1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This seminar is designed to support doctoral students as they integrate the technical and theoretical knowledge gained in coursework to develop clear and compelling proposals for their preliminary examinations and dissertations. We will cover the process for formulating research questions, organizing and developing literature reviews, identifying and developing research methods, and organizing proposals. The requirements and procedures for the social work preliminary examination will be reviewed and clarified. The focus will be on developing proposals that integrate social science and social work knowledge.

More specifically, the preliminary exam consists of the student’s answers to three questions that are relevant to his/her interests and approved by the faculty committee:

1. A question concerning the major theory of theories in their area

2. A question focusing on the empirical research available in their area

3. A question addressing social work practice; that is, research that has been conducted in the area of practice and/or policy in their area
Answers for the prelim should not be descriptive alone, but rather should involve analysis, synthesis, conceptualization, and integration of major viewpoints, alternate considerations, and research evidence from the available literature, and should identify critical issues for future development in the student’s area.

b. Course design

This course is designed as a seminar that emphasizes discussion and exchange of ideas and information. Most classes will require reading from assigned articles. Throughout this term, we will examine topics pertinent to making explicit the requirements and practices of scholarship needed for the development of a prelim proposal in Social Work. Students who have completed the prelim already and faculty from the Joint Doctoral Program who have participated on prelim committees will describe their experiences, how their proposal and prelim were conceived and executed. This will give students a direct sense of different styles with which they may wish to write their prelim proposal and ultimate complete their prelim. In addition, students will learn about conducting systematic reviews. Experts will come to class and instruct students on the technology that can assist them in conducting a systematic review and on how to conduct a systematic review. Students will take an active role in framing our discussions.

| 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. |
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.

c. 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.

d. Objectives
• Outline of prelim proposal
  o Theory question
    ▪ Description of major relevant theory or theories
    ▪ Empirical research that supports or refutes theories
    ▪ Critique of theories
    ▪ Suggestions for enhancing theories (e.g., additional conceptual linkages; syntheses of two or more theories)
  o Empirical Research question
    ▪ Analysis and synthesis of empirical research
    ▪ Critique of research
• Identification of gaps in research and suggestions for future research
  o Social work practice question
    ▪ Synthesis of research conducted on social work practice and/or policy
    ▪ Critique of this research
    ▪ Identification of gaps in research on practice and/or policy. Suggestions for addressing these gaps.

• Identify how themes of privilege, oppression, diversity, or social justice will be addressed in the prelim proposal (PODS exercise)
  o Understand ethical issues in the conduct of research and evaluation.
  o Understand the relevance and applicability of research in working with disadvantaged, disenfranchised, and diverse populations.
  o Examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

• Critically evaluate the design, methodology, and conclusions of social work and social and behavioral science research publications.
  o Understand research concepts to permit a critical analysis of research and evaluation studies with respect to quality, bias, ethics, and potential applications.
  o Assess the strengths and weaknesses of selected research designs and methodology.
  o Assess the cultural sensitivity of measures and measurement strategies.
  o Assess the biases and implications of conclusions drawn in the research studies.

• Become familiar with different styles for writing a prelim proposal from other doctoral students who have completed their prelim and their prelim Committee members.

• Write a social work prelim proposal

**e. 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 undergird 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).

**f. 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.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials

All readings will be available electronically via Canvas. A primary resource will be our 2019 Joint Program Guidelines, found here: https://ssw.umich.edu/sites/default/files/documents/phd/fall-2019-guidelines.pdf

b. Class schedule (*Grades due no later than May 1, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Required Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introductions, Course Overview</td>
<td>Read example prelim proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/14/20</td>
<td></td>
<td>online (on Canvas)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Go over example prelims, guidelines</td>
<td>Read example prelims (on Canvas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21/20</td>
<td>for prelims and Discuss Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Overview of Writing a Prelim Proposal</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/28/20</td>
<td>• Nina Jackson Levin (10:00 – 10:30)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Brian Starks (10:30 – 11:00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4/20</td>
<td>• Dr. Beth Reed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Discussions (Matthew Bakko</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&amp; Matthew Hiller)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/11/20</td>
<td>• Dr. Ruth Dunkle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Discussions (Rita Hu, Danae</td>
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<td>Ross, &amp;</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>2/18/20</td>
<td>Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>2/25/20</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>3/3/20</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>3/10/20</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>3/17/20</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>3/24/20 (Note: Hindu Holiday)</td>
<td>Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>3/31/20</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Assignments

1. Draft Prelim Proposal (Due 4/21/20)
   a. Full draft of prelim proposal. Should contain the elements contained in the picture of the table of contents below. There is not a set page length for this assignment but would be around 25 to 40 pages. But again, not a specific page length so might be slightly shorter or longer.

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2. **PODS Exercise:** This would be the POWER, OPPRESSION, DIVERSITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE section of the prelim proposal above (Due 4/21/20)

3. **Student Lead Class Discussions:**
   a. Students should attempt to include the following components:
      i. Description of major theories/research/practice in their area.
      ii. Critique
      iii. Identification of gaps
      iv. Proposed question

To find due dates find your name above in syllabus class schedule.

**Note:** It is understood that this might be limited and not well formed. The student does not have to write anything out and submit though if it is helpful for the student to bring notes they should. Whether you are describing theory, research, or practice will depend on the section of the prelim being covered that week in class. So, for example, on 2/4/20 the class will be covering the theory section of the prelim proposal so the students would want to discuss the major theory(s). The student should be prepared to tell what the theory(s) are and the basic components of the theory. What are the critiques? Then identify gaps in what is known about the theory/research/practice. In the case of research/empirical section of the prelim proposal students would describe major research studies in their area and for the practice section they would describe the major practices. Lastly, attempt to identify a question or two related to the section of the prelim (theory/research/practice).

4. **Review Tables (Due 4/14/19)**
   a. Students will be provided with a template for a table (the template can also be found on Blackboard) to use to summarize at a “minimum” 20 peer reviewed research articles. The articles can be related to theory, empirical, or practice. However, theory articles should go in a theory table, empirical articles in an empirical table and so forth.

**d. Deadline Expectations**

All assignments are due by email (willelli@umich.edu) prior to 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.

**e. Attendance and class 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. This is a seminar class so much of the class content is gained through discussion with guest speakers.
f. Grading

The overall grade for the course will be based on the completion of Student Lead Discussion (30 points), PODS (10 points), Draft Prelim Proposal (40), and completion of Review Tables (20 points). An A grade is given for exceptional individual performance. Grades in the B range reflect satisfactory completion of course requirements (competent performance). C grades reflect less than satisfactory work and D grades indicate deficient performance; neither is acceptable at the graduate level.

Grade Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
<th>Points Allocated</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Lead Discussions</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30 (10 points per discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PODS</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Prelim Proposal</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Tables</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*The PODS exercise is embedded in the prelim proposal.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: [https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources](https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources). They include:

- Safety and emergency preparedness
- Mental health and well-being
- Teaching evaluations
- Proper use of names and pronouns
- Accommodations for students with disabilities
- Religious/spiritual observances
- Military deployment
- Writing skills and expectations
- Academic integrity and plagiarism