

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

SW 388: SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

Course Number: SW 388	Instructor: Diana DiNitto
Unique Number: 57230	Office Number: SSW 3.130B
Semester: Spring 1998	Office Phone: 471-9227
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Meeting Time/Place: M, 9:00–12:00 SSW 2.122	Office Hours: M, 12:00–1:30 p.m.; T, 4:00–5:30 p.m.; and by appointment

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 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, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and preparation and use of research reports.

Prerequisites: Students must have had a course in basic statistics with content on statistical inference.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Explain the logic of the research process and its relationship to social work knowledge and practice;
2. Define basic research concepts and describe the basic principles of causal inference, and their relationship to the various types of research designs;
3. Describe the concept of probability and its relationship to sampling procedures; the logic of measurement; and the accompanying issues of sources of error, validity, and reliability, including the use of scales, indices, and the principles and tools of library research;
4. Explain how research can be used to guide professional practice at all levels on the micro-macro continuum;
5. Describe how research can be used as a tool to define, design, monitor, and evaluate the outcomes of program intervention in social work practice;
6. Critically evaluate research relevant to social work and assess the implications of research for professional practice;
7. Describe how particular values and sensitivity to ethical issues influence the conduct of research;
8. 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;
9. Describe how social work's commitment to equity and social justice influences and differentiates the social work research process.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

The primary means of instruction are informal lectures (i.e., students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments during lectures), take home and in class exercises, and class discussions. As time permits, guest speakers will be invited to class to provide examples of the research methods and issues we will be studying.

READINGS

The text for this course is Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (1997). Research Methods for Social Work (3rd ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Other readings are found in the course agenda and will be made available in a course packet.

COURSE AGENDA

Week 1 Mon., Jan. 26	Introduction and approach to course What is social work research and how scientific is it? Is there anything more practical than a good theory?	Rubin & Babbie, Prologue, Chaps. 1 & 2 Witkin, S. L., & Gottschalk, S. (1988, June). Alternative criteria for theory evaluation. <i>Social Service Review</i> , 62, 211-224.
Week 2 Mon., Feb. 2	It always starts with a problem: Research questions and hypotheses In class exercise	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 4 Rothman, J., Smith, W., Nakashima, J., Paterson, M. A., & Mustin, J. (1996). Client self-determination and professional intervention: Striking a balance. <i>Social Work</i> , 41, 396-405.
Week 3 Mon., Feb. 9	Getting specific: Concepts, constructs, and operational definitions In class exercise	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 5 Singer, M. I., Bussey, J., Song, L., & Lunghofer, L. (1995). The psychosocial issues of women serving time in jail. <i>Social Work</i> , 40, 103-112.
Week 4 Mon., Feb. 16	Selecting a good yardstick: Measurement (validity and reliability) Take home exercise	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 6 Tebb, S. An aid to empowerment: A caregiver well-being scale. <i>Health and Social Work</i> , 20(2), 87-92.
Week 5 Mon., Feb. 23	Measurement (con't) Review for Test 1	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 7 Kumar, K., & Meyerlein, M. (1991). Construction and validation of an instrument for measuring ingratiation behaviors in organizational settings. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 76, 619-627.

Week 6 Mar. 2	Test 1!	
Week 7 Mar. 9	Epistemological perspectives: Which suits you? How gender and ethnicity matter in social work research Mid-term evaluation of course	<p>Cummerton, J. M. (1986). A feminist perspective on research: What does it help us see? In N. Van Den Bergh & L. B. Cooper (Eds.), <i>Feminist visions for social work</i>. Silver Spring, MD: NASW.</p> <p>Fraser, M., Taylor, M. J., Jackson, R., & O'Jack, J. (1991). Social work and science: Many ways of knowing? <i>Social Work Research & Abstracts</i>, 27(4), 5-15.</p> <p>Guba, E. C. (Ed.). (1990). Chapter 1 of <i>The paradigm dialog</i>. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Stanfield, J. H., II. (1993). Methodological reflections: An introduction. In J. H. Stanfield II & R. M. Dennis (Eds.), <i>Race and ethnicity in research methods</i> (pp. 3-15). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Stanfield, J. H., II. (1993). Epistemological considerations. In J. H. Stanfield II & R. M. Dennis (Eds.), <i>Race and ethnicity in research methods</i> (pp. 16-36). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.</p>
Mar. 16	Spring break	Have fun! X
Week 8 Mar. 23	So many choices: Experimental, quasiexperimental, and survey research designs	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 9, 11, 12, 13, Appendices B, C, D, I</p> <p>Edleson, J. L., & Syers, M. (1990). Relative effectiveness of group treatments for men who batter. <i>Social Work Research & Abstracts</i>, 26(2), 10-17.</p> <p>Martin, P. Y., & DiNitto, D. (1987). The rape exam: Beyond the hospital emergency room. <i>Women & Health</i>, 12(2), 5-28.</p>

<p>Week 9 Mar. 30</p>	<p>Single subject and other designs</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10 Jayaratne, S., Tripodi, T., & Talsma, E. (1988). Methodological observations on applied behavioral science. <i>The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science</i>, 24, 119-128. Thrasher, S. P., & Mowbray, C. T. (1995). A strengths perspective: An ethnographic study of homeless women with children. <i>Health & Social Work</i>, 20, 93-101.</p>
<p>Week 10 Apr. 6</p>	<p>Choose me: Sampling in the conduct of social work research In class exercise Review for Test 2</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 8 Review sampling approaches in the previously assigned articles</p>
<p>Week 11 Apr. 13</p>	<p>Test 2!</p>	
<p>Week 12 Apr. 20</p>	<p>Inferential statistics: How important are they? Are we making a difference?: Program evaluation</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 14, 15, 16, 17, Appendix G Gant, L. M. (1996). Are culturally sophisticated agencies better workplaces for social work staff and administrators? <i>Social Work</i>, 41, 163-169. O'Hare, T. (1996). Court-ordered versus voluntary clients: Problem differences and readiness for change. <i>Social Work</i>, 41, 417-422. Rock, B. D., Beckerman, A., Auerbach, C., Cohen, C., Goldstein, M., & Quitkin, E. (1995). Management of alternate level of care patients using a computerized database. <i>Health & Social Work</i>, 20, 133-139.</p>
<p>Week 13 Apr. 27</p>	<p>Program evaluation (con't) The ethics and the politics of social work research Review for Test 3 Final evaluation of course</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 18 Review previously assigned Jayaratne et al. article</p>
<p>Week 14 May 4</p>	<p>Test 3!</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 3</p>

STUDENT EVALUATION

Tests 1 and 2 will each count as 40 percent of the final grade. Test 3 will count 20 percent. The tests will contain a combination of some or all of the following types of questions: matching, true/false, multiple choice, or short answer. Test 1 is scheduled for March 2, Test 2 for April 13, and Test 3 for May 4.

The tests 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 = 40%

Test 2 = 40%

Test 3 = 20%

Total = 100%

IMPORTANT NOTES

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 1997-1998. Scholastic dishonesty in this class may result in a grade of F for the course with possible reporting to the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Dean of the Graduate School.
2. Only in the case of illness or other unforeseen emergencies will make-up tests be given. The format of make-up tests is at the discretion of the instructor and may be limited to essay questions.
3. Students are expected to attend class regularly, to be prepared for each session, and to participate in class discussions, exercises, etc.

EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTOR

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.