

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW 313	Instructor:	Diana DiNitto
Unique Number:	61765	Office Number:	SSW 3.130B
Semester:	Spring 2003	Office Phone:	471-9227
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Meeting Time/Place:	T/R, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. SSW 2.106	Office Hours:	T/R 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m.-1:00 p.m., and by appointment
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SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

Course Description

This 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 quasiexperimental 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 to discuss their research.

Required Text and Additional Required Readings

The text for this course is Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2001). Research Methods for Social Work (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The textbook will be available at local bookstores. Additional readings are listed on the syllabus and will be available in a course packet through University Duplicating at the Graduate School of Business (GSB 4.120).

Student Evaluation

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

Tests

Tests 1, 2, and 3 will each count as 20% of the final grade, and test 4 will count as 25%. 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 Thursday, February 6, Test 2 for Thursday, March 6, Test 3 for Tuesday, April 8, and Test 4 will be given at the required final exam time on Tuesday, May 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

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 departments on campus. These lectures can be about research on any subject as long as they are sponsored by an academic department. The instructor and teaching assistant will help you identify lectures to attend. Write a 500 word (double-spaced and typewritten) description and analysis of each talk. Include the subject matter, research questions, research methods used, conclusions presented by the speaker, your critique of the work, and other information, such as issues raised by the audience. **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 hypotheses, you should consider discussing whether they meet the criteria for good hypotheses. Or, if you are discussing sampling, identify the type of sampling used, the sample's representative, and other important qualities of the sample. 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) presented. When you submit your papers, include copies of any handouts provided during the lectures. Each paper is worth 5% of the final course grade for a total of 15%. The first paper is due on Thursday, February 13; the second paper is due on Tuesday, March 25; and the third paper is due on Tuesday, April 29. You may turn in a draft of each paper at least one week in advance if you want feedback before you submit the final copy.

Option Two

Work on a UT-sponsored research project for at least 12 hours. The Center for Social Work Research is one place that offers such opportunities. The instructor and teaching assistant will also help you identify projects. 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 alone is not sufficient for this assignment. **Turn in a sign-up sheet by Thursday, February 13 for this assignment and get the instructor's approval before proceeding.** Familiarize yourself with the project by reading available grant proposals, human subjects review material, and discussing the study with the principal investigator or project director and other staff before you engage in project tasks. **Take the human subjects protection course at <http://cme.nci.nih.gov/> and submit a copy of your completion certificate to the instructor before beginning work on the project.** At the completion of the assignment, write a 1500 word paper describing the project and your work; devote at least 500 words to providing insights (e.g., what you learned, what you felt was most relevant about your research experience). **Be sure to relate the discussion of your work to the research concepts and principles such as hypothesis testing, sampling, ethical issues, etc., discussed during the semester by citing the text or referring to lectures.** The 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. The paper is due on Tuesday, April 29. You may submit a draft two weeks earlier if you wish to obtain feedback before submitting the final copy. **When you turn in your paper, you must include a form provided by the course instructor.** Have this form signed by the research project's principal investigator, project director, or other responsible staff member indicating that you have satisfactorily completed the required hours. A passing grade cannot be assigned without this verification.

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

In-Class Exercises

Five 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 participation on a research team. The exercises are arranged according to the stages of research design. Each student is expected to contribute to these group exercises. Groups will report on their exercises to the class. A different group member will report each time. **Students who do not participate**

in these exercises and report for their group will lose one letter grade at the end of the course. The five exercises are as follows:

Exercise 1: Groups brainstorm 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 the type of research design to be used in their hypothetical studies (e.g., experimental, quasiexperimental, survey, 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. They will also consider generalizability (external validity) of study results.

Exercise 5: Groups will review and discuss the ethical issues or dilemmas raised as they went through the process of designing their study and any additional issues that have come to mind.

Class Policies

1. 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.
2. 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 2002-03*. There will be two versions of each test. All non-test materials must be placed under desks during exams. Scholastic dishonesty in this class may result in a grade of F for the course with reporting to the Undergraduate Program Director, Dean of the School of Social Work, and the Dean of Students.
3. 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 make-up tests is at the discretion of the instructor and may be limited to essay questions.
4. Barring emergencies, assignments are to be submitted on time. Five points per day 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 11:00 a.m.
5. Only in emergency situations will an incomplete grade (X) 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.

6. 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.

7. The Blackboard site available for this class will be used for e-mail, announcements, or other functions. Class e-mail rosters are a component of these sites. Students who do not want their names included in these electronic class 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>.

5. Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

6. 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 also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

Course and Instructor Evaluation


Students will have opportunities to evaluate the instructor at mid-term and at the end of the semester. You do not have to complete these evaluations, but they are helpful to the instructor. 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
TU, Jan. 14	INTRODUCTION TO COURSE WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND HOW SCIENTIFIC IS IT? THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	
TH, Jan. 16	WE WILL NOT MEET AS A CLASS. READ CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO OF RUBIN AND BABBIE AS ASSIGNED. SEE THE TA IF YOU WERE NOT AT THE FIRST CLASS MEETING.	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 1, Scientific inquiry and social work, pp. 1-25; Chap. 2, Philosophical issues in science and research, pp. 26-49.

TU, Jan. 21	IS THERE ANYTHING MORE PRACTICAL THAN A GOOD THEORY? IT ALWAYS STARTS WITH A PROBLEM: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 3, Theory & research, pp. 50-71; Chap. 5, Problem formulation, pp. 103-138. Thames, G., & McNeil, J. S. (1987). Independence levels and social adjustment of poststroke patients. <i>Health and Social Work, 12</i> (2), 121-125.
TH, Jan. 23	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 5, Problem formulation (con't), Appendix A, Using the library, pp. 601-608.
TU, Jan. 28	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES (con't.) GETTING SPECIFIC: CONCEPTS, CONSTRUCTS, AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 6, Conceptualization and operationalization, pp. 139-170. Smokowski, P. R. (1999). Postgroup-casualty status, group event, and leader behavior: An early look into the dynamics of damaging group experiences. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 9</i> (5), 555-574.
TH, Jan. 30	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON DEFINING CONCEPTS	Chap. 6, Conceptualization and operationalization (con't).
TU, Feb. 4	REVIEW FOR TEST 1	
TH, Feb. 6	TEST 1!	
TU., Feb. 11	STUDENT DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE. CLASS WILL NOT MEET SO THAT YOU CAN ATTEND THIS BIENNIAL EVENT WITH SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS FROM ACROSS TEXAS	
TH, Feb. 13	REVIEW TEST 1 SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE VALIDITY OF MEASURES OPTION 1: FIRST PAPER DUE RESEARCH PROJECT SIGN-UP SHEET DUE MIDTERM EVALUATION OF COURSE	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 7, Measurement, pp. 171-207. Tebb, S. (1995). An aid to empowerment: A caregiver well-being scale. <i>Health & Social Work, 20</i> (2), 87-92.
TU, Feb. 18	SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE RELIABILITY OF MEASURES	Chap. 7, Measurement (con't).
TH, Feb. 20	MEASUREMENT (con't.): TYPES OF SCALES; WRITING GOOD ITEMS; EXAMPLES OF INSTRUMENTS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 8, Constructing measurement instruments, pp. 208-245
TU, Feb. 25	LOOKING FOR MINES: THREATS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10, Causal inference and group designs, pp. 292-300.
TH, Feb. 27	SO MANY CHOICES: EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10, Causal inference and group designs, pp. 300-310; DiNitto, D. M., Webb, D. K., & Rubin, A. (2002). The effectiveness of an integrated treatment approach for clients with dual diagnosis. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 12</i> , 621-641.

TU, Mar. 4	SO MANY CHOICES: QUASIEXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS REVIEW FOR TEST 2	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10, Casual inference and group designs, pp. 310-325; Appendix C, The Research Report, pp. 620-626; Appendix D, A Consumer's Guide to Social Work Research, pp. 627-631.
TH, Mar. 6	TEST 2	
TU, Mar. 11 & TH, Mar. 13	SPRING BREAK	HAVE FUN! 
TU, Mar. 18	REVIEW TEST 2 SO MANY CHOICES: SINGLE SUBJECT DESIGN	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 11, Single-subject designs, pp. 326-355. 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.
TH, Mar. 20	SO MANY CHOICES: SURVEY RESEARCH AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 12, Survey research, pp. 357-386; Appendix D, Commission on Aging Survey, pp. 632-639; Chap. 13, Qualitative research methods, pp. 387-436. 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. Martin, P. Y., & DiNitto, D. M. (1987). The rape exam: Beyond the hospital emergency room. <i>Women & Health, 12</i> (2), 5-28.
TU, Mar. 25	UNOBTRUSIVE RESEARCH IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH DESIGNS OPTION 1: SECOND PAPER DUE	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 14, Unobtrusive research: quantitative and qualitative methods, pp. 437-463.
TH, Mar. 27	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH DESIGNS (con't.) CHOOSE ME: PROBABILITY SAMPLING IN THE CONDUCT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 9, The logic of sampling, pp. 247-291.
TU, Apr. 1	PROBABILITY SAMPLING (con't.) NONPROBABILITY SAMPLING IN CLASS EXERCISE ON SAMPLING	Chap. 9, The logic of sampling (con't). 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.
TH, Apr. 3	IN CLASS EXERCISE ON SAMPLING (con't) REVIEW FOR TEST 3	Chap. 9, The logic of sampling, (con't).

TU, Apr. 8	TEST 3	
TH, Apr. 10	REVIEW TEST 3 MEASURING OUR SUCCESS: PROGRAM EVALUATION	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 19, Program evaluation, pp. 559-599. Secret, M., Jordan, A., & Ford, G. (1999). Empowerment evaluation as a social work strategy. <i>Health & Social Work</i> , 24(2), 120-127.
TU, Apr. 15	ETHICS AND POLITICS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH: CAN RESEARCH ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE? IN CLASS EXERCISE ON ETHICAL ISSUES IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 4, The ethics and politics of social work research, pp. 72- 102.
TH, Apr. 17	ISSUES OF DIVERSITY: ETHNICITY IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Marin, G., & Marin, B. V. (1991). <i>Research with Hispanic Populations</i> (pp. 18-41). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
TU, Apr. 22	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 N. Van Den Bergh & L. B. Cooper (Eds.). <i>Feminist visions for social work</i> (pp. 80-100). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.
TH, Apr. 24	RESEARCH REPORT DAY (Use this time to work on your Option 2 paper or your third Option 1 paper.)	The instructor and TA are available for consultation.
TU, Apr. 29	CRITIQUING RESEARCH STUDIES OPTION 1: THIRD PAPER DUE OPTION 2: PAPER DUE	Review Thames & McNeil article from Jan. 23, DiNitto et al. article from Feb. 22, & McNeece et al. article from Mar. 6.
TH, May 1	PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER TOWARD THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH REVIEW FOR TEST 4 FINAL COURSE EVALUATION	Rubin & Babbie, Appendix B, Social Work Research and Cyberspace, pp. 609-619. Atherton, C. A. (1993). Empiricists versus social constructionists. <i>Families in Society</i> , 74(10), 617-624.
TU, May 13 9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.	Test 4 (ROOM TBA)	

Bibliography (Recommended Readings)

- Babbie, E. (2001). *The practice of social research* (9th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1966). *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, Jr., R. M. (2001). *Social work research and evaluation*. (5th ed.). Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.
- 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. (1986). *Foundations of behavioral research*. New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston.
- Miller, D. C. (1991). *Handbook of research design and social measurement* (5th ed.). Newbury Park, NJ: Sage.
- Neuman, W. L. (2002). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Royse, D. (1999). *Research methods in social work* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Singleton, R. A., Straits, B. C., & Straits, M. M. (1999). *Approaches to social research* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- 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. & Morison-Rodrigues, B. (2001). *Research methods for social workers* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.