



**University of Central Florida  
School of Social Work**

**SOW 3401.0001 - Social Work Research**

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Term: Spring 2009  
Class Days: Mondays  
Class Hours: 1:30-4:20 PM  
Class Location: HPA 1 246

**DESCRIPTION:** Study of quantitative and qualitative methods of building knowledge for social work and the ethical use of research in professional practice.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the term, students should be able to:

1. Understand social work research as an integral part of informed practice.
2. Explain how research is utilized in planned change processes in micro, mezzo and macro practice.
3. Identify when different types of social work research (quantitative/qualitative) should be used.
4. Discuss the specific stages of the social work research process:
  - a. Formulation of practice questions and hypotheses
  - b. Sampling
  - c. Principles of Protection of Human Subjects
  - d. Data collection
  - e. Processing of data
  - f. Interpretation of statistical results and testing of hypotheses
  - g. Report writing & documenting the research process
5. Identify and understand methods used to evaluate social work practice effectiveness
6. Utilize various research designs in social work practice.
7. Understand basics usage of SPSS for data analysis.
8. Discuss beginning level statistical methods and their applications in describing and analyzing the variables in practice.
9. Understand, critically evaluate and make use of social work research presented by others.
10. Discuss the relationship between ethics, social justice, economic justice and the research process in social work especially as applied to diverse populations (women, racial and cultural minorities, handicapped, elderly, and the poor) for social work research.
11. Understand the importance of integrating the strengths perspective when using human subjects in social work research.

**EVALUATION OF GRADING AND LEARNING:** Your grades will be based upon mid and final exams, SPSS/PC exercises, a research project, and class attendance and participation in projects. The final course grade is computed as follows:

| Activity                                | Grade Point               | Date  |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| Midterm                                 | 25                        | March 2 2009  |
| Research Article Critique Presentations | 20                        | Ongoing—students to sign up for a presentation date |
| SPSS Activity/Qualitative Analysis      | 10                        | April 13, 2009                                      |
| Review of the Literature Assignment     | 20                        | April 13, 2009                                      |
| Final Examination (comprehensive)       | 25                        | During Finals Week                                  |
|   | <b>Total Points = 100</b> |   |

1. **EXAMINATIONS:** There will be two exams: a midterm and final examination that will consist of questions taken from material covered in e class and in assigned readings. Each exam may have any combination of true/false, multiple choice, matching, completion, and short answer questions. Each exam is worth 25 points.
2. **RESEARCH CRITIQUE PRESENTATION:** The class will be assigned one research article that the instructor selects and that will be worked on as a practice exercise throughout the semester. Following the Holosko Primer text students will sign up for a group presentation (no more than 4 students to a group) on a specific chapter of that book. Each chapter

focuses on critiquing a specific section found in research articles. Each group will prepare a 20 minute presentation and the assignment will be worth 20 points of the course grade. Each student in the group will receive a group grade. The instructor will provide more information at the beginning of the semester.

3. **SPSS/PC EXERCISE:** There will be two exercise(s) designed to expose students to data analysis and all students are expected to participate. The exercise is worth 10 points of the course grade.
4. **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ASSIGNMENT:** Students will be expected to review the literature on a specific research topic idea and to write a review of the literature on that topic. The instructor will provide guidelines for this assignment at the beginning of the semester. This assignment is worth 20 points.

**Please note that there will NOT be any make ups for any of the assignments described above unless the student has an extraordinary reason (hospitalization, death of a close relative, etc.) and the student provides the instructor with documentation. Please do not plan your vacations for days that you are scheduled to take quizzes or exams.**

6. **CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** Regular class attendance is expected. Students, who miss three (3) or more absences, may have their final grade lowered by one letter grade. A final course grade will be based upon the total number of points accumulated on the above evaluations and on the course attendance policy. See attendance policy in syllabus.
7. **GRADES:**

|                    |                   |                   |                   |                       |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Grades</b>      | B+ = 87-89 (3.25) | C+ = 77-79 (2.25) | D+ = 67-69 (1.25) | F = 59 or less (0.00) |
| A = 95-100 (4.0)   | B = 84-86 (3.00)  | C = 74-76 (2.00)  | D = 64-66 (1.00)  |                       |
| A- = 90- 94 (3.75) | B- = 80-83 (2.75) | C- = 70-73 (1.75) | D- = 60-63 (.75)  |                       |

**TEXTS REQUIRED:**

1. Yegidis, B.L. & Weinbach, R.W. (2006). Research methods for social workers. (Fifth Edition). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
2. Holosko, M. J. (2006). Primer for critiquing social research: A student guide. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Brooks Cole.

**Texts Recommended:**

Strunk, W. Jr., & White, E. B. (2000). *Elements of style* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Longman. ISBN: 020580902X

**OPTIONAL READINGS:** At the beginning of the semester the instructor will provide students with a list of additional articles for optional readings that the students may search out in the library. The instructor may identify additional readings throughout the semester.

**EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING:**

**Completion of Assignments and Reading:**

All assignments are due on the scheduled date unless the student has extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from meeting the deadline. In those cases the student **MUST** speak directly with the instructor and must make prior arrangements. Please note that documentation of the special circumstances must be brought in to the instructor. Approval for late work must be obtained directly from the instructor. One letter grade will be subtracted for each week that an assignment is late. Students are responsible for required and reserved readings. In addition, it is expected that students will also search out additional readings in efforts to expand their knowledge in specific areas. The instructor may include additional reserve readings throughout the semester.

**Classroom Behavior:**

Students should arrive for class on time and avoid disrupting the class with late arrivals. Students are expected to demonstrate courtesy and respect for the instructor and for peers. Differences in points of view expressed constructively, as the basis of academic freedom are encouraged.

**Academic Integrity:**

While it is not expected that social work students will resort to academic dishonesty, students must be aware that any evidence of

dishonesty/cheating or plagiarism will result in a Failing grade for the course and will be subject to other consequences as per the School of Social Work and UCF policies.

**Submitting Assignments:** In this course we will utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you will be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, the instructor receives a report from turnitin.com that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process visit: <http://www.turnitin.com> The instructor will provide additional information on turnitin.com at the beginning of the semester.

**Special Accommodations:** The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

**Audiotaping of Course Lectures:** Students are prohibited from audiotaping any part of the course lectures, unless the student is registered with the university's Student Disability Office and requires such arrangement for learning purposes. Students with special needs that require this accommodation must discuss this personally with the instructor at the beginning of the course.

**Use of Laptops in the Classroom:** Students wishing to use their personal laptops to take class notes may do so, BUT only if they agree to the following conditions:

- The student must let the instructor know at the beginning of the semester that he/she wishes to or needs to (because of special accommodations) use a personal laptop computer.
- The only computer function to be used during class is word processing—for example Microsoft Word
- The student agrees that he/she WILL NOT engage in searching the internet, reading or responding to email or reviewing other material on the computer that is not directly related to word processing functions for this course.
- The student agrees that if the instructor discovers that the student is reading email, conducting personal business such as banking, the student loses the privilege to utilize the laptop computer in class.

**Use of Cell Phones:** Cell phones in the classroom can be disruptive to the learning process. As a courtesy to the instructor and other students, cell phones are to be turned off or put on silent. Students should not be taking personal calls during class time unless there is an extraordinary personal situation. The student should advise the instructor of this situation at the beginning of class.

**Attendance Policy:** Given the course content it is imperative that students attend all classes. Student's who miss three (3) or more class sessions for other than extraordinary reasons (hospitalization, illness, death, etc.) will have their final grade lowered by one letter grade. **PLEASE NOTE THAT IF A STUDENT HAS AN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE RESULTING IN A CLASS ABSENCE, THE STUDENT MUST PROVIDE THE INSTRUCTOR WITH WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION ASAP. STUDENTS MAY ONLY PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION FOR EXTRAORDINARY ABSENCES.**

**Make up Exams:** Make up exams WILL ONLY be given if a student has an extraordinary circumstance, has provided written documentation to the instructor and made appropriate arrangements with the instructor for a make up. If approved, the instructor will provide the student with a different make up format than what the class was given.

**Instructor's Office Hours:** Students should make advising appointments with the instructor as needed. The instructor's office hours are included in this syllabus. If for some reason the student cannot meet during the instructor's office hours, the instructor will try whenever possible to accommodate the student's schedule.

**Course Policies:** See **Social Work Student Handbook** and **the Golden Rule Handbook for UCF Students**.

## Course Outline and Schedule

### Week 1 (1/12/09) Social Work Practice and Social Work Research

#### Content

1. Course overview
  - Introductions
  - Review of the syllabus, course expectations, readings and grading
2. Introductory Concepts
  - Similarities & differences between social work practice and social work research
  - Types of knowledge
  - Basic and applied research
  - Research as a tool in the planned change process at the micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work practice
  - Quantitative and qualitative research

**Required Readings:** Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 1, Research and Social Work Practice, pgs. 1-14

### Week 2 (January 19, 2009)-Martin Luther King Jr. Day-NO CLASS

### Week 3: (1/26/09) – Ethical Issues in Research: Lessons Learned

#### Content

1. Ethical violations in past research
2. Understanding *Informed Consent*, the IRB process and other ethical standards today
3. Integrating the strengths perspective when identifying, recruiting and working with human subjects.
4. Social justice, economic justice and research with diverse populations (minorities, women, children, etc.) and social work research
5. Applying the NASW Code of Ethics to research

#### Required Readings:

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 1, pgs 31-51
- (2) Holosko Primer, chapters 1 & 2

### Weeks 4 & 5: (2/2/09 & 2/9/09)

#### Finding and Using the Literature to Formulate Research Questions and Hypotheses

**Assignments: Presentation(s) #1 & 2 on Article Review Critique on 2/11/08**

#### Content

1. Identifying research questions
2. Reviewing and using the literature in research
3. Research questions versus hypotheses
4. Problem identification, research questions and hypotheses
5. Considerations in report/documentation preparation:

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. Introduction                                  | b. Problem statement          |
| c. Review of literature                          | d. Study questions/hypotheses |
| e. Research design                               | f. Discussion of findings     |
| g. Implications for social policies and programs | h. Conclusions/Summary        |

#### Required Readings:

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapters 3, 4 & 5
- (2) Holosko Primer, Chapter 6

### Week 6: 2/16/09 – Research Designs & Methods for Acquiring Research Data

**Assignments Due: Presentation(s) #3 on Article Review Critique**

#### Content

1. Introduction to research designs
2. Methods for acquiring research data
3. Other ways to describe research (content analysis, historical research, feminist research, ethnographic research, meta analysis)

**Readings - Required:**

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapters 6, 7 and 8
- (2) Assigned article to be used for Research Critique article-to be identified by the instructor and retrieved by the students
- (3) Holosko Primer, Chapters 3 & 9

**Weeks 7: 2/23/09 Sampling & Measurement**

**Assignments Due: Presentation(s) #4 on Article Review Critique**

**Content**

1. Sampling concepts and terminologies
2. Probability and non-probability sampling methods
3. Selecting a sample
4. Defining "measurement"
5. Levels of measurement: Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, Ratio
6. Common sources of measurement errors
7. Criteria for measurement quality
  - a. Reliability
  - b. Validity

**Readings - Required:**

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 9 &10
- (2) Holosko Primer, Chapter 4 & 5

**Week 8: 3/2/09-MIDTERM EXAMINATION & Review of Assigned Article (if needed)**

**MARCH 9-14, 2009—SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9 – 3/16/09 - Sampling & Measurement-Continued**

**See Week 8 for Class Content Information**

**Assignments Due: Presentation(s) #5 on Article Review Critique**

**Week 10: 3/23/09 – Data Collection Instruments**

**Quiz #2 Today**

**Content**

1. Using different types of data collection instruments
2. Considerations in using existing, constructing new instruments and self administered instruments
3. Survey Research
  - Guidelines for asking questions.
  - Questionnaire construction
  - Telephone and face to face interviews
3. Using existing and new instruments: challenges and opportunities

**Readings Requested:**

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 11
- (2) Holosko Primer, Chapter 7

**Weeks 11 & 12---3/30/09 & 4/6/09 – Data Processing, Analysis & Interpretation**

**Assignments Due: Presentation(s) #6 on Article Review Critique on 3/31/08**

**Assignments Due: Presentation(s) #7 on Article Review Critique on 4/7/08**

**Week 13 4/13/09**

**SPSS and Qualitative Activity Due in Lab on April 13, 2009**

**Content:**

1. Getting ready data for analysis
2. Basics of SPSS
3. Considerations in selecting statistical tests
4. Overview of analysis & interpretation of data
5. Disseminating research results

**Required Readings:**

- (1) Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 12
- (2) Holosko Primer, Chapter 7 & 8

**Assignments due: Review of Literature paper on April 13, 2009**

**Week 13 & 14: 4/20/09 & 4/27/09 – Evaluating Programs and Evaluating Practice Effectiveness**

**Content:**

1. Purpose and types of program evaluations designs
2. Using logic models
2. Using focus groups
3. Ethical considerations in program evaluations
4. Methods for evaluating a social worker's interventions
4. Single system research in evaluating practice effectiveness

**Required Readings:** Yegidis and Weinbach text, Chapter 13 & 14

**Week 15: FINAL EXAMINATION WEEK - FINAL EXAM DATE AND TIME TO BE CONFIRMED.**

**This syllabus may be modified at the discretion of the instructor.**

**Changes will be discussed with students in class and/or via email. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his/her Ecommunity email address is correct.**

**The UCF Creed**

Integrity, scholarship, community, creativity, and excellence are the core values that guide our conduct, performance, and decisions.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Integrity</b>   | I will practice and defend academic and personal honesty.  |
| <b>Scholarship</b> | I will cherish and honor learning as a fundamental purpose of my membership in the UCF community.                        |
| <b>Community</b>   | I will promote an open and supportive campus environment by respecting the rights and contributions of every individual. |
| <b>Creativity</b>  | I will use my talents to enrich the human experience.  |
| <b>Excellence</b>  | I will strive toward the highest standards of performance in any endeavor I undertake.                                   |

## Bibliography

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