

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

Course Number: SW 313

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Semester: Fall 2009

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Or by appointment

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**SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS
(BSW Program Required Course)**

I. Standardized Course Description

This course is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. The course introduces students to the social work values base, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research design and inference, single subject designs and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW313 is a prerequisite to entry into the social work major.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

The goal of the course is to help students develop basic understanding of research process. Upon completion of this course the students should be able to:

1. Describe the basic steps of scientific inquiry and how they parallel the basic steps of social work practice;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of basic social work research skills pertinent to the profession of social work: a) formulation of research problems, b) formulation of research questions and hypotheses, c) use of various research methods (e.g., survey research, single subject design, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, field research, and use of secondary data), d) collection and analysis of research data, and e) interpretation of research results;
3. Critically analyze research findings and be effective consumers of, and contributors to, social work research;
4. Illustrate how gender bias or insensitivity to diverse populations can impede effective research and inference;
5. Identify research methods, sampling designs, and measurement techniques which are sensitive to diverse groups, including women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and gays and lesbians;
6. Discuss the usefulness of social science theory and research methods in social work practice;
7. Explain ethical issues in conducting and using research and the role of the social work values base in research and evaluation;
8. Determine feasibility, practicability, and generalizability of research findings.

III. Teaching Methods

The primary means of instruction are interactive lectures (i.e., students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments), in-class exercises, class discussions, guest speakers who will discuss their research, tests, and experiential assignments.

IV. Required Readings

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. *Essential research methods for social work*. Second Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Assigned readings and other materials such as additional readings are expected to be completed before each class. Additional readings shall be posted on Blackboard or can be directly accessed on the UT Library Web site.

V. Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be based on two examinations, quizzes, and a writing assignment. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all class meetings. You may also elect to complete the extra credit opportunities detailed below.

Exam #1	30%
Exam #2	30%
Quizzes (Given at the beginning of most class sessions)	20%
Human Subjects Training Assignment	10%
Research Presentation Assignment	10%

Course requirements and grade assignment (based on 100 points):

Exam #1: The first exam is worth 30% of your grade (30 points). This closed-book exam will consist of a combination of some or all of the following types of questions: multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and short essay. This exam will cover information from both assigned readings and in-class presentations/discussions up to this class day.

Exam #2: The second exam will be given during the assigned university final exam time slot and is worth 30% of your grade (30 points). This closed-book exam will consist of a combination of some or all of the following types of questions: multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and short essay. This exam will not be comprehensive, and will cover the material from the required class readings and class discussions during second half of the semester.

Quizzes: Given the experiential nature of this course, completion of the required readings before class is essential to maximize student participation and learning. To encourage these readings, **a quiz will be given at the beginning of most class sessions.** Each quiz will have five questions and be worth 5 points. The overall percentage of correct answers across all but two quizzes will account for 20% of the course grade (20 points). The two quizzes with the lowest percentage of correct answers will be dropped from this calculation. Regardless of the reason for absences or tardiness, any quizzes that are missed due to absence or tardiness will be included among the two dropped quizzes. If more than two quizzes are missed (regardless of the reason), those additional quizzes will be included (with a score of zero) in the overall calculation.

Human Subjects Training Assignment: Social Sciences research usually deals with data containing human subjects. Due to the sensitivity issue, all human subjects research (including but not limited to recruitment) conducted at university level must be approved by the school Institutional Review Board (IRB) before commencing. The major goals of the IRB are to minimize the risk to human subjects (beneficence); ensure all subjects consent and are fully informed about the research and any risks (autonomy); and promote equity in human subjects research (justice). Therefore, this course requires students to take the human subjects protection course (all four sections of the training) at www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html Upon completion, hand in (1) the certificate, and (2) a typed, one-page summary paper on major points discussed in the human subjects training. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade (10 points).

Research Presentation Assignment: To complete this assignment, attend an on-campus **research** lecture, symposium, colloquium, or “brown bag” talk offered by the School of Social Work, Women’s Studies, African American Studies, Population Research Center, LBJ School of Public Affairs, psychology department, sociology department, or other academic department on campus. The lecture can be about any subject as long as the speaker presents original, empirical research s/he conducted and an academic department sponsors the presentation. The instructor will help you identify presentations to attend. Write a 750-word, doublespaced, and typewritten description and analysis of the presentation. Include the subject matter, research questions or hypotheses, research methods, and conclusions the speakers presented, your critique of the work, and other information, such as issues the audience raised. **Be sure to relate your discussion to the material that has been covered in class by directly referring to research concepts and citing the text and referring to lectures.** For example, if you are discussing the presenter’s hypothesis, you should consider discussing whether it meets the criteria for a good hypothesis. Or, if you are discussing sampling, identify the type of sampling used, the sample’s representativeness, and other important qualities of the sample. You will not be able to cover everything about the presentation in 750 words, so after summarizing the basic idea of the presenter’s research, focus on a few points. Your paper will be graded on the quality of writing (organization, clarity, grammar) and the quality of the ideas (expression of thought, depth of thought, analytic perspective) presented. When you submit your paper, include a copy of any handouts provided during the lecture. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade (10 points).

VI. Grading Criteria

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

63 - 60 = D-

59 and below = F

VII. Class Policies

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all classes, be prepared for each session by reading the materials assigned for that date **before** coming to class, and participate in class discussions, exercises, etc. Learning is also facilitated by respectful communications among all parties.

Makeup Tests

Only in the case of illness or other **unforeseen** emergencies will make-up tests be given. Please notify the instructor of the situation as soon as it is reasonably possible. The format of makeup tests is at the discretion of the instructor and may be limited to essay questions.

Late Assignments

Barring documented emergencies, assignments are to be submitted on time. Three points per day (including weekends) will be deducted from the grade for each day the assignment is late, starting with assignments not turned in by the start of class at 9:30 a.m.

Incompletes

Only in documented emergency situations will a grade of X (incomplete) be assigned for the course. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed.

APA Style

The referencing style of the American Psychological Association (APA) is to be used for all written assignments. If you are not familiar with this style, a handout is available at the Student Services desk.

Blackboard

The Blackboard site available for this class will be used for e-mail, announcements, and other functions. Class e-mail rosters are a component of these sites. Students who do not want their names included in these electronic rosters must restrict their directory information in the Office of the Registrar, Main Building, Room 1. For information on restricting directory information see: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi00-01/app/appc09.html>.

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.

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.

I look forward to a productive term.

VIII. Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	Required Reading
Week 1 8/26/09 (Wed)	Introduction to the course/review syllabus	
Week 2 8/31/09 (Mon)	Why should social workers understand and use research? Philosophy and theory in science and research Evidence-based Practice (EBP)	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 1, "Why Study Research?" Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 2, "Evidence-Based Practice"
9/2/09 (Wed)	Evidence-based Practice (EBP), continued	Gambrill (1999). Evidence-Based Practice: An Alternative to Authority-Based Practice. (Available on Blackboard)
Week 3 9/7/09 (Mon)	LABOR DAY – No class	
9/9/09 (Wed)	Research purposes	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 3, "Factors Influencing the Research Process"
Week 4 9/14/09 (Mon)	Selecting a research topic and developing a research question	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 4, "Reviewing Literature and Developing Research Questions"
9/16/09 (Wed)	Formulating a good hypothesis and defining variables of interest	Rubin & Babbie Chapter 5, "Conceptualization in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry"
Week 5 9/21/09 (Mon)	Measurement error, reliability, validity	Rubin & Babbie Chapter 6, "Measurement in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry"
9/23/09 (Wed)	Instrument development and appraisal, interviewing **Human Subjects Training Assignment Due	Rubin & Babbie Chapter 7, "Quantitative and Qualitative Measurement Instruments"
Week 6 9/28/09 (Mon)	Causality, study design, internal and external validity	Rubin & Babbie Chapter 10, "Experiments and Quasi-Experiments"

9/30/09 (Wed)	In Class Exercise: Study Design and Instrument Development	Review documents available on Blackboard in "Study Design and Instrument Development" folder
Week 7		
10/05/09 (Mon)	Single-case evaluation designs	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 11, "Single-Case Evaluation Designs"
10/07/09 (Wed)	In Class Article Critiques: Single-case evaluation designs	Please read the following articles and come to class ready to share your critique on the following research studies that used single-case designs. (All are available on Blackboard) Taber, "Cognitive behavior modification treatment of an aggressive 11-year old boy" Wolfe, et al., "Intensive Behavioral Parent Training for a Child Abusive Mother" Ronen, T. & Rosenbaum, M. (2001). "Helping Children to Help Themselves: A Case Study of Enuresis and Nail Biting."
Week 8		
10/12/09 (Mon)	EXAM #1	
10/14/09 (Wed)	Purpose, politics, pitfalls, planning	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 12, "Program Evaluation"
Week 9		
10/19/09 (Mon)	Guest Speaker: Dr. Carol Lewis Associate Director, Center for Social Work Research, UT School of Social Work	No readings and no quiz. Class attendance will count for a full 5-point quiz.
10/21/09 (Wed)	Survey Research	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 8, "Surveys"
Week 10		
10/26/09 (Mon)	Survey Research	Available on Blackboard: Winkleby MA, Cubbin C, Ahn D. Effect of cross-level interaction between individual and neighborhood socioeconomic status on adult mortality rates. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 2006;96:2145-2153. Cubbin C, Santelli J, Brindis C, Braveman PA. Neighborhood context and sexual behaviors among adolescents: findings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health. <i>Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health</i> 2005;37:125-134.

10/28/09 (Wed)	Guest Speaker: Dr. Barbara Jones Assistant Professor, UT School of SW	No readings and no quiz. Class attendance will count for a full 5-point quiz.
Week 11		
11/02/09 (Mon)	Probability sampling	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9, "Sampling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches"
11/04/09 (Wed)	Sampling methods	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9, "Sampling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches"
Week 12		
11/09/09 (Mon)	<i>Library Day for Class Assignments</i>	
11/11/09 (Wed)	Qualitative research methods	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 13, "Additional Methods in Qualitative Inquiry"
Week 13		
11/16/09 (Mon)	Guest Speaker: Dr. Kelly Mikelson Assistant Professor, UT School of SW **Research Presentation Assignment Due	No readings and no quiz. Class attendance will count for a full 5-point quiz.
11/18/09 (Wed)	Data analysis	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 14, "Analyzing Available Records: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods"
Week 14		
11/23/09 (Mon)	Research Ethics	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 15, "Ethical Issues in Social Work Research"
11/25/09 (Wed)	<i>No Class. Travel safely and enjoy your Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	
Week 15		
11/30/09 (Mon)	Culturally competent research issues	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 16, "Culturally Competent Research"
12/02/09 (Wed)	Last day of class. Review for Exam #2 and wrap up any unfinished business.	
12/15/09 (Tues) 9:00am-12:00pm	EXAM #2 (FINAL)	

Recommended readings:

Babbie, E. (2005). *The practice of social research* (11th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
 Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1973). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Gibbs, L. E. (1991). *Scientific reasoning for social workers: Bridging the gap between research and practice*. New York: Merrill.

Grinnell, R. M., Jr., & Unrau, Y. (Eds.). (2008). *Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice* (8th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1997). *The new language of qualitative method*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hudson, W. W., & Nurius, P. S. (Eds.). (1994). *Controversial issues in social work research*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Isaac, S., & Michael, W. B. (1995). *Handbook in research and evaluation* (3rd ed.). San Diego: Edits.

Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. (2000). *Foundations of behavioral research* (4th ed.). New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston.

Miller, D. C., & Salkind, N. (2002). *Handbook of research design and social measurement* (6th ed.). Newbury Park, NJ: Sage.

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stanfield, J. H., II, & Dennis, R. M. (1993). *Race and ethnicity in research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Task Force on Social Work Research. (1991). *Building social work knowledge for effective services and policies*. Austin, TX: School of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin.

Tutty, L. M., Rothery, M. A., & Grinnell, R. M., Jr. (1996). *Qualitative research for social workers: Phases, steps, and tasks*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Tyson, K. (1995). *New foundations for scientific social and behavioral research: The heuristic paradigm*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Yegidis, B. L., & Weinbach, R. W. (2005). *Research methods for social workers* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.