

COURSE TITLE	Basic Social Work Research
COURSE NUMBER	522 (Winter 2018, Section 003)
TIME & PLACE	Tuesday 6:00-9:00pm, Room B780, SSWB
CREDIT HOURS	3
PREREQUISITES	None
INSTRUCTOR	Willie Elliott, Professor
CONTACT DETAILS	SSW 3734 Email: willelli@umich.edu
OFFICE HOURS	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.

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.

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. 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 that effect 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.

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.

<p>Relationship to SW Ethics and Values:</p>	<p>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.</p>
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Intensive Focus Statement on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice (PODS)

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work towards social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

This course will emphasize the relationship of the NASW Code of Ethics, specifically those sections pertaining to the core values and ethical principles of social work as well as the standards of research and evaluation that under gird ethical behavior in the conduct of scientific evaluations. Additionally, this course will emphasize the relationship between the NASW Code of Ethics and other ethical codes governing evaluation research such as the Nuremberg Code, Declaration of Helsinki, and 1974 National Research Act (PL93-348) and the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Relevant Policies

Religious Holidays

Students who observe a religious holiday on the same day as class will have access to the class materials covered that day. Students are expected to notify the instructor if they plan to miss class. The official University of Michigan policy on religious holidays, and a list of possible conflicts with classes, can be found at:

www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious_holidays.html

Learning Needs and Disabilities

Students with specialized learning needs are requested to make an appointment with the instructor to discuss the necessary arrangements. If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with the instructor 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.

Deadline Expectations

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the course outline. Late assignments will be graded down 5% per day. Exceptions will need prior permission of the instructor.

Incompletes

Incompletes are not granted unless it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the normal expectations of the course. The student must formally request an incomplete with the instructor prior to the final weeks of class. Please review the Student Guide section on Ethical Conduct in the University Environment. This section addresses plagiarism, harassment and discrimination policies.

Grading System

A	94-100	B+	86-89	C+	76-79	D	<69 (no credit)
A-	90-93	B	83-85	C	73-75		
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

One last note about class: As social workers, we should be prepared to reflect on and explore our own family history, social systems, experiences, identity, cultural background, and assumptions regarding all forms of diversity. Please be prepared to share your opinions and feedback with others in discussions and exercises, and to do so in a respectful and constructive manner. Also, prepare yourself to hear varying opinions and feedback non-defensively, and to use those data or challenge them constructively. Please practice tolerance, not expecting yourself or your classmates to be polished in discussions about issues that can be challenging and confusing. We can expect to blunder and make mistakes in the classroom so that we are better prepared when we are in the field. Lastly, in you are triggered by a topic or comment in class, please feel free to excuse yourself, discuss it with me after class, and/or seek out resources.

Required Text:

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2007). *Research Methods for Social Work (6th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Brooks-Cole.

Require Materials:

Laptop with SPSS (statistical software).

SPSS is available to students for free. Bring your laptop to class on Jan. 16, 2018 and Robert LaRoe from IT is coming to class to walk you through how to download onto your computer.

Assignments

Written Research Project Using Data Provided in Class:

Section of this paper will be due at different points over the semester. At the end of the semester, you will hand in your entire research paper containing all sections of the paper. These sections will be: Abstract, Introduction/Problem Statement; Literature Review (ending with research questions); Methods (sampling, measures, procedures); Results; and Discussion (interpretation, implications, conclusions).

Because I want everyone to be successful, it is very important that you consult with me throughout the semester, starting with the topics you're interested in researching.

A dataset will be available on Canvas that covers a wide range of topics.

- a. Final paper (incorporating all previous sections): 40% of semester grade
- b. First draft of introduction (i.e., problem statement) and literature review: 10% of semester grade
- c. First draft of methods section: 5% of semester grade

PODS Exercise: 10% of semester grade; Pass/Fail

Find a research article related to PODS. It must be a report of a research study in an academic journal (e.g. Children and Youth Services Review, Social Work Research, etc.), as opposed to a theory article or a review of articles. (See me if you have any questions whether your article counts). Turn in a copy of the abstract of the article. In 1-2 pages, list the key words you used to find the article, summarize the article, describe how the results may or may not be relevant to your social work practice.

Presentation: 20% of semester grade

The presentation should be a 10-minute power point presentation. Student should be prepared to respond to questions (about 5 minutes). A part of the grade will be based on student's ability to answer questions appropriately.

Organization of presentation: (You will be graded on the presentation of each of these sections, so make sure you include them all in your presentation.)

- Problem statement
- Review of research and Research Question
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion (implications, limitations, future research, conclusion)
- References

Lab Work: 15% of semester grade; Pass/Fail

We will spend time each week doing lab work on SPSS. The university offers SPSS to students on **free**. Please take advantage of this and install on your computer—Mac or PC. On 1/16/2018, in class, you will be shown how to install on your computer.

The purpose of lab work is to give your hands on experience with the building blocks of research, data handling, and data analysis. Lab work will illustrate the terms you learn in the text, such as “variable”, “value”, “case”, etc. and will lead to statistical of data that you will need to know for your research project. You'll use lab to learn how to do the important steps in research rather than simply reading research studies or reading about research. Most of the learning in lab occurs in the doing of lab, and lab is intended to be a collaborative experience. Although I will at times collect your lab work, I will not grade your lab work. I am always happy to discuss lab work in more detail during lab, office hours, or over email.

Attendance & Participation

Given that we only meet once a week; attendance is very important. More than attending, though, it's important to be present, by which I mean actively engaging in class discussion, and sharing your own experiences.

Given also that we will be doing a lab most weeks, if you are absent for any reason, I still expect you to complete the lab for that week.

Grade Summary

Title	Percentage of Grade	Points Allocated
Final paper	40%	40
First Draft of introduction and literature review	10%	10
First draft of methods section	5%	5
PODs	10%	10
Presentation	20%	20
Lab Work	15%	15
Totals	100%	100

Final Paper Grading Rubric

Category	Possible Score	Your Score
Abstract	3	
Intro/Problem Statement	5	
Review of Research	5	
Research Questions	5	
Methods	2	
Results	8	
Discussion	7	
References	3	
APA Style	2	
Total	40	

Presentation Grading Rubric

Category	Possible Score	Your Score
Content	10 total	
Problem Statement	2	
Review of Research Summary	1	
Methods	1	
Results	2	
Discussion	3	
Presentation References	1	
Speaking Style	10 total	
Speaks clearly and at an understandable pace	2	
Maintains eye contact with audience	1	
Well-rehearsed	1	
Speaker uses body language appropriately	2	
Speaker is within time limits	2	
Speaker is able to answer questions professionally	2	
Total for Presentation	20	

Assignment Calendar:

Assignment	Due Date
PODS Exercise	January 23
Introduction & literature review	February 6
Methods	February 20
Presentation Due	March 20
Final paper research paper	April 17

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	1/9	Introduction to course, overview of research in the social sciences, review of student experiences and interests Lab: Writing Lab (Components of Research Paper)		
2	1/16	Theory and research in the social sciences (correlation, causation, counterfactuals, and falsification) Guest Speaker: Justin King, Policy Director, New America Lab: Robert LaRoe, IT: show how to access SPSS virtually from laptop; Overview of SPSS	RB Chps 1 & 2	Bring Laptop to Class
3	1/23	Formulating a research question; conceptualization and operationalization. Guest Speaker: Kelly Harrington, MSW, Research and Program Manager, Office of Economic Empowerment, Massachusetts Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General Lab: Overview of Data Sets and Code Books,	RB Chp 6	PODS Exercise
4	1/30	Ethics in social science research Guest Speaker: University of Michigan Internal Review Board Representative Class Exercise: Mock IRB for Determining the Ethical Conduct of Research Proposal	RB Chp 4 & 5	
5	2/6	Measures of Central Tendency: Mean, median, and mode; Measures of Variability: Range and standard deviation Guest Speaker: Melinda Lewis, Assistant Director of AEDI and Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Kansas Lab: Descriptive Statistics (frequencies, means, modes, etc.)	RB Chp 20	Introduction & Literature Review Bring Laptop to Class

6	2/13	Research design: non-experimental, quasi-experimental, experimental, and single case study Guest Speaker: Michele Corey, VP for Program, Michigan's Children Lab: T-tests	RB Chp 10 & 11	Bring Laptop to Class
7	2/20	Sampling Guest Speaker: Anthony Poore, Director of Regional & Community Outreach, Boston Federal Reserve Bank Lab: Chi-square	RB Chp 14	Methods Bring Laptop to Class
8	2/27	Winter Break – No Class		
9	3/6	Levels of measurement; Survey research, scales and indexes Guest Speaker: Christy Finsel, is an independent consultant and researcher focused on asset building in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities Lab: Time to finish analysis for final paper/Discuss write-up for methods	RB Chp 8 & 9	Bring Laptop to Class
10	3/13	Qualitative research design and techniques Lab: Introduce Coding, Matrices; Transcripts Group Activity: (7 groups of 5) Provide each group with transcripts to identify themes and put in matrices	RB Chp 17 & 18	Bring Laptop to Class
11	3/20	Class Presentations (power point - 10 minutes with 5 minutes for questions)		Presentations Due
12	3/27	Class Presentations (power point - 10 minutes with 5 minutes for questions)		
13	4/3	Class Presentations (power point - 10 minutes with 5 minutes for questions)		
14	4/10	Wrap up – using research in social work practice Video: A Hidden America: Children of		
15	4/17			Final Research Project