

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 388R	<b>Instructor's name:</b>	Diana DiNitto
<b>Unique Number:</b>	58265	<b>Office Number:</b>	SSW 3.130B
<b>Semester:</b>	Fall 1997	<b>Office Phone:</b>	(512) 471-9227
		<b>E mail:</b>	ddinitto@mail.utexas.edu
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	Thurs. 1 to 4 SSW 2.140	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wed. 3:30–5:00, Th. 12:00–12:30, 4:00–5:00, and by appointment

**RESEARCH METHODS I**

**Course Description**

This is the first in a series of research courses required of social work doctoral students. This course introduces students to the basic elements of research design in the social sciences with particular attention to social work research.

**Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, students should:

1. Have knowledge of aspects of epistemology relevant to the social sciences, especially social work;
2. Be acquainted with some research role models significant to social work;
3. Have working knowledge of the language of research in order to use research terminology precisely and accurately;
4. Know the elements and phases of research;
5. Be able to evaluate the quality of research done by others;
6. Have increased facility in designing research, especially in aspects preceding data analysis;
7. Have increased knowledge of tools useful in planning, conducting, and reporting the results of research such as data collection instruments and publication formats;
8. Have increased knowledge of the type of writing needed to describe research designs and report findings;
9. Be familiar with standards for the ethical conduct of research, including human subjects protection, and their relationship to the social work value base;
10. Be familiar with gender and ethnic sensitivity in conducting research;
11. Understand the impact of political and other ideological forces on social work research and program evaluation.

**Methods of Instruction**

The methods of instruction will be informal lectures (questions and comments are encouraged), class discussions, class exercises, guest presentations, and student presentations.



## Course Readings

The required text for the course is:

Kerlinger, F. N. (1986). Foundations of behavioral research (4th ed.). New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

Recommended books are:

American Psychological Association. (1994). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

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

Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings. Chicago: Rand McNally.

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

## Course Agenda

DATE	TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS	READINGS
Class 1 Aug. 28	Introduction to Course How Scientific is Social Work Research? Assign theory exercise	Kerlinger, Chp. 1. Heineman, M. B. (1981). The obsolete scientific imperative in social work research. <u>Social Service Review</u> , 55 371-397. Handout on Social Thought, Social Philosophy, and Social Theory
Class 2 Sept. 4	How Do We Know?: Epistemological Issues in the Development of Social Work Knowledge	Cook & Campbell, Chp. 1. Fraser, M., Taylor, M. J., Jackson, R., & O'Jack, J. (1991). Social work and science: Many ways of knowing. <u>Social Work Research and Abstracts</u> , 27 (4), 5-15. Hudson, W. W. (1982). Scientific imperatives in social work research and practice. <u>Social Service Review</u> , 56, 246-258. Schinke, S. P., & Nugent, W. R. (1994). Are some research methodologies inherently more worthy of professional endorsement than others? In Hudson & Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 225-236).
Class 3 Sept. 11	Epistemology (con't) Feminist Perspectives on Social Science Research <b>THEORY EXERCISE DUE</b>	Allen-Meares, P., Deroos, Y. S., & Siegel, D. H. (1994). Are practitioner intuition and empirical evidence equally valid sources of professional knowledge? In Hudson & Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 37-49). Cummerton, J. M. (1986). A feminist perspective on

		<p>research: What does it help us see? In N. van den Bergh, &amp; L. B. Cooper (Eds.), <u>Feminist visions for social work</u> (pp. 80-100). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.</p> <p>Guba, E. G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E. G. Guba (Ed.), <u>The paradigm dialog</u> (pp. 17-27). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.</p> <p>Peplau, L. A. (1989). Beyond nonsexist research, the perils of feminist methods in psychology. <u>Psychology of Women Quarterly</u>, <i>13</i>, 379-400.</p> <p>Riger, S. (1992). Epistemological debates, feminist voices: Science, social values, and the study of women. <u>American Psychologist</u>, <i>47</i>(6), 730-740.</p>
Class 4 Sept. 18	<p>Let's Get Specific: Stating Research Problems and Hypotheses</p> <p>In-class Exercise on Problems and Hypotheses</p>	<p>Kerlinger, Chp. 2. Handout on Concepts and Hypotheses.</p> <p>Karger, H. J. (1983). Science, research, and social work: Who controls the profession?, <u>Social Work</u>, <i>28</i>, 200-205.</p> <p>Witkin, S. L., &amp; Gottschalk, S. (1988). Alternative criteria for theory evaluation. <u>Social Service Review</u>, <i>62</i>, 211-224.</p>
Class 5 Sept. 25	<p>Let's Get More Specific: Constructs, Variables, and Operational Definitions</p> <p>In-Class Exercise on Operational Definitions</p> <p>Assign research role model exercise</p> <p>Review for Test #1</p>	<p>Kerlinger, Chps. 3, 5, 17, &amp; 18 Handout on Causal Modeling.</p>
Class 6 Oct. 2	<b>TEST # 1</b>	
Class 7 Oct. 9	<p>"So Many Choices": Selecting the Type of Research Design</p> <p>Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs</p> <p><b>RESEARCH ROLE MODEL EXERCISE DUE</b></p> <p><b>STUDENT'S MID-TERM VALUATION OF COURSE</b></p>	<p>Kerlinger, Chps. 19 &amp; 21</p> <p>Edelson, J. L., &amp; Syers, M. (1990). Relative effectiveness of group treatment for men who batter. <u>Social Work Research and Abstracts</u>, <i>35</i>, 10-17.</p> <p>Rose, S. D. (1988). Practice experiments for doctoral dissertations: Research training and knowledge building. <u>Journal of Social Work Education</u>, <i>24</i>, 115-127.</p>
Class 8 Oct. 16	<p>More choices: Non-experimental Designs (Field Research, Survey Research, Historical Research, Single Subject, Meta-analysis, and other Designs)</p>	<p>Kerlinger, Chps. 22, 23, 24, 28, &amp; Appendix A</p> <p>Downs, W. R., &amp; Rubin, A. (1994). Lacking evidence of effectiveness, should single-case evaluation techniques be encouraged in practice? In Hudson &amp; Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 113-127).</p> <p>Hesselbrock, M. N., Hesselbrock, V. M., &amp; Reid, W. L. (1994). Are exploratory post hoc models better suited for social work research than hypothesis testing approaches? In Hudson &amp; Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 50-</p>

		62). Martin, P. Y. and DiNitto, D. M. (1987). The rape exam: Beyond the hospital emergency room, <u>Women &amp; Health</u> , 12 (2), 5-28. Marin, G., & Marin, B. V. (1991). <u>Research with Hispanic populations</u> Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, Chps. 1 & 3. Shong, S., & Ashford, J. B. (1994). Are traditional empirical research methods inherently biased against people of color? In Hudson & Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 22-36).
Class 9 Oct. 23	Looking for Mines: A Review of Internal and External Validity Review for Test #2	Campbell & Stanley (review entire book)
Class 10 Oct. 30	<b>TEST #2</b>	
Class 11 Nov. 6	"Choose Me": Sampling in the Conduct of Research Assign measurement exercise	Kerlinger, Chps. 8 & 20 Cook & Campbell, Chp. 8 Santos, R. L. (1991). One approach to oversampling Blacks and Hispanics: The national alcohol survey. In W. B. Clark, & M. E. Hilton (Eds.), <u>Alcohol in America: Drinking practices and problems</u> (pp. 329-344). Albany: State University of New York Press.
Class 12 Nov. 13	Measurement: Choosing Valid and Reliable Yardsticks; Collecting Data; Scales & Indexes	Kerlinger, Chp. 9; Chp. 10, pp. 147-151, 159-166; Chp. 25, 26, 27 & 29. Kumar, K., & Blyerlein, M. (1991). Construction and validation of an instrument for measuring ingratiation behaviors in organizational settings, <u>Journal of Applied Psychology</u> , 76 (5), 619-627.
Class 13 Nov. 20	More on Measurement and Data Collection The Ethical Conduct of Social Work Research <b>MEASUREMENT EXERCISE DUE</b> <b>ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>	Kerlinger, Chps. 28, 30 & 31 Gilchrist, L. D., & Schinke, S. P. (1988). Research ethics. In R. M. Grinnell, Jr. <u>Social work research and evaluation</u> , 3rd ed. (pp. 65-79). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock. Handout: Guidelines for conducting human subject research.
Nov. 27	Thanksgiving holiday	Eat well and relax!
Class 14 Dec. 4	Putting the Pieces Together: Summary of Course Looking Towards the Dissertation Review for Test #3 Student's Final Evaluation of Course	Kerlinger, Appendix D Fisher, J. (1985). Evaluating research reports. In R. M. Grinnell, Jr. <u>Social work research and evaluation</u> , 2nd ed. (pp. 476-481). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock. Harrison, D. F., & Thyer, B. A. (1988). Doctoral research on social work practice: A proposed agenda. <u>Journal of Social Work Education</u> , 24, 107-114. Humphreys, N., A. & Gambrill, E. (1994). Are social

		<p>work journals requiring adequate empirical justification for claims of effectiveness? In Hudson &amp; Nurius (Eds.), <u>Controversial issues in social work research</u> (pp. 259-270).</p> <p>Sprenkle, D. H., &amp; Bischoff, R. J. (1995). Research in family therapy: Trends, issues, and recommendations. In M. P. Nichols, &amp; R. C. Schwartz (Eds.), <u>Family therapy: Concepts and Methods</u> (pp. 542-573). Needham Heights: MA: Allyn and Bacon.</p> <p>Review APA Manual</p>
Wed., Dec. 10	<b>TEST #3</b>	9:00 to 12:00

### Criteria for Student Evaluation

The final grade for the course will be based on three tests and either three exercises or an alternative assignment.

Tests: There will be three tests. The first will be on October 2, the second on October 30, and the third on December 10. The tests will include true or false, multiple choice, matching, short answer, and/or essay questions. The format for each test will be discussed one week prior to the test date.

Exercises: Each exercise should be typewritten or word processed and doubled-spaced. Instructions for each of the three exercises are attached. The exercises are due on September 11, October 9, and November 20.

Alternative Assignment: Those who have access to data may wish to write an article to submit for publication in lieu of the three exercises. If you wish to consider this option, please make an appointment with the instructor. This assignment will be due no later than November 29.

All papers and tests will be given a numerical grade.

The final grade will be computed in the following manner

Exercises:

Social Work Theory	10%
Research Role Model	10%
Measurement	10%
or	
Alternative Assignment	30%

Tests:

#1	20%
#2	20%
#3	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

The grading scale for papers, tests, and the final grade is:

90–100=A

80–89=B

70–79=C

60–69=D

59 and below =F

### **Course Policies**

1. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified unless an emergency occurs or previous arrangements have been made with the instructor for compelling reasons. Late assignments may be submitted, but the penalty is five points a day including weekends. This penalty also includes assignments submitted after the start of the class period.
2. The university recommends that instructors specify policies on scholastic dishonesty. While I do not anticipate scholastic dishonesty occurring, please refer to General Information of the University of Texas at Austin for policies and other information on this subject. In this course, scholastic dishonesty may result in a grade of F in the course and a report to the Doctoral Committee and Graduate School.
3. Students are expected to attend all classes and to be prepared to participate.

### **Course and Instructor Evaluation**

You will have two opportunities to evaluate the course and instructor. At mid-term I will use my own format for this. This is an informal procedure. You are free to complete the evaluation or not. Forms should be completed anonymously. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to give the instructor feedback that may be useful in improving the course during the remainder of this term and subsequent terms. Your comments will be appreciated and seriously considered.

At the end of the course I will use the standard Course Instructor Survey (CIS) provided by the University of Texas at Austin. The CIS offers students a systematic method of evaluating courses and instructors. It also provides a comparative method for instructors to evaluate a number of aspects of their courses. The results are also used by the Dean and the School's Executive Committee as one aspect of faculty evaluation. I hope every student will complete the CIS.

Should you wish to discuss the course at other times during the semester, please stop by during office hours or make an appointment.

*I look forward to a productive term.*

### **Exercise I: An Introduction to Theory**

According to Fred N. Kerlinger (1986) in his book Foundations of Behavioral Research, "A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena" (p. 9). Theory building is a primary purpose of research.

Select a theory relevant to the field of social work such as role theory, a theory of human development, a theoretical explanation of some type of social problem, or another theory of particular interest to you.

Applying Kerlinger's definition to the theory you have selected, provide illustrations of 1) constructs/concepts, 2) definitions, 3) propositions specifying relations among variables and explanations and predictions of phenomena. Two examples of each of these components will be sufficient for this exercise.

Use the following outline to complete the assignment:

1. Name and briefly describe the theory.
2. Briefly identify leading theorists in the field and their contributions to the theory.
3. Provide two illustrations of each of the following, giving adequate descriptions of each:
  - a. constructs/concepts
  - b. definitions of these constructs or concepts
  - c. explanations and predictions of phenomena and propositions specifying relations among variables
4. Conclude the paper with a critical analysis of the theory, including its limitations or shortcomings in advancing the practice of social work.

Be succinct. Do not exceed five pages. In addition, attach a list of the references you consulted in APA format. This assignment is due on September 20. Be prepared to discuss your analysis in class.

### **Exercise 2: Research Role Model\***

This assignment is intended to acquaint you and your classmates with significant contributors to social work knowledge through a review of their empirical research and scholarly publications. Select an individual whom you believe represents the standards of the profession in terms of research and scholarship. Use the following outline to organize your report.

1. Identification and biographical information (education, dates of significant work, other significant information) if possible.
2. Identify and describe some of this researcher's major contributions. What research questions has this individual addressed? What research methods has the individual used? What are the major conclusions the author has drawn from her/his work? Identify other important aspects of the author's work.
3. How did time and place influence this person's contributions?
4. What major values, attitudes, and points of view are reflected in this person's works?
5. What epistemological perspectives are reflected in this researcher's works?
6. Evaluate this researcher's scholarly publications in terms of strengths and weaknesses. What trends do you see reflected in the various contributions?

Do not exceed five pages. Also include a list of the references you consulted. This assignment is due on October 25. Be prepared to discuss this assignment in class.

\*Adapted from Martha Williams.

### **Exercise 3: Measurements and Instruments in Social Work Research\***

The purpose of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to learn about a range of instruments used in social work practice and research. Select an instrument, and locate and review one or more research articles that utilize this instrument. Write a report covering the following points:

1. What is the name of the measure or instrument?
2. Who developed the measure or instrument?
3. How can the measure or instrument be obtained?
4. When was the instrument first published? Has it been modified?
5. What is the measure or instrument intended to measure?
6. How has the measure or instrument been developed and tested?
7. What theoretical frameworks influenced the development of the measure or instrument?
8. How has the measure been used since it was first developed?
9. How is it administered?
10. How is it scored?
11. What information is available on the instrument's validity?
12. What information is available on reliability?
13. How would you evaluate the adequacy of the instrument? Include information such as ease or difficulty of administration, scoring, evaluating, and applying results, and so forth. Do you think the instrument does what it claims?

A list of sources of instruments will be provided, but keep your eyes open for good examples in your readings or use an instrument with which you are already familiar from social work practice.

Do not exceed five pages. This assignment is due on December 6. Include a reference list and be prepared to discuss your assignment in class.

\*Adapted from Martha Williams.