

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

Course Number:	SW 313	Instructor:	Diana DiNitto
Unique Number:	59435	Office Number:	SSW 3.130B
Semester:	Fall 1998	Office Phone:	471-9227
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Meeting Time/Place:	T/TH, 11:00–12:30 SSW 2.106	Office Hours:	T, 9:30–11:00 TH, 4:00–5:30

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

Course Description

This course is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. Usually taken in the student's sophomore year, the course introduces students to the use of the scientific method in social work, research ethics and the social work values base, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs and inference, single subject designs and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW 313 is a prerequisite to entry into the social work major.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student 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.

Teaching Methods

The primary means of instruction are informal lectures (i.e., students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments during lectures), in class exercises, and class discussions. As time permits, guest speakers may be invited to class.

Required Texts and Additional Required Readings

The text for this course is Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (1997). *Research Methods for Social Work*, 3rd ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. The text book will be available at local bookstores. Additional readings are listed on the syllabus and will be available through University Duplicating.

Student Evaluation

Your grade for the course will be based on four tests and one additional assignment.

Tests

Test 1 will count as 15% of the final grade, test 2 as 20%, test 3 as 25% and test 4 as 30%. The tests will contain a combination of some or all of the following types of questions: matching; true/false; and multiple choice. Test 1 is scheduled for Tues., Sept. 22, test 2 for Tues. Oct. 13, test 3 for Thurs., Nov. 12, and test 4 will be given during the final exam period, to be announced later.

Additional Assignment

An additional assignment is also part of the course grade. There are two options for completing it.

Option One

Attend three on-campus research lectures offered by the School of Social Work, Women's Studies, African American Studies, psychology department, sociology department, or other department on campus. These lectures can be about research on any subject as long as they are sponsored by an academic department. Write a 250-500 word (double-spaced and typewritten) description of each talk, including the most important two or three things you learned from it. These papers 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).

Option Two

Work on a UT-sponsored research project for at least 12 hours. The Center for Social Work Research is one place that might offer such opportunities. This assignment should be confined to tasks that can be done on campus and that **would not jeopardize your safety** in any way. Examples of appropriate tasks are working with a team to code qualitative data, assisting with analysis of quantitative or qualitative data, helping to design a survey instrument, or conducting telephone surveys at a supervised phone bank. Simple data entry is not appropriate for this assignment. Before proceeding with the research tasks, familiarize yourself with the project by reading available grant proposals, human subjects review material, talking with the principal investigator, project director, etc. At the completion of the assignment write a two-page paper describing the project and your work, and devote at least one page to providing insights (what you learned, what you felt was most relevant about the research project). The two-page 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).

Grading

Each test, the additional assignment, and the final grade will be based on the following scale:

90–100% = A
80–89% = B
70–79% = C
60–69% = D

59% AND BELOW = F

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Test 1=	15%
Test 2=	20%
Test 3=	25%
Test 4=	30%
<u>Additional assignment</u>	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL=	100%

In-Class Exercises

Four in-class exercises will be used to give students an opportunity to learn experientially how to conduct social work research. Students will work in small groups and simulate participate on a research team. The exercises are broken into stages of research design. Groups will report on their exercises to the class. The four exercises are as follows:

Exercise 1: Groups brainstorm on possible research questions. The objective of this exercise is to settle on a particular research question and a hypothesis (if applicable) to be tested. Groups should discuss whether their questions and hypotheses express the relationship between at least two variables, have nature and direction, and address an important social science issue.

Exercise 2: Groups identify concepts included in their questions and hypotheses and develop both conceptual and operational definitions of those concepts.

Exercise 3: Groups will select a type of research design to be used in their hypothetical studies (i.e., experimental, quasi-experimental, survey research, etc.) and explicate their design. They will also discuss the threats to internal validity posed by their design and attempt to minimize them.

Exercise 4: Groups will determine the type of sampling method and a sampling strategy to be used in their studies and their rationale for this selection.

Class Policies

1. While scholastic dishonesty is not anticipated, students should be familiar with The University of Texas at Austin's policy on this subject found in *General Information* 1998-1999. There will be two versions of each test. All non-test materials must be placed under desks. Scholastic dishonesty in this class may result in a grade of F for the course with possible reporting to the Undergraduate Program Director, Dean of the School of Social Work, and the Dean of Students.
2. 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 is reasonably possible. The format of makeup tests is at the discretion of the instructor and may be limited to essay questions.
3. Students are expected to attend all classes, to be prepared for each session by reading the materials assigned for that date before coming to class, and to participate in class discussions, exercises, etc.

Course and Instructor Evaluation

Students will have two opportunities to evaluate the instructor. At mid-term, I will use my own form for obtaining your views on the course to date, and at the end of the term, I will use the official Course Instructor Survey (CIS) of the University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work. I am also available during office hours and at other mutually agreeable times to discuss the course with you.

I look forward to a productive term.

Course Schedule

Date	Description	Text / Readings
Thurs., Aug. 27	INTRODUCTION TO COURSE WHY RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO SOCIAL WORKERS	Rubin & Babbie, Preface & Prologue, pp. xiv-xxvii.
Tues., Sept. 1	WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND HOW SCIENTIFIC IS IT?	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 1, Human inquiry & science, pp. 1-31.
Thurs., Sept. 3	IS THERE ANYTHING MORE PRACTICAL THAN A GOOD THEORY?	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 2, Theory & research, pp. 32-57.

Tues., Sept. 8	IT ALWAYS STARTS WITH A PROBLEM: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 4, Problem formulation, pp. 91-111 & Appendix A, Using the Library, pp. 583-590. Thames, G. & McNeil, J.S. (1987). Independence levels and social adjustment of poststroke patients. <i>Health and Social Work, 12</i> (2), 121-125.
Thurs., Sept. 10	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Chap. 4 (con't), Problem formulation, pp. 111-123.
Tues., Sept. 15	GETTING SPECIFIC: CONCEPTS, CONSTRUCTS, AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 5, Conceptualization and operationalization, pp. 124-141. Franklin, C. (1992). Family and individual patterns in a group of middle class dropout youths. <i>Social Work, 37</i> (4), 338-344.
Thurs., Sept. 17	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON DEFINING CONCEPTS REVIEW FOR TEST 1!	Chap. 5 (con't), Conceptualization and operationalization, pp. 141-154.
Tues., Sept. 22	TEST 1!	
Thurs., Sept. 24	SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE VALIDITY OF MEASURES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 6, Measurement, pp. 155-174. Franklin, C. & Streeter C.L. (1993). Validity of the 3-D Circumplex Model for family assessment. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 3</i> (3), 258-275.
Tues., Sept. 29	SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE RELIABILITY OF MEASURES	Chap. 6 (con't), Measurement, pp. 174-189.
Thurs., Oct. 1	MEASUREMENT CONTINUED: EXAMPLES OF INSTRUMENTS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 7, Constructing measurement instruments, pp. 190-226.
Tues., Oct. 6	MIDTERM COURSE EVALUATION SO MANY CHOICES: EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 9, Causal inference and group designs, pp. 274-292 & Appendices B, The Research Report pp. 591-597 & C, A Consumer's Guide to Social Work Research, p. 598-602. Edelson, J. L., & Syers, M. (1990, June). Relative effectiveness of group treatment for men who batter. <i>Social Work, pp.</i> 10-17.

Thurs., Oct. 8	REVIEW FOR TEST 2! QUASIEXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	Chap. 9 (con't), Causal inference and group designs, pp. 292-308
Tues., Oct. 13	TEST 2!	
Thurs., Oct. 15	SINGLE SUBJECT DESIGN	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10, Single-subject designs, pp. 309-340. Rubin, A. (1991). The effectiveness of outreach counseling and support groups for battered women: A preliminary evaluation. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 1</i> (4), pp. 332-357.
Tues., Oct. 20	SURVEY RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 11, Survey research, pp. 341-370 and Appendix D, Commission on Aging Survey, pp. 603-610. McNeece, C.A., DiNitto, D.M., DeWeaver, K.L., & Johnson, P.H. (1987). Social work education: No sexual harassment here? <i>Human Service Education, 8</i> (2), 20-28.
Thurs., Oct. 22	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 12, Qualitative research methods, pp. 371-418 & 13, Unobtrusive research: quantitative and qualitative methods, pp. 404-430. Appendix D, p.593. Martin, P. Y. and DiNitto, D. M. (1987). "The Rape Exam: Beyond the Hospital Emergency Room." <i>Women & Health, 12</i> (2), pp. 5-28.
Tues., Oct. 27	UNOBTRUSIVE RESEARCH IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH DESIGNS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 13, Unobtrusive research: quantitative and qualitative methods, pp. 419-448.
Thurs., Oct. 29	CHOOSE ME: PROBABILITY SAMPLING IN THE CONDUCT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 8, The logic of sampling, pp. 231-266.
Tues., Nov. 3	NONPROBABILITY SAMPLING	Chap. 8 (con't), The logic of sampling, pp. 266-273.
Thurs., Nov. 5	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON SAMPLING	McRoy, R. G., Grotevant, H. D., Lopez, S. A., & Furuta, A. (1990). Adoption Revelation and communication issues: Implications for practice. <i>Families in Society, 7</i> (9), 550-557.

Tues., Nov. 10	IN CLASS EXERCISE (Con't) REVIEW FOR TEST 3!	Chap. 8 (con't), pp. 217-260.
Thurs., Nov. 12	TEST 3!	
Tues., Nov. 17	MEASURING OUR SUCCESS: PROGRAM EVALUATION	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 18, Program evaluation, pp. 545-582. Goodman, C. (1990). Evaluation of a model self- help telephone program: Impact on natural networks. Social Work, 35(6), 556- 562.
Tues., Nov. 19	ETHICS AND POLITICS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH: CAN RESEARCH ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE?	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 3, The ethics and politics of social work research; pp. 58-88.
Thurs., Nov. 24	ISSUES OF DIVERSITY: ETHNICITY IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Marin, G. & Marin, B.V. (1991). Issues in Identifying Hispanics. <i>Research with Hispanic Populations</i> . Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, Chap. 2.
Thurs., Nov. 26	<i>Thanksgiving</i>	<i>Have Fun!</i>
Tues., Dec. 1	ISSUES OF DIVERSITY: GENDER & SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Cummerton, J. M. (1986). A feminist perspective on research: What does it help us see? In Van Den Bergh, N. & Cooper, L.B. (Eds.). <i>Feminist Visions for Social Work</i> , (pp. 80-100). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.
Thurs., Dec. 3	PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER TOWARD THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH REVIEW FOR TEST 4! FINAL COURSE EVALUATION	Rubin & Babbie, Appendix H, Social Work Research and Cyberspace, pp. 733-742. Atherton, C. A. (1993). Empiricists versus social constructionists. <i>Families in Society</i> , 74 (10), 617- 624.
TBA	Test 4! (Room TBA)	

Bibliography (Recommended Readings)

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- Campbell, D.T., Stanley, J.C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Ellis, L. (1994). *Research methods in the social sciences*. Madison, WI: WCB Brown & Benchmark.
- Gibbs, L.E. (1991). *Scientific reasoning for social workers: Bridging the gap between research and practice*. New York: Merrill.
- Grinnell, Jr., R.M. (1993). *Social work research and evaluation*. 4th ed. Itasca, Ill: F.E. Peacock.
- Gubrium, J.F., & Holstein, J.A. (1997). *The new language of qualitative method*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Isaac, S. & Michael, W.B. (1995). *Handbook in research and evaluation* 3rd ed. San Diego: Edits.
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). *Foundations of behavioral research*. New York: CBS College.
- Miller, D.C. (1991). *Handbook of research design and social measurement* 5th ed. Newbury Park, NJ: Sage.
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- 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.
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