

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

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| Course Number: | SW385R | Instructor's name: | Darlene Grant, Ph.D. |
| Unique Number: | 58745 | Office Number: | SWB 3.130L |
| Semester: | Spring, 2000 | Office Phone: | (O): 471-0532 d.grant@mail.utexas.edu |
| Meeting Time/Place: | Thursdays: 2:00- 5:00 p.m.; SWB 2.132 | Office Hours: | Tues. 1 to 4 p.m. or by appointment |

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

I. Standardized 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.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the 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;

II. Standardized Course Objectives (cont.)

7. Describe how particular values and a sensitivity to ethical issues influence the conducting 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 raise in the conduct of research.
9. Describe how social work commitment to equity and social justice influences and differentiates the social work research process.

III. Teaching Methods

The primary means of instruction are informal lectures, allowing for both presentation and discussion. Students are encouraged to actively participate in class and collaborate with one another. Reading assignments completed prior to class will provide the basis for discussion, quizzes, and structured in-class projects. There will be ten quizzes, take home assignments and practical in-class exercises.

Generally, **I do not use lecture time as a verbatim review of the reading material assigned.** I will indicate where you can look in the material, on your own time, for further information on the topic being discussed. Some attempt will be made to indicate the breadth of applicability of the information presented to direct practice. At the end of class a brief summary will be given along with comments about the following week's lecture. **Collaborative learning**/small group assignments will be used in class on a fairly frequent basis to provide opportunities for dialogue among peers and to manipulate and integrate research material.

IV. Required and Recommended Texts, and Materials

Required texts:

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (1997). Research Methods for Social Work (3rd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN 0-534-26388-7, Library HV11.R84 1997.

Rubin, A. (1997). Practice-Oriented Study Guide for Research Methods for Social Work (3rd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN 0-534-34498-4, Library HV11.R82 1997.

Emphasis: Used in conjunction with the Rubin & Babbie text, the **Study Guide** will "enhance your comprehension of the material in the text, with a major focus on applying that material to problems that you may be likely to encounter in your social work practice" (Study Guide Preface). Rubin recommends that you read the corresponding **Study Guide "Objectives"** and **Practice-Relevant Summary** sections before and after reading assigned chapter readings, suggesting that research is easier to learn when it can be applied to practice and made more relevant and interesting to you. I hope you find this approach useful and relevant to your learning process this semester.

Required readings (available in the LRC):

Andersen, M. L. (1993). Studying across difference: Race, class, and gender in qualitative research. In J. H. Stanfield, II & R. M. Dennis (Eds.), Race and ethnicity in research methods (pp. 39-52). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Eichler, M. (1988). Nonsexist research methods: A practical guide. Boston: Allen & Unwin. [Chps. 1 (Sexism in research) and 7 (Guidelines for nonsexist research).]

Hanson, M. J., Lynch, E. W., & Wayman, K. I. (1990). Honoring the cultural diversity of families when gathering data. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 10(1), 112-131.

Marks, C. C. (1993). Demography and race. In J. H. Stanfield, II & R. M. Dennis (Eds.), Race and ethnicity in research methods (pp. 159-171). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Recommended reading/resource (available in the LRC):

Andrews, F. M., Klem, L., Davidson, T. N., O'Malley, P. M., & Rodgers, W. L. (1981). A guide for selecting statistical techniques for analyzing social science data (2nd Ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

V. Course Requirements

The following course requirements will be completed during the semester, with points given for each course requirement. Grading will be based on total points accrued by the end of the course.

EXAMINATIONS:

Ten quizzes will be given during the course covering content from readings and handouts. Quizzes will include a variety of question formats including true/false, multiple choice, and short answer/essay. Quizzes will be worth 5 points each. The total of 10 quizzes will count 50 points toward the final grade.

The mid-term will be given on **March 9** during the regularly scheduled class period. The mid-term will include a variety of question formats including true/false, multiple choice, and short answer/essay. Each examination will count 25 points toward the final grade.

QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY RESEARCH PROJECT:

Each student will complete an individual research project that has been okayed by your instructor. This will allow students to apply course material to designing and implementing research aimed at answering a particular problem/question. A **SURVEY RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENT GUIDE** will be provided to students during the first few weeks of class. Further, the Andrews et al. reference in the LRC package (A guide for selecting statistical techniques for analyzing social science data) provides information for choosing appropriate analytic methods for your research. Students will be required to provide on-going information regarding their proposals throughout the semester (see class schedule for specific due dates). Requirements for the final submission of the Research Project Report will be detailed in a class handout. The 10-15 page research report is due **May 4th**. This project will count 25 points toward the final grade.

A total of 100 points may be earned for the above activities. Grades will be assigned as follows:

- 90-100 points = A
- 80- 89 points = B
- 70- 79 points = C
- 60- 69 points = D
- 50 and below = F

Social work majors must receive a minimum grade of C in the course or repeat the course.

VI. Class Policies

1. It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both attendance and in meeting deadlines. Therefore, class attendance is expected, as is handing in assignments on time. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. Any adjustments in assignment due dates and/or examination times **MUST** be discussed with the instructor at least 24 hours **PRIOR** to the regularly scheduled date.

2. Students who fail to attend class on a regular basis (missing more than one class without a valid excuse, e.g., medical documentation) may receive one course grade lower than their final grade when points are totaled. Students who are one or two points below the cut-off for a letter grade may receive the higher grade at the end of the semester based on attendance/participation.

3. Social work practitioners assume responsibility for themselves. Therefore, it is expected that work handed in will be your own. Scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating during examinations, violates social work values and will result in recommendation for dismissal from the social work program and a referral to the Dean of Student's Office.

4. Social work practitioners are assertive and function as team members. Therefore, feedback about the course is welcome and the course will be viewed as a joint effort between students and the instructor.

5. Differences in values, opinions and feelings of class members will be respected.

6. Class will be cancelled if the University is closed because of inclement weather (or for any other reason). Assignments/quizzes due on a day the University is closed due to inclement weather will be due the following class session.

VII. Course Schedule

| Date | Description | Text / Readings |
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| WEEK 1 1-20-00 | Introduction to Research and Ways of Obtaining Knowledge Role of Scientific Method in Social Work: A Framework for Integrating Research and Practice. | Rubin & Babbie: Prologue; Chapter 1: Human Inquiry and Science; Appendices A, Using the Library, and H, Social Work Research and Cyberspace |

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| <p>WEEK 2 1-27-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 1</p> <p>The Role of Theory in Social Work Research Problem Formulation.</p> <p>Ethics and Social Work Research: At Whose Expense? Management of Confidentiality.</p> <p>How Social Work's Commitment to Equity and Social and Economic Justice influences and Differentiates The Social Work Research</p> <p>Qualitative Research Methods [differentiating obtrusive and unobtrusive research methods]</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 2, Theory and Research, and Chapter 3: The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research, and Chapter 12: Qualitative Research Methods</p> |
| <p>WEEK 3 2-3-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 2</p> <p>Factors Influencing Problem Selection and Formulation [the influence of time, place, politics, age, race, gender, economics, ability, sexual/relationship orientation, etc.]</p> <p>Purposes of Research [exploration, description, explanation]</p> <p>Research Questions, and Hypotheses</p> <p>Quantitative Research Methods</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 4: Problem Formulation</p> <p>Anderson (1993): Studying across difference.</p> <p>Eichler (1988): Chapters 1, Sexism in research, and 7, Guidelines for nonsexist research.</p> <p>Hanson, Lynch, & Wayman (1990): Honoring the cultural diversity of families when gathering data.</p> <p>Marks (1993): Demography and race.</p> |
| <p>WEEK 4 2-10-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 3</p> <p>Conceptualization and Operationalization</p> <p>Measurement [levels of measurement, sources of error, reliability and validity]</p> <p>Due: Research Project Prospectus: topic, statement of the problem, and an on-line literature review with a minimum of 5 abstracts</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 5: Conceptualization and Operationalization, and Chapter 6: Measurement</p> |

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| <p>WEEK 5 2-17-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 4 Constructing and Assessing Measurement Instruments</p> <p>Due: Sample instrument(s) for possible use in student's survey research project either developed by student or another researcher</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 7: Constructing and Measurement Instruments</p> |
| <p>WEEK 6 2-24-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 5 Making Choices: Sampling Making Choices: Selecting Type of Research Design Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Design</p> <p>Video: The Stanford Prison Experiment</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 8: The Logic of Sampling, and Chapter 9: Causal Inference and Group Designs</p> |
| <p>WEEK 7 3-2-00</p> | <p>SPEAKER -- TBA Dr. Grant Presenting at VCU Conference on Women and Addiction</p> | <p>In preparation for Week 9 quiz Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 10: Single-Subject Designs as Part of Social Work Practice</p> |
| <p>WEEK 8 3-9-00</p> | MIDTERM EXAM | |
| <p>3-16-00</p> | SPRING BREAK | |
| <p>WEEK 9 3-23-00 <i>Jubilee Jamboree!</i></p> | <p>Non-Experimental Design: Single-Subject Designs</p> <p>Due: Research Project Sampling Plan and Revised Measurement Instrument</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 9: Causal Inference and Group Designs, and Chapter 10: Single-Subject Designs</p> |

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| <p>WEEK 10 3-30-00 and Fri. 3-31-00</p> | <p>School of Social Work Jubilee 2000</p> <p>*Lecture: Dr. Barbara Solomon: Social Work's Response to Social Problems--Issues and Challenges Throughout the Decades. 7:30 p.m. Thompson Conf. Center</p> <p>*Discussion: Student and Faculty Response to Dr. Solomon's Lecture. Fri., March 31, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Utopia Theater</p> | <p>TBA [work by Dr. Barbara Solomon]</p> |
| <p>WEEK 11 4-6-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 6 Survey, Field, Historical, and Content Analysis Research</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 11: Survey Research, and Chapter 13: Unobtrusive Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods</p> |
| <p>WEEK 12 4-13-00</p> <p>INSTRUCT- IONAL TECHNO- LOGY CLASS- ROOM 2:30- 5:00 P.M.</p> | <p>QUIZ 7 Data Management and Analysis</p> <p>Due: Raw Data for Input and Initial Analysis during class session [blank diskette]</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 14: Processing Data, and Chapter 15: Interpreting Descriptive Statistics and Tables</p> |
| <p>WEEK 13 4-20-00</p> | <p>QUIZ 8 Research and Effective Practice: Program Evaluation</p> | <p>Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 18: Program Evaluation</p> |
| <p>WEEK 14 4-27-00</p> <p>INSTRUCT- IONAL TECHNO- LOGY CLASS- ROOM 2:30- 5:00 P.M.</p> | <p>QUIZ 9 Data Management and Analysis continued</p> <p>Descriptive Statistics, Tables, Charts, and Graphs</p> | <p>Review Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 15: Interpreting Descriptive Statistics and Tables</p> |

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| WEEK 15 | QUIZ 10 | |
| 5-4-00 | Wrap-Up: Important Considerations | |
| | Due: Research Project Report | |

VIII. Bibliography

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Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (1993). Research Methods for Social Work (2nd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

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Andersen, M. L. (1993). Studying across difference: Race, class, and gender in qualitative research. In J. H. Stanfield, II & R. M. Dennis (Eds.), Race and ethnicity in research methods (pp. 39-52). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Eichler, M. (1988). Nonsexist research methods: A practical guide. Boston: Allen & Unwin. [Chps. 1 (Sexism in research) and 7 (Guidelines for nonsexist research).]

Hanson, M. J., Lynch, E. W., & Wayman, K. I. (1990). Honoring the cultural diversity of families when gathering data. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 10(1), 112-131.

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Supplemental readings:

Barlow, D. H., & Hersen, M. (1984). Single-case experimental designs: Strategies for studying behavioral change. New York: Pergamon.

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

Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). Quasi-experimentation: Design & analysis issues for field settings. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Kish, L. (1965). Survey sampling. New York: John Wiley.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd Ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Singleton, R. A. Jr., Straits, B. C., & Straits, M. M. (1993). Approaches to social research (2nd Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.