COURSE TITLE: Basic Social Work Research
COURSE NUMBER: SW 522 (Winter Term, 2016, Section 001, Class# 17755)
TIME & PLACE: Monday, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon (ET), Room 3816 - SSWB
CREDIT HOURS: 3
PREREQUISITES: None
INSTRUCTOR: Rabindar Subbian, MSW, MBA
CONTACT DETAILS: E-mail: rabindar@umich.edu - Start email subject line with SW 522:
Phone: 314.322.6184
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

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Sincere thanks to Profs. Daphne Watkins & Emily Nicklett from whose past SW 522 syllabi the contents of this one has been drawn from.

COURSE BACKGROUND

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 & COURSE DESIGN**

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. Current statistical, graphical, and display technologies will be used.

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.

**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, 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:

**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. 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.

**Theme Relation to Social Justice:**
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.

**Theme Relation to Social Work 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.

**STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. Services are available, if you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support. For help, contact **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** at (734) 764-8312 and at the CAPS website: https://caps.umich.edu/ during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors.
physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see http://www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources.

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: http://umich.edu/~mhealth/.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a condition or disability that may affect or interfere with your participation in this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. It is the School of Social Work’s policy that instructors keep this information strictly confidential.

Information and resources for accommodations is also available with the office of Services for Students with Disability (SSD).

On August 18, 2014 their location and contact information was as follows:

**Location**—G-664 Haven Hall, 505 South State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045

**Phone**— (734) 763-3000, (734) 615-4461 (TDD), (734) 619-3947 (VP)

**Email**— ssdoffice@umich.edu

**Working Hours**— Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Please note that contact, location and working hours may change without notification. Most up to date contact, location and working hours information for the office is available via the search function of the University of Michigan website http://www.umich.edu and the University of Michigan Phone Directory service.

CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

This section of the syllabus has been quoted from Janet Ray’s syllabus for SW 560 offered in the Fall 2013 semester. The instructor acknowledges her generous help in explaining how to create a positive learning experience. Ms. Ray has in turn acknowledged the collaborative efforts of SW 560 instructors Luke Shaefer, Lorraine Gutierrez, Shane Brady, Tony Rothschild, Trina Shanks, Diane Vinokur and Michael Woodford in the creation of her syllabus.

"Critical analysis and discussion are integral components of graduate education, empowerment, and adult education. Thus, it is important to foster an environment in which all participants are willing to express their opinions and perspectives. At times, this engagement can involve some risk, but it is hoped that you will feel comfortable to share your views and queries in order to promote your learning and that of your colleagues. To encourage this environment, we are all reminded of our professional responsibility to treat one another with respect. If the classroom is to be a space for learning, it cannot reinforce systems of bias and domination. As course instructor, I will strive to develop a respectful course environment. You too can contribute to this ethos by extending to your colleagues the same respect and sensitivity you desire.

Questioning one another is a part of a positive and productive learning process. Such questioning should be done in a collegial, civil, and professional manner, which involves listening to, recognizing, and respecting others’ views, even if we do not agree with the perspectives being advanced. At times it may be necessary to challenge the ideas someone presents, but it is important to do so in a manner that calls into question the ideas outlined, not the person who presents them (adapted by M. Woodford from MSW Handbook, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto)."

**Electronic Devices**

In consideration of your fellow students in this class please set all mobile phones that you bring to class on vibrate. If you need to take a call, please step outside and then answer the phone to ensure that the class is not disrupted.
Religious Observances

Please let the instructor(s) know of your religious observances that may conflict with class attendance or assignment due dates or group work so that appropriate arrangements can be made. It would make the instructor(s) (and possibly of your fellow team members’) lives easier if you bring this up during the first week of the semester.

Contacting Instructor

A note about email: Please place “SW522: “ in the subject line. Please note I do not check my email every day of the week, 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 mobile phone (314.322.6184) and leave a message.

COURSE DETAILS

CLASS SESSIONS

Please refer to course site on Canvas for a detailed listing of topics for each session and agenda for class lectures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Topic(s)</th>
<th>Session Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Jan 11 Introduction</td>
<td>Mar 7 MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS EXAM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18 MLK Day (No Class)</td>
<td>7 Mar 14 Variables Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Jan 25 Research Problems &amp; Questions</td>
<td>8 Mar 21 Collecting Original Data Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Feb 1 Research Approaches</td>
<td>9 Mar 28 Collecting Existing Data Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Feb 8 Ethics Statistics Topics</td>
<td>10 Apr 4 Collecting Existing Data Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> Feb 15 Evidence Based Practice Statistics Topics</td>
<td>11 Apr 11 Sampling &amp; Research Designs Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Feb 22 Midterm Preparation in Teams</td>
<td>12 Apr 18 Collecting Existing Data Statistics Topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SPRING RECESS (Feb 27 – Mar 6, 2016)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments &amp; Grading</th>
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Individual assignments are assignments that you will complete by yourself and team assignments are those you will complete in collaboration with your assigned team. All work must be your personal work that you contribute (either to your individual assignment or to your team's) and the work of others needs to be properly attributed. (Please pay close attention to the "Academic Honesty and Integrity" section of this syllabus in terms of attribution expectations.) All assignments are due at the beginning of lecture time on the date they are due unless otherwise stated and should be submitted via the Canvas site for the course. If you think you will be late submitting an assignment please inform the instructor(s) before the due date. The instructor may at her/his discretion accept late assignments and may impose a penalty of up to 50% of points earned for the assignment on a case by case basis. This includes team assignments, if any, and the whole team will be penalized for late submissions. Please refer to the course site on Canvas for details of assignments.

As an instructor I want each student to attain their greatest learning potential for this course. I am not a gate keeper to your grade and view myself as a facilitator to your achieving the maximum grade you deserve based on the learning you
achieve. Points will be applied toward deciding your grade for the course. A listing of points that can be earned is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>MAXIMUM POINTS</th>
<th>MAXIMUM POINTS AS A % OF TOTAL COURSE POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Contribution</td>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor's evaluation of student's holistic performance in course during the semester</td>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Eval of Team</td>
<td>5 points</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Practice Brief</td>
<td>5 points</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Abstract (Team Assignment)</td>
<td>20 points</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20 points</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30 points</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 POINTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Translation of points earned to grade assigned for course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Grades of &quot;A+&quot; are typically earned by students who turn in exceptional work in assignments and exceptionally contribute in class and in their assigned teams. The grade of A+ will rarely be used and, in general, students should not expect to receive this grade, for it signifies work that goes beyond the content of the course and the expertise students are expected to master. An A+ is very rare to obtain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Grades of &quot;A&quot; or &quot;A-&quot; 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. The difference between these two grades is determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A or A-</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A grade of B is given to student work which meets the basic requirements. It denotes that the student has done adequate work and meets basic course expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>A grade of B- denotes that a student’s performance was less than adequate, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ or C</td>
<td>The grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- to F</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Honesty and Integrity**
The "Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct" of the School of Social Work, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, applies to all your work in this course. Cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty is prohibited and engaging in
them can have serious consequences. Plagiarism is "representing someone else's ideas, words, statements or works as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation." Section 1.12.02 of the 2013-14 MSW Student Guide states:

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
1. Using or otherwise taking credit for someone else's work or ideas.
2. Using the language of another without full and proper quotation or source citation.
3. Implicitly presenting the appropriated words or ideas of another as one's own.
4. Using Internet source material, in whole or in part, without careful and specific reference to the source.
5. Borrowing facts, statistics, or other illustrative material without proper reference, unless the information is common knowledge or in common public use.
6. Self-plagiarism, that is, reusing one's own work without acknowledgment that the text appears elsewhere (e.g. in a paper for another current or previous class).

Plagiarism, like other forms of cheating and misconduct, is taken very seriously at the University of Michigan and is grounds for expulsion from the University.

Please familiarize yourself with "Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct" section of the MSW handbook of the school. Instructors are required to report all violations of the code by students to the school administration.

**COURSE MATERIALS & TEXTS**

**Required Texts:**


Please note that the OpenIntro textbook is available free electronically at the OpenIntro website: https://www.openintro.org/stat/textbook.php. A hardcopy version is also available for a very reasonable sum (~$10) via links at their website.

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