Special Needs: If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please contact me within two weeks after the class starts 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).

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of presenting the work or ideas of others as your own. Any material reproduced verbatim or paraphrased must be referenced following the guidelines in the APA style manual. Evidence of collaboration on written work also counts as plagiarism. Acts of plagiarism must be reported to the campus judiciary for investigation. Plagiarism on an assignment

in this course will result in a “0” for that assignment. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at the University of Michigan and is grounds for expulsion from the University. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the information presented at:

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies/section11>

Attendance and Participation: All students are expected to arrive on time and stay throughout all class sessions. I strongly encourage you not to miss any class session as the materials covered in each session are connected to each other. There will also be a number of in-class exercises. They will be based on the topic under discussion and are meant to provide hands-on experiences in research methods and report writing. Therefore, attendance in class is mandatory and counts towards your course grade. Only under exceptional circumstances, which must be documented with a doctor's note or equivalent, will excused absences be permitted.

Cell phones/PDAs/Laptops: I expect that students will turn off or mute (not “vibrate”) any cell phones, and will not respond to text messages or calls during class. These can be used during the break. Use of laptops is acceptable in class as some students take notes more efficiently using laptops. Use of laptops for non-course related activities (i.e. web surfing, online shopping, emails, Facebook) is distracting to yourself, fellow students, and to the instructor. Engaging in such activity will adversely affect your participation grade in this course.

Late Work Policy: Assignments are due by 6 PM on Canvas on the due date. In-class work must be handed in at the end of class. Late work will be penalized. **Late assignments lose 5 points per day the assignment is late. Missed quizzes without a documented reason for the absence cannot be made up.**

Availability and Contact:

The best way to reach me is via email. Please place “SW522” in the subject line. I will try my best to respond to your email within 48 hours of receipt.

Tentative Schedule (Please note this syllabus is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
1	1/13	Course Introduction; Scientific Inquiry; Problem Formulation;	Engel (2014); Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 7 (pg. 158-162, 171-178)	Course goals
2	1/20	<i>MLK Day (no class)</i>		
3	1/27	Conceptualization; Operationalization; Levels of Measurement	Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 8, Ch. 21 (pg. 543-546)	
4	2/3	Report Writing/Scientific Language		Plagiarism Module
5	2/10	Measurement Error; Reliability & Validity;	Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 9	Paper 1 (Introduction)
6	2/17	Sampling; Designs (Correlational, Experimental, Quasi-Experimental)	Powell & Thompson (2014); Spencer et al., (2011); Williams & Chapman (2011)	Quiz 1
7	2/24	Ethics; Culturally Competent Research	Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 6	PEERRS Module
8	3/3	<i>Spring break (no class)</i>		
9	3/10	Constructing Instruments (Surveys, Interviews)	Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 10	
10	3/17	Descriptive Statistics; Inferential Statistics (chi-square, correlations)	Rubin & Babbie: Ch. 21 (pg. 551-566), Ch. 23 (pg. 600-608)	Paper 2 (Methods)
11	3/24	Inferential Statistics cont. (t-test, ANOVA)		Quiz 2
12	3/31	In-class Statistics Lab		Paper 3 (Data Analysis Plan and Predicted Results)
13	4/7	Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research	Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong (2003)	Quiz 3
14	4/14	In-class Peer-review (Grant Proposal)		Bring a hard copy of your grant proposal to class
15	4/21	Photovoice; Community-based Participatory Research		Final Grant Proposal

Letter Grade (Percentage of Points)

	Description
A+ (100)	The grade of A+ will rarely be used and, in general, students should not expect to receive this grade on an assignment. This grade 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 (95-99) A- (90-94)	The grade of A is used for assignments that demonstrate excellence. These grades 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+ (87-89)	A grade of B+ is given to work determined to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material.
B (83-86)	A “B” grade is given to student work meeting the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work and meets basic course expectations.
B- (80-82)	The grade of “B-” denotes that a student’s performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only a moderate grasp of expectations and/or content.
C+ (77-79) C (73-76) C- (70-72)	A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.
D+ (67-69) D (63-66) D- (60-62) F (below 60)	Grades between D+ and F reflect a failure to meet the minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of performance on the assignment.

Grading: Grades are based on the percentage of total possible points you earn.

Contribution to Course Grades:

Plagiarism Module	5%
Ethics (PEERRS)	10%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	10%
Paper 3	10%
Three Quizzes	15%
Peer-review (Grant Proposal)	10%
Final Grant Proposal	25%
Attendance and Participation	5%