



University of Central Florida
School of Social Work

SOW 5404.0001 - MSW Social Work Research

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Term: Spring 2009
Class Days: Wednesday
Class Hrs: 6:30 P.M. - 9:20 P.M.
Location: TBA

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

THE UCF CREED

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

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

POLICIES

In addition to the information below, the student should become familiar with [School of Social Work Student Handbook](#) and [The Golden Rule Handbook for UCF Students](#). All policies included in these handbooks apply to this class.

Modification of Syllabus

This syllabus may be modified at the discretion of the instructor. Changes will be reported to students in class and/or via email. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that their email addresses are current in *eCommunity*.

Cell phones, pagers and recorders

- Turn off cell phones and beepers during class sessions.
- Permission to audiotape a class meeting(s) must be obtained from the instructor in advance.
- Use of laptop computers to take class notes is allowed; however, it is expected that students WILL NOT engage in other laptop activities. Prohibited activities include but are not limited to: internet connections, reading or responding to emails, balancing a checkbook, etc. If these activities occur, the instructor reserves the right to request that the student not use a laptop during class.

Classroom Decorum

- Side conversations are discouraged because they distract the class.
- The instructor expects students to respect the culture, values, beliefs and rights of their classmates. During class sessions, alternate points of view are encouraged and should be received by others with respect. Students should feel free to express their opinions and to refer to relevant personal situations without fear of disapproval or disrespect; however, the classroom is not the place where students should indulge in personal venting or support seeking.

Attendance and Participation

Student attendance and participation are integral parts of this course. Students are expected to attend each class, arrive on time, and remain for the duration of the class. Students are also expected to assume responsibility for their own learning and to actively involve themselves in class discussions and exercises. Students must be prepared for class (i.e., complete readings and other assignments *prior* to class). Make-up exams are not given **ONLY** in extreme circumstances. These circumstances include exceptional health EMERGENCIES (that require that the student bring in medical documentation), and the make up exam will be an essay exam. Out-of-town vacations, trips, mild illness (such as a cold), and other similar circumstances do not qualify as extreme. The instructor reserves the option to provide a make up exam in hers or his absence.

Students who miss three (3) or more absences regardless of the reason may have their final grade lowered by one letter grade. The only exception to this is if the student has a **documented** extraordinary circumstance (student hospitalization; severe illness; death in the family; car accident) preventing the student from coming to class. In that case, the student must present written documentation to the instructor.

It is University policy that **all classes MUST meet during the scheduled final exam session.**

Written Assignments

Effective written communication skills are essential to professional social work practice. Thus, students are expected to present their ideas clearly and properly and to adhere to accepted standards of writing. *Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are to be correct in all written materials submitted and will be considered in grading written assignments.*

All written assignments must be typed in a 12-font print and all margins must be one inch. The cover page of a paper is not considered a page of text. Work not conforming to these standards or demonstrating serious deficiencies in common English usage may be returned without a grade. When references are required, they must be in the APA documentation style.

Students are encouraged to use the University Writing Center (UWC) for assistance in preparing written assignments. The UWC is located in MOD 608 (near the Communications Building). UWC staff may be reached at (407) 823-2197 or <http://www.uwc.ucf.edu/>.

Late Assignments

All assignments must be turned in to the instructor at the beginning of the class period or delivered to the instructor's mailbox before class starts on the due date. It is the student's responsibility to see to it that her or his assignment is stamped with the date by the social work staff member who then places the assignment in the instructor's mailbox. No assignments will be accepted by fax or email. Late assignments will lose a full letter grade for each day that they are late unless the student gained prior approval from the instructor. No assignment will be accepted after the last day of class. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor regarding late assignments.

Incomplete Grades

An "Incomplete" is only an option in exceptional circumstances and when in keeping with the School and University policies. Individual arrangements must be made with the instructor for the completion of the course requirements, but in no case will the due date extend beyond the end of the following semester. Students who experience chronic medical or personal problems that prevent them from attending class regularly are encouraged to review policies relating to securing a leave of absence from their university studies.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment may result in an "F" for that assignment and may also lead to an "F" for the entire course and referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. (See the UCF Golden Rule for further information.) It is assumed that students will adhere to the academic creed of the University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Please do not ask for your grade to be changed without just cause or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

Turnitin.com

The instructor reserves the option to use Turnitin.com which is an online system which can determine if work has been copied from another source. You will be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. For a more detailed look at this process, please visit: <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Disability Access Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. 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 instructor. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the instructor to request them.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of research as integral to evidence-based social work practice
2. Explain the function of research in micro, mezzo, and macro practice
3. Demonstrate an understanding of social work research as a scientific approach
4. Discuss the specific stages of the social work research process: formulation of practice questions and hypotheses, sampling, data collection, data processing, interpretation of statistical results, testing of hypotheses, and report writing
5. Explore the social and economic justice implications of implementing and interpreting research
6. Use research designs for social work practice
7. Demonstrate beginning level skills in the use of a computerized statistical program (SPSS) for data analysis in social work research
8. Discuss beginning level strategies for qualitative data analysis
9. Conduct social research (quantitative/qualitative and descriptive/explanatory) related to community-based clinical practice
10. Understand, critically evaluate, and make use of the research findings of others
11. Discuss ethical and political issues and the need for sensitivity when studying the populations of diversity (women, racial and cultural minorities, gays and lesbians, persons with disabilities,

- older people, economically disadvantaged) and
- Understand and apply the principles of the human subjects' protection, the IRB review process and how it relates to social work research.

REQUIRED READINGS

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2007). *Essential research methods for social work*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Available UCF Bookstore and the publisher's website) <http://www.bookstore.ucf.edu>

Rubin, A. (2007). *Statistics for evidence-based practice and evaluation*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Available UCF Bookstore) <http://www.bookstore.ucf.edu>

Cournoyer, B.R. (2004). *The evidence-based social work skills book*. Boston: Pearson. (Available UCF Bookstore). <http://bookstore.ucf.edu>

Journal Articles: Several journal articles are listed in the syllabus as required reading; in order to provide the best information possible as it becomes available, new journal articles may be substituted on a one-to-one ratio. Articles are available through the online electronic databases at <http://library.ucf.edu>

Additional required readings available on the Web:

Nuremberg Code <http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/nuremberg.html>
 NASW Code of Ethics <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/default.asp>

Additional readings and handouts may be provided throughout the semester.

UCF Library Instruction Tutorials and Resources

<http://library.ucf.edu/Reference/Instruction/ENC1102Tutorial>
<http://library.ucf.edu/Reference/Guides/SocialWork.asp>

The following web sites provide additional information about APA style:

<http://www.uwc.ucf.edu>
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>
<http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>
<http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/citing.htm>
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/write/handouts.html>

Evaluation of Learning and Grading

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Participation	5	N/A
Evidence-Based Question/Search Exercise	10	Class session 7
Human Participant Protections Education	5	Class session 9
Research Analysis and Critique Paper	15	Class session 11
Research Proposal	20	Class session 14
SPSS Exercise (In-class)	15	Class session 14
Final Exam	30	Class session 15
Total Possible	100	

Grading Scale	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)

1. **Examination:** There will be a final written examination. Exam questions will be taken from the materials covered in the class and assigned readings. The exam may have any combination of true/false, multiple choice, matching, or brief essay questions.
2. **Evidence-Based Question/Search Exercise:** Students will review designated research articles, develop either a clinical practice effectiveness or program enhancement question and search strategy. This question and search strategy will form the basis for developing your research analysis and critique paper. Guidelines will be provided by the instructor.
3. **Research Analysis and Critique Paper:** Each student is required to write an analysis of a research-based article that is applicable to community-based clinical practice. The paper should not exceed 5 pages and must be double spaced type-written/word-processed with a minimum of 12 point font. APA style guidelines (5th Edition) must be followed. The guidelines and other specifics for the research assignment will be provided and discussed in class.
4. **SPSS Data Entry and Analysis Exercise:** There will be one SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) assignment. Preparation and partial work on this assignment will be done over two class sessions. These sessions will meet in a computer lab on campus. Guidelines for the assignment will be distributed in class.
5. **Research Proposal:** Each student is required to write a research proposal that is directly related to community-based clinical practice. The paper should not exceed 8 pages and must be double spaced with 12 point font. APA style guidelines (5th Edition) must be followed. The guidelines and other specifics for this assignment will be provided and discussed in class.
6. **Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams**---- (complete the web-based tutorial; print out certification; make two copies—retain one for your files; provide one to the instructor). UCF Institutional Review Board <http://www.research.ucf.edu/Compliance/irb.html>

Class Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend all classes and *actively participate* in learning activities. Students are expected to come to class prepared; the student participation grade will reflect preparation for class discussion and exchanges. Up to 5 points will be deducted from the final grades of students who have more than one unexcused absence and/or who are habitually late for class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

Session 1, January 7 – An Introduction to Inquiry

Learning Objectives

1. Define and illustrate errors in human inquiry
2. Understand the foundations of Social Science
3. Identify the motivations for doing Social Work Research
4. Understand deductive and inductive theory constructions
5. Understand prejudice and stereotyping in human inquiry

Content

1. Human inquiry

2. Foundations of social science
3. Motivations for social work research
4. Scientific theory and social work practice models
5. Application to generalist social work practice
6. Deductive theory construction
7. Inductive theory construction

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 1, 2, & 3

Session 2, January 14 - Problem Formulation, Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the Social Work Research process
2. Identify research topics related to social stress, support, shared responsibility, social functioning, empowerment, social/economic justice.
3. Explain the purposes of research and develop a problem statement, research questions and hypothesis.

Content

1. Phases of the research process
2. Culturally competent problem formulation
3. Research purposes
4. Develop the conceptual framework for research questions: the Literature Review
5. Conceptual explication.
6. Operational definitions.

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 6 & 7

Session 3, January 21 - The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the issues of ethical controversies and cultural sensitivity in Social Work Research
2. Understand NASW Code of Ethics
3. Understand the Political issues of Social Work Research
4. Identify and discuss political and ethical issues in research on populations at risk
5. Address the Human Subjects Review Process and protection for human subjects

Content

1. Human diversity and Social Work Research
2. Ethical issues and controversies in social work research
3. NASW Code of Ethics and the politics of social work research
4. The Guidelines for Human Subjects of School of Social Work and UCF Committee

Text Reading: None

Article Reading:

1. Loue, S., Okello, D., & Kawuma, M. (1996). Research bioethics in the Ugandan context: A program summary. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 24, 47-53.

Session 4, January 28 - (continued from Session 2) Problem Formulation, Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this Unit, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the logic of conceptualization and its relationship to measurement
2. Define and give examples of dimensions and indicators
3. Distinguish conceptualization from operationalization
4. Understand and use the four levels of measurement
5. Understand descriptive statistics
6. Discuss bivariate and multivariate analysis

Content

1. Levels of Measurement , measurement validity
2. Coding
3. Review of descriptive univariate analysis
4. Relationships among variables
5. Measures of association and selecting a test of statistical significance

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 8 & 9

Session 5 February 4 - Introduction to Evidence-Based Social Work

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the purposes of research and develop a problem statement, research questions and hypothesis.
2. Understand, critically evaluate and make use of the research findings of others

Content

1. Overview and purpose of the research process
2. Parts of the Research Paper
3. Human diversity issues
4. Evidence-based questioning and searching (**with exercise done in and outside of class**)
5. Writing social work research reports

Text Reading: Cournoyer, B.R. (2004). The evidence-based social work skills book. Boston: Pearson. Chapters 1, 2, 3

Evidence-Based Practice Exercise Due Session 7; Human Participation Education Due Session 9

Sessions 6, 7 & 8, February 11, February 18, February 25 - Data Collection, Survey Research, and Sampling

(Session 8 will include a review of the research analysis and critique paper guidelines)

(Sessions 6,7 & 8)

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the guidelines for asking survey questions
2. Discuss the pros and cons of using closed-ended and open-ended questions
3. Construct questionnaires, composite measures
4. Understand mail surveys and the building of self-administered questionnaires
5. Review the principles and problems that can occur with survey research
6. Discuss sampling concepts and terminology
7. Explain probability sampling theory
8. Understand the types of probability sampling and non-probability sampling
9. Discuss the problems of sampling

Content

1. Guidelines for asking questions
2. Questionnaire construction with composite measures
3. Some prominent scaling (e.g., Guttman, Likert, Thurstone)
4. Cultural sensitivity issues in constructing questionnaires
5. Self-administered questionnaire and cover Letter
6. Personal interviews and the role of the interviewer
7. Telephone surveys and electronic mail survey
8. Human diversity and ethical issues with survey research methods and sampling
9. Sampling concepts, terminology, types and problems

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10 (Session 6), Chapter 11 (Session 7)

Required Journal Article Readings (Session 8):

1. Rees, A., & Pithouse, A. (2008). The intimate world of strangers – embodying the child in foster care. *Child & Family Social Work, 13*, 338-347. (mixed-methods survey questionnaire with in-depth structured interviews).
2. Rosen, M.A., Salas, E., Wilson, K., King, H., Salisbury, M., Augenstein, J., Robinson, D., & Birnbach, D. (2008). Measuring team performance in simulation-based training: Adopting best practices in health care. *Simulation in Health Care, 3*(1), 33-41. .

Session 9, March 4 - Conceptual Overview of SPSS & Skills for Research Critique and Analysis

Learning Objectives

1. **Understand the applications and uses of SPSS**
2. **Understand and apply principles of research critique**
3. **Learn use of SPSS examples**

Required Journal Article Readings:

1. Ejaz, F.K. (2000). The influence of religious and personal values on nursing home residents' attitudes toward life sustaining treatments. *Social Work in Health Care, 32*(2), 23-39. (cross-sectional survey)

§ Human Participant Protections Education Due Today

Session 10, March 18 – SPSS Practice Session (Student Lab)

Learning Objectives

1. Review SPSS skills in computer lab

Content

1. SPSS exercise

Text reading: NONE

Required Journal Article Readings: NONE

Research Analysis and Critique Paper due beginning of Class Session 11.

Session 11, March 25- Program Evaluation and Single-Case Evaluation Designs

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the components and variations within experimental designs
2. Review factors that influence internal and external validity
3. Discuss "natural" experiments and its implications for research
4. Understand research designs for social work practice
5. Conduct social research (quantitative/qualitative and descriptive/explanatory) related to community-based clinical practice
6. Discuss the ethical and political issues, and sensitivity of studying the populations of diversity (women, racial and cultural minorities, gays and lesbians, handicapped, elderly, poor) incorporating the principles of the human subjects review process, related to SW work research.

Content

1. Pre-experimental, experimental and quasi-experimental designs
2. Internal validity and External validity
3. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs.
4. Single-case designs to evaluate clinical practice.
5. Review Program evaluation designs
4. Practical aspects of agency-based research

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Ch 12, 13 & 14

Required Journal Article Readings:

1. Springer, D.W., Lynch, C. & Rubin, A. (2000). Effects of a solution-focused mutual aid group for Hispanic children of incarcerated parents. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(6), 431-442. (quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test non-equivalent comparison group).
2. Boelen, P.A., Keijser, J., & Van den Bout, M. (2007). Treatment of complicated grief: A comparison between cognitive-behavioral therapy and supportive counseling. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(2), 277-284. (multiple treatments, comparative)
3. Whitfield, G.W. (1999). Validation school social work: an evaluation of a cognitive-behavioral approach to reduce school violence. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 9(4), 399-426.

Review of Proposal Paper Guidelines; Qualitative Research Methods Questions In Final Exam

Session 12, April 1 - Qualitative Research Methods

Learning Objectives

1. Identify topics appropriate to Qualitative research
2. Describe and understand the various roles of the observer and sampling in qualitative research
3. Understand how to ask questions and how to record observations
4. Be able to analyze data and to draw conclusions
5. Be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research

Content

1. Topics appropriate and the roles of the observer.
2. Sampling, asking questions, recording observations, coding, data processing and analysis, and, drawing conclusions.
3. The strengths and limitations of qualitative research
4. Human diversity and cultural sensitivity issues with qualitative research

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 15 & 18

Required Journal Article Readings:

1. Ungar, M.T. (2000). The myth of peer pressure. *Adolescence*, 35, 167-180.
2. Jackson, S.F. (2008). A participatory group process to address qualitative data. *Progress in Community Health*, 2(2), 161-170.

Session 13, April 8- Quantitative Research Methods

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss data coding and data analysis strategies
2. Discuss the relationship of these strategies to research questions and study hypotheses
3. Understand measures of association and explain statistical significance

Content

1. Practice data coding, using SPSS software
2. Use SPSS software to create a database and enter data
2. The relationship of data coding and analysis to research questions and study hypotheses
3. Measures of association and statistical significance

Text Reading: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 16 & 17

Research Proposal due beginning of Class Session 14. SPSS Exercise continues in Class Session 14.

Session 14, April 15 - SPSS Lab and Review for Final Exam (Turn in SPSS in-class product)

Class meets in computer lab. Location TBA (Split session – SPSS & Final Exam Review)

Content

1. Explore data frequencies and descriptives using SPSS software
2. Practice data analysis with various measures of association, using SPSS software
3. Review for final exam

SPSS Exercise Completed in Session 14, Turn in by End of Class
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Session 15, April 22 - FINAL EXAM

Final Class will take place according to University Schedule for this class – No readings due – Wrap up Only)

Bibliography

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