

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 385R	<b>Instructor's name:</b>	Namkee G. Choi, PhD, MSW
<b>Unique Number:</b>	63800	<b>Office Number:</b>	3.122D
<b>Semester:</b>	Fall 2009	<b>Office Phone:</b>	(512) 232-9590
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	W 5:30-8:20 PM SSW 2.122	<b>Office Hours:</b>	W 4:00-5:15 PM; 8:30-9:30 PM & by appointment
<b>Course TA:</b>	Kacee Mottola ( <a href="mailto:kcmottola@gmail.com">kcmottola@gmail.com</a> ) <b>Instructor's e-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:nchoi@mail.utexas.edu">nchoi@mail.utexas.edu</a> * <a href="mailto:nchoi@austin.rr.com">nchoi@austin.rr.com</a> *		

\*(Please send e-mail messages to both addresses for quick response.)

**SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS**

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This foundation course is designed to help students gain an understanding of and appreciation for the use of research as a tool for professional evidence-based practice. Students are introduced to the concepts and skills underlying a systematic approach to social work research, including basic research terminology, the scientific method in social work, the value of research in social work, research ethics and the social work value base, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs to evaluate programs and practice, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and preparation and use of research reports. The emphasis in the course is on equipping students with the research knowledge and skills they'll need to engage in the evidence-based practice process at all levels of social work practice. As part of that process, they will learn how to critically appraise sources of scientific evidence and how the criteria for that appraisal will vary depending upon the purpose of the research.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Formulate answerable evidence-based practice research questions;
2. Efficiently conduct advanced searches of electronic bibliographic databases and other sources to find evidence bearing on evidence-based practice research questions;
3. Critically appraise sources of scientific evidence and explain how the criteria for that appraisal will vary depending upon the purpose of the research;
4. Discuss why research evidence needs to be integrated with practice expertise and idiosyncratic client preferences, circumstances and values in the evidence-based practice process;
5. Design evaluations as part of evidence-based practice.
6. Explain how both qualitative and quantitative research processes apply in evidence-based practice;
7. Define basic qualitative and quantitative research concepts and describe the basic principles of causal inference, and their relationship to the various types of research designs;
8. Describe key concepts in measurement bearing on evidence-based practice, such as sources of measurement error, reliability and validity, and measurement equivalence across cultures.
9. Find measurement instruments applicable to evidence-based practice, sources of evidence bearing on the suitability of those instruments for specific practice scenarios, and critically appraise those sources from the standpoint of measurement principles and cultural sensitivity.
10. Describe the logic of probability sampling procedures, issues in the use of non-probability sampling procedures, how sampling issues bear on conducting evidence-based practice research at mezzo and macro levels of practice, and the implications of sampling for appraising and integrating sources of evidence in guiding practice decisions;

11. Describe how particular values and sensitivity to ethical issues influence the conducting of research;
12. Give examples of the issues that diversity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation, race, class, and physical or mental ability) raises in the conduct of research and in appraising and utilizing research to guide practice decisions;
13. Critically appraise how social work commitment to equity and social justice influences and differentiates the social work research process.

### **III. Teaching Methods**

The primary means of instruction will be informal lectures, in-class exercises in small groups, and class discussions from the assigned reading. Students will be expected to have done the assigned reading before class and to actively participate in class and collaborate with one another.

**IV. Required Text and Readings** (Students are responsible for the material in the assigned readings whether or not the material is discussed in class.)

**Required text:**

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2009). *Essential research methods for social work*, 2nd edition, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

or

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2007). *Essential research methods for social work*, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

**Required journal articles:** All of the following articles are available on the course Blackboard. Articles with asterisks are the ones that can be chosen for a critical review paper (see section VI of this syllabus).

- \*Bradshaw, W. & Rosenborough, D. (2004). Evaluating the effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of residual symptoms and impairment in Schizophrenia. *Research on Social Work Practice, 14* (2), 112-120. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- Brophy, G. (2000). Social work treatment of sleep disturbance in a 5-year-old boy: A single case evaluation. *Research on Social Work Practice, 10*(6), 748-758. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- \*Edmond, T., Sloan, L., McCarty, D. (2004). Sexual abuse survivors' perceptions of the effectiveness of EMDR and eclectic therapy. *Research on Social Work Practice, 14* (4), 259-272. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- \*Fraser, M. W., Day, S. H., Galinsky, M. J., Hodges, V. G., & Smokowski, P. R. (2004). Conduct problems and peer rejection in childhood: A randomized trial of the making choices and strong families program. *Research on Social Work Practice, 14* (5), 313-324. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- \*Gellis, Z. D., McGinty, J., Tierney, L., Jordan, C., Burton, J., & Misener, E. (2008). Randomized controlled trial of problem-solving therapy for minor depression in home care. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18* (2), 107-116. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- \*Glisson, C. (2007). Assessing and changing organizational culture and climate for effective services. *Research on Social Work Practice, 17* (6), 736-747. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- Kim, J. (2008). Examining the effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy: A meta-analysis. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18* (2), 107-116. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- McAllister, C. L., Green, B. L., Terry, M. A., Herman, V., & Mulvey, L. (2003). Parents, practitioners, and researchers: Community-based participatory research with Early Head Start. *American Journal of Public Health, 93*, 1672-1679. Available: <http://www.ajph.org>
- Mullen, E. J., Bledsoe, S. E., & Bellamy, J. L. (2008). Implementing evidence-based social work practice. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18* (4), 325-338. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>
- \*Padget, D. K., Gulcur, L. & Tsemberis, S. (2006). Housing first services for people who are homeless with co-occurring serious mental illness and substance abuse. *Research on Social Work Practice, 16*(1), 74-83. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>

\*Pasupuleti, S., Allen, R. I., Lambert, E. G., & Cluse-Tolar, T. (2009). The impact of work stressors on the live satisfaction of social service workers: A preliminary study. *Administration in Social Work, 33*, 319-339.

\*Simpson, D. D. (2009). Organizational readiness for stage-based dynamics of innovation implementation. *Research on Social Work Practice, 19*(5), 541-551. Available: <http://rsw.sagepub.com/archive/>

## **V. Websites that are relevant to this course**

<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org> (meta analysis of the effects of interventions in the social, behavioral, crime and justice, and educational arenas)

<http://www.cochrane.org> (meta analysis of the effects of health and mental health interventions)

[http://www.psych.org/psych\\_pract/treatg/pg/prac\\_guide.cfm](http://www.psych.org/psych_pract/treatg/pg/prac_guide.cfm) (practice guidelines for psychiatrists for each psychiatric/mental/cognitive disorders)

<http://evidencebasedprograms.org>: Social programs that work

## **VI. Grading and Course Requirements**

### **Accumulated points and grading scale**

100-94 = A	93-90 = A-	89-87 = B+	86-84 = B	83-80 = B-	
79-77 = C+	76-74 = C	73-70 = C-	69-67 = D+	66-64 = D-	59 and below = F

### **Course requirements and grade assignment:**

1. Two-person outline for a single-case/system evaluation study (for the instructor's feedback: ungraded; Due: 9/23/09): Submit a 1-page, typed outline for the team's planned single-case evaluation study. The outline must briefly describe the dependent variable(s) and evidence-based intervention(s), tentative method of data collection, and time line for the evidence-based interventions. Although this outline will not be graded, those who do not submit the outline on time will be given a penalty of -3 points (from the total assigned points for the single-case study paper) for each day it is late.
2. Two--mid-term and wrap-up--tests (15 points each, 30 points total, closed book; 10/14/09 & 11/11/09): Two multiple-choice tests will cover all materials assigned and/or discussed in class this semester.
3. Critical review paper (6 pages, double-spaced: 15 points; Due: 11/4/09): For this assignment, students are required to critically examine 3 empirical articles (based on analyses of quantitative or qualitative data) from the ones marked with asterisks in the required reading list. Refer to the guidelines in section X.
4. Two-person report on a single-case evaluation study (7-8 pages maximum for the text only, not including the charts and reference list, double-spaced: 30 points; Due: 11/18/09): For this project, two students are required to team up and choose a problem (=dependent variable: e.g., level of anxiety, depression, smoking, binge eating, ongoing conflict with a colleague) of a fictional client (or one of the students'), select and implement an evidence-based intervention or interventions (independent variable[s]: e.g., cognitive-behavioral interventions, attending support groups, therapeutic journaling) to solve or alleviate the problem, and measure and compare the status of the dependent variable before and during the intervention phase to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention(s). When a fictional client's problem is chosen, one of the students can role play the client. The student dyads are strongly recommended to select at least one scale/index from the Corcoran & Fischer book (refer to the Bibliography section at the end of this syllabus) as a measurement tool. Refer to the guidelines in section X.
5. Group research proposal (12 pages maximum for the text only, double-spaced, for the body text of the proposal; Due: 12/8/09) and class presentation during the last week (12/2/09) of the semester (25 points for

the written proposal): For this assignment, each 4-5 student group is required to write up a plan to conduct a research project that will *evaluate a program/service/intervention* for a chosen problem. For in-depth learning of research procedures, students are strongly encouraged to select quasi-experimental or experimental research designs, but will be allowed to choose other designs (e.g., survey/interview or use of existing data sets) depending on the chosen problems/issues. Refer to the guidelines in section X. In addition to the group research proposal, each group will have a 15-minute presentation of its work to the class. Although this presentation will not be graded in and by itself, it is strongly recommended that each group make a thorough presentation so that the professor can provide feedback to improve the group's research proposal. Since all the group members will receive the same points based on the grade of the group project, it is very important for all the group members to work together. In case any group member has not done his/her share of responsibilities, the other group members should send the professor a memo detailing the individual's lack of contribution. Upon receipt of such a memo, the instructor may assign a lower grade to the individual.

## **VII. University and School Notices and Policies**

**The University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Professional Conduct in Class:** The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism. Being a graduate student can be a stressful experience especially when you have multiple other roles such as being a spouse, parent, and adult child caregiver (role overload and role strain). As professionals, however, all of us must conduct ourselves within the boundaries of the accepted norms of civility, responsibility, and respect for others. Please at least be mindful of the negative impact of your unprofessional speech and conduct on your classmates and the professor.

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

**Documented Disability Statement:** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

**Religious Holidays:** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students:** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed

about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

**Safety:** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL):** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

**Feedback on Learning:** During this course the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways. It is very important for the professor to know the students’ reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to inform the professor on how her teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

### **VIII. Additional Class Policies Affecting Course Grade**

**Class Attendance and Participation Policies:** It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both meeting deadlines and in attendance. Thus, students are expected to attend all classes, if at all possible. Students are permitted **one** excused absence. A student will be considered absent if she or he arrives more than 15 minutes late to class or does not come to class without medical documentation. Students who miss two classes, without medical documentation, during the semester will lose 3 points, those who miss three classes will lose 6 points, and those who miss more than three classes will lose 10 points. Leaving class early will be counted as an absence unless the student provides a reasonable cause for doing so in advance and receives the professor’s permission. Students are expected to do assigned readings before the class time and actively participate in class discussions and group exercises.

**Late Assignment Policies:** Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the specified due date at the beginning of class. (If at all possible, please turn in paper copies of assignments. Electronic copies as e-mail attachments will be allowed only for late assignments and under special circumstances when the student cannot be present in class.) Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student must contact

the professor and negotiate another due date at least 48 hours PRIOR to the date specified in the course syllabus.

**Computer and Other Electronic Device Use Policies:** Using laptop and handheld computers and other electronic equipment (e.g. cell phone, text messaging, ear buds) in class will **NOT** be permitted except in the case of extreme emergencies and special circumstances that have been pre-approved by the professor. Students frequently use laptop computers in class to conduct tasks that are not related to the course contents (e.g., working on papers for other classes, checking e-mails, surfing Internet news), and such behaviors are unprofessional and disruptive to other students and the professor. All communication devices will be turned off or placed in ‘silent’ mode while in class. Students who break the computer use policies and who engage in any other tasks that are unrelated to the course (e.g., reading newspapers and articles for other classes, playing Sudoku and other games) will be asked to leave the classroom.

### **IX. Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Text/Readings</b>
Week 1 8/26/09	Review of syllabus and introduction to course Role of scientific method in Social Work Philosophical and political issues in Social Work research  Introduction to evidence-based practice and policy	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 1-3 Mullen et al. (2008) Read description of <a href="http://www.campbellcollaboration.org">www.campbellcollaboration.org</a> and <a href="http://www.cochrane.org">www.cochrane.org</a>
Week 2 9/2/09	More on evidence-based social work practice and policy  Ethics and Social Work research: At whose expense? Viewing of documentary: The Deadly Deception  Purposes/types of research The role of theory and literature review in Social Work research problem formulation	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 4-6 Kim (2008): Review this article to learn how meta analysis is done.  <a href="http://www.utexas.edu/research/rs/c/humanresearch">www.utexas.edu/research/rs/c/humanresearch</a>
Week 3 9/9/09	Conceptualization; development of research hypotheses; and operationalization	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 7-8
Week 4 9/16/09	Levels of Measurement Research designs: Single-case evaluation designs Viewing of video: Evaluating Social Work practice: A user-friendly approach	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 14
Week 5 9/23/09	More on research designs: Single-case evaluation designs Measurement in single-subject evaluation designs <b>Outline for a single-case evaluation study due 9/23/09</b>	Brophy, G. (2000); Bradshaw, W. & Rosenborough, D. (2004)
Week 6 9/30/09	Causal inferences in group designs: Experimental and quasi-experimental designs and more	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 12 Fraser, M. W. et al. (2004);
Week 7 10/7/09	Reliability and validity in measurements; Sources of measurement error; Constructing and assessing measurement instruments	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 8-9
Week 8 10/14/09	<b>MID-TERM TEST (&lt; an hour)</b> <b>The remainder of the class time will be utilized as consultation time for single-case evaluation study.</b>	
Week 9 10/21/09	Surveys and interviews Sampling Article critiques	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 10-11 Pasupuleti, S. et al. (2009)

Week 10 10/28/09	Article critiques	Padget et al (2006) Gellis, Z. et al. (2008) Edmond, T. et al. (2004)
Week 11 11/4/09	Qualitative research methods; Unobtrusive research: Field, historical, and content analyses  Participatory research Program evaluation <b>Critical review paper due 11/4//09</b>	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 13, 15, 16 McAllister et al. (2003)
Week 12 11/11/09	<b>WRAP-UP TEST, 11/11/09 (The rest of the class time will be used for a meeting of group members for the groups research proposal.)</b>	
Week 13 11/18/09	Coding, data entry, data cleaning; and data analysis (The class will meet in the IT classroom in the ground floor.) <b>In-class time for group proposal: Questions and clarifications</b> <b>Single-case evaluation study paper due 11/18/09</b>	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 17
Week 14 11/25/09	No class (Happy Thanksgiving!)	
Week 15 12/2/09	Presentation of group research proposals	
12/8/09	<b>Group Research Proposal due 2:00 pm, 12/8/09: Bring the proposal to the instructor's office (no class)</b>	

#### **X. Description of Assignments and Suggested Formats:**

##### **In-class, closed-book, mid-term and wrap-up tests:**

For each test, there will be 30 (0.5 point each) multiple-choice and true-false type questions. The professor provides opportunities for many in-class practice tests. The test questions will resemble the questions in the in-class practice tests.

##### **Guidelines for a Critical Review Paper (6 pages: Please choose any three papers with asterisks from the article list)**

- Briefly summarize the nature and type of the study being conducted. Assess the merits of the justification for the study. Assess the quality and relevance of the theoretical framework and the literature review.
- Identification of the major research question(s) and/or hypotheses, and, if applicable, the dependent, independent, and other variables and their operational definitions.
- Assess the strengths and limitations of the study with respect to its research design; sampling procedures, measures, reliability and validity of the measurement; data collection methods, method of analysis, and implications.
- Your recommendations as to how the article may be improved. Or how would you have written it differently, if you were the author?

##### **Guidelines for a dyadic single-case evaluation study paper (7-8 pages; please use section headings in your proposal)**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with opportunities for applying basic social work research methods in practice evaluation. The focus of this assignment is on selecting and applying an

evidence-based intervention to a fictional client's (or a student team member's) problem and on evaluating its effectiveness.

- **Title page:** Descriptive title of the study and your names
- **Introduction (no more than 1 page; 2 points):** (1) Description of the case and the client system; (2) a brief statement of the client's problem, selected evidence-based intervention, and the client's goals and the social worker's goals; and (3) a brief statement of the purpose and method of the study.
- **Literature review, conceptual/theoretical framework, and research hypotheses (2.5 pages; 10 points):** (1) A brief review of relevant literature related to the problem focusing on its etiology and effects; (2) a brief description of the chosen evidence-based intervention, its theory base, and its evidence base—citing previous studies/meta analyses that showed its efficacy and/or effectiveness and focusing on critical appraisal of the major methodological strengths and weaknesses of previous studies that form the evidence base, what is already known, and what needs to be known; and (3) the study hypothesis and a rationale for it (including both why it is a reasonable hypothesis, and why it is significant or worth investigating), and any underlying assumptions. (Please remember that the dependent variable is the targeted behavior that you try to change, and the independent variable is the evidence-based intervention that you are implementing to change the targeted behavior.)

Please note that the intervention that you select should emerge from a review of a recently published outcome studies and systematic reviews (if any) on its efficacy or effectiveness and should have the best scientific evidence supporting its efficacy or effectiveness. If the intervention with the best scientific evidence is not feasible, then select an alternative intervention that is feasible and has the best evidence among those that are feasible. That is, you must provide justification of your choice of intervention based on scientific evidence and feasibility (compared to other possible intervention/s).
- **Methodology (2 pages; 10 points):** (1) Description of the research design (e.g., single system ABAB design, ABC design) duration of the study, number of data points in each phase, and the rationale for these choices; (2) operationalization of the dependent variable(s) and the outcome measures (e.g., validated and/or newly constructed scales/instruments for self-report or behavioral observations), justification for the choices, and the reliability and validity of the scales/instruments, including at least one standardized, validated scale (please refer to the writing tips in the appendix section of this syllabus); (3) methods of data collection (e.g., self-report, behavioral observations, etc) and the rationale for the choice and the measurement rigor including discussion of any measurement errors that may have compromised the reliability and validity of your study; and (4) description of methods you employed to try to maximize the degree of internal validity and fidelity of intervention(s) (how did you make sure that you have adhered to the treatment/intervention guidelines).
- **Findings (or Results: 1 page; 5 points):** (1) Report of findings, including a visual (graphic) presentation of the findings showing the stability or changes in the dependent variable(s) between the baseline phase and the intervention phase; and (2) description of the visual significance or nonsignificance of the findings.
- **Discussion and conclusion (1 page; 5 points):** Discussion of clinical significance of results of study. Strengths and limitations of the study in terms of methods, interventions, and ethical issues. Implications for future research (e.g., how the study weaknesses may be improved in future projects).
- **References (1.5 points):** Follow the APA format.
- **Appendix (1.5 points):** Blank copies of data collection instruments.

Note: The students will NOT be graded on the basis of conducting a successful intervention, but on the basis of demonstrating an understanding of research in single-case evaluation studies.

**Guidelines for a Group Research Proposal** (12 pages; please use section headings in your proposal):

The purpose of this research proposal is to provide students with the opportunity for application of their learning in research method by planning an evaluation of a program/service/intervention for a chosen problem/issue. Research and evaluation projects are almost always done in groups, and the students will

have to learn how to produce a proposal in collaboration with other people. The students will apply the following research process in the proposal writing: (1) Formulation of answerable research questions that will contribute to promoting evidence-based social work practice; (2) literature review of the chosen problem and critical appraisal of the efficacy and effectiveness of the evidence-based program/service/intervention; hypotheses generation; (3) choice of research design (quasi-experimental or experimental design; description of the procedures of implementing evidence-based program/service/intervention; planned methods of subject identification, screening, recruitment, and retention; fidelity monitoring methods; selection of measures of outcomes and other variables; and data collection methods); (4) data analysis methods; (5) anticipated findings and their implications for social work practice, programs, and/or policies; and (6) anticipated limitations of the study with respect to its research design and methods of data collection.

Some examples of problems/issues that students in previous years focused are: Iraqi war veterans with PTSD; youth gangs; depression in older adults (focusing on Katrina evacuees); food insecurity in low-income neighborhoods; lack of supportive services for emancipated youth (from foster care); substance abuse; post-adoption adjustment; runaway youth; parental skills deficits; teen pregnancy; and domestic violence.

**Title Page:** Descriptive title, group members' names, date, and a very brief (one paragraph) synopsis.

**Introduction** (1 page; 2 points): Describe the purpose of the study and the specific research question(s) that you will be examining. Then, describe the significance of the chosen questions to evidence-based social work practice with reference to one or a few of the following criteria: (a) Adding to the knowledge base for evidence-based practice by testing the efficacy or effectiveness of promising interventions; (b) Testing efficacy or effectiveness of existing interventions for a critical or underserved population (e.g. rural older adults, racial/ethnic minority groups, GLBT groups); and (c) has implications for the practical and effective solution of a specific problem(s) that is prevalent.

**Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Hypotheses for the Evaluation** (2-3 pages; 6 points): For literature review, what is the essence of the previously published works relevant to this contemplated evaluation? What is the current state of our knowledge about the efficacy and effectiveness of the intervention on the outcome(s) that you plan to focus on? What are major methodological strengths and deficits of the previous studies? In which areas is essential knowledge lacking for the evidence-base of the intervention? You are not expected to make an exhaustive review of the literature -- perhaps 8-12 articles will be adequate. One to three non-research articles are acceptable out of the 8-12 chosen.

Following the critical appraisal of current status of knowledge, provide a conceptual/theoretical framework guiding your evaluation. Examples may include learning theory, systems theory, role theory, life course perspective, and so on. Theories are essential to provide the foundation for your assumption (study hypotheses) about why the program/service/intervention is likely to help your clients achieve an outcome or outcomes that they set out to achieve.

State your evaluation hypotheses. (e.g., A 12-week cognitive behavioral therapy will be more efficacious than usual care [case management as usual] in reducing depressive symptoms by 50% among disabled older adults at 3-month and 6-month posttests; Emancipated foster youths who receive housing subsidy for the first year will be more likely to continue their education and/or maintain stable employment than their peers who do not receive housing subsidy.) Provide a rationale (using your theoretical framework) for believing that your independent variable(s)--intervention--will be related to your dependent variable(s)--outcomes. If appropriate, identify moderating and/or mediating variables relevant to your hypotheses. Also cite other variables you wish to control for and explain why.

**Research Design** (6 pages; 12 points):

**Design:** (a) Describe the best research design that can be used (e.g., two-arm quasi- or true-experimental; mixed-method design; longitudinal survey/interview design); (b) Explain why the chosen

design is the most appropriate for the evaluation (may need to discuss the weaknesses of alternative designs), and specify strengths and limitations of the chosen design.

**Program/service/intervention:** (a) Describe what your intervention is (e.g., 12-week CBT; housing subsidy consisting of deposit and monthly rent payments); who is providing the intervention and where?; how are you going to select and train the therapists?; and how will the intervention fidelity be adhered to and monitored?

**Study site(s) and subject recruitment, enrollment, and retention in the study:** What are the steps/strategies that you will use to identify, screen, and recruit subjects for the study?; how will you assign the subjects into the experimental vs. control groups?; what will you do to minimize dropout among subjects?

**(Applicable for use of existing data, survey/interview, and qualitative study) Sampling procedures:** Describe your type of sampling plan (e.g. purposive; simple random; stratified; clustered; and multi-stage clustered) and defend your choice against any other sampling plan. Your plan must be feasible. Specify population from which sample is to be drawn, if any. How will you access them? Sample size? Representativeness? Sources of sampling bias? Other factors affecting external validity (=generalizability). Make sure your sampling plan is consistent with your chosen design.

**Measures and data collection:** (a) Describe measures (e.g., Beck Depression Inventory; months of continuous employment, number of courses taken at post-secondary educational institutions) for your variables. Discuss its reliability and validity from previous validation studies; (b) describe data collection techniques to be used: self-report at the time of interviews; mailed questionnaires; participant observation coding of agency records; etc. Who will collect data and how often? Provide a brief rationale for your choice of data collection method as compared to alternative choices and reliability and validity considerations. Describe pretesting (or pilot testing) procedure for your data collection instruments, if necessary, to be utilized. Also discuss how you will adhere to the ethical guidelines when collecting data.

#### **Data Analysis; Expected Findings, and Implications (2 pages; 1 points):**

**Data analysis:** Discuss applicable coding. How will you analyze your data? If applicable, which statistical tests will you perform?

**Expected findings:** What do you believe you will find and why?

**Implications of the study:** Assuming your hypotheses are supported or refuted, what are the implications of such findings for 1) theory, 2) practice, 3) policy, and 4) future research? Same points also need to be discussed for qualitative research. Briefly summarize (and discuss) the assets and limitations of your study that you have already identified in the previous sections. How will you disseminate your study findings?

#### **Project TimeLine and Budget (1 page; 1 point):**

Provide a timeline (with monthly or quarterly tasks) for the project. Also provide a rough estimate of expenses for personnel, intervention, subject incentives, data collection and analysis, and other resources needed to conduct the study.

**References (1 point):** Please follow the APA format of in-text citing and referencing the articles, books, and documents that are cited in the body of the proposal.

**Appendices (2 points):** Any document you consider important, copies of survey questionnaire, interview schedule, and/or measurement instruments. Label each of them as a separate appendix.

#### **XI. Bibliography (Recommended readings):**

Campbell, D. T. & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

- Cook, T. D. & Stanley, J. C. (1979). *Quasi-Experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Corcoran, K & Fischer, J. (2000). *Measures for clinical practice (Vols I and II)*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gibbs, L. & Gambrill, E. (1999). *Critical thinking for social workers* (revised edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Herek, G. Kimmel, D. C., Amaro, H., & Melton, G. B. (1991). Avoiding heterosexist bias in psychological research. *American Psychologist*, 46 (9): 957-963.
- Kish, L. (1965). *Survey Sampling*. New York: John Wiley.
- Martsch, M. D. (2005). A comparison of two group interventions for adolescent aggression: High process versus low process. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15 (1), 8-18.
- O'Hare, T. & Sherrer, M. V. (2005). Assessment of youthful problem drinkers: Validating the drinking context scale (DCS-9) with freshman first offenders. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15 (2), 110-117.
- Padgett, D. K. (1998). *Qualitative methods in social work research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008) *Research methods for social work* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Thompson, L. (1992). Feminist methodology for family studies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 3-18.
- Tyson, E. H. & Glisson, C. (2005). A cross-ethnic validity study of the shortform assessment for children (SAC). *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15 (2), 97-109.
- Unrau, Y. A., Gabor, P. A., & Grinnell, R. M. (2001). *Evaluation for human services*. F. E. Peacock

### **Appendix: Writing tips for reporting reliability and validity of measures in the Methodology Section of a single-case study paper**

1. For each scale or measurement instrument that has been validated, please remember to cite reliability and validity from previous studies.
2. For both your self-constructed and validated scales, please describe:
  - Number of items
  - Rating scheme (e.g., 5-point Likert scale; dichotomous "yes" or "no" scale)
  - Maximum and minimum possible scores
  - If applicable (in the case of validated clinical symptom measures), clinical cut-off points (e.g., normal range versus clinically significant range): This will be very useful because it will provide a meaningful context for discussing your findings. That is, you may be able to state that the baseline scores showed clinically significant symptoms while the scores toward the intervention phase showed that your symptoms were reduced to normal ranges.

Please see the following examples:

Example 1. The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II) comprises two scales designed to measure cultural orientation and modes of acculturation among Mexican Americans. The 30-item first scale, which contains a Mexican orientation subscale and an Anglo orientation subscale on a 5-point Likert scale, measures the level of integration and assimilation by assessing English and Spanish language and media use, childhood and current friendships, contacts with Mexico, preferred racial/ethnic identification, and dietary practices. The scores range between 30 and 150, with higher scores representing higher degrees of acculturation. The 18-item second scale measures separation and marginalization as modes of acculturation by assessing acceptance of Anglo versus Mexican and Mexican American ideas, values, attitudes, behaviors, and friends. The ARSMA-II has been found to have excellent concurrent and predictive validity, as well as Cronbach's alphas ranging from .68 to .91 (Cuellar et al., 1995). The original ARSMA and ARSMA-II have been used in studies with older Mexican American samples (see Bundeck, Marks, & Richardson, 1993; Gonzalez, Haan, & Hinton, 2001).

Example 2. To measure the level of depressive symptoms, I have chosen the 15-item short-form Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS; Sheikh & Yesavage, 1986) which had response categories of 0, "No" and 1, "Yes.". The short-form is less likely to cause undue burden on frail subjects of the study. The GDS has shown Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability coefficients of .94 for a sample of community-living older persons and those hospitalized for depression (Brink et al., 1986; Yesavage et al., 1989). The GDS scores between 0 and 4 represent no depressive symptoms, those between 5 and 11 represent mild-to-moderate level of depression, and those higher than 11 represent severe depressive symptoms.

3. Examples of measurements errors are: (1) measures may have been too lengthy (especially in the case of validated scales); (2) possible testing effect due to repeated measuring; (3) research reactivity; and (4) inaccurate recollection of past events or mood

4. Examples of steps that you can use to maximize treatment fidelity and internal validity: (1) adherence to the schedule of intervention (e.g., exercising 5 times a week, 30 minutes each time as planned; carrying out 15-minute cognitive writing every night as planned); and (2) adherence to practice guidelines or manuals or by implementing all segments/components of intervention (e.g., cognitive reframing, positive reinforcement, breathing, and so forth). In your paper, please describe if and how you have adhered to these steps.