

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

Course Number:	SW385R	Instructor's name:	Darlene Grant, Ph.D.
Unique Number:	58745	Office Number:	SWB 3.130L
Semester:	Spring, 2001	Office Phone:	(O): 471-0532 d.grant@mail.utexas.edu
Meeting Time/Place:	Thursdays: 2:30- 5:30 p.m.; SWB 2.116	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 five 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. (2001). Research Methods for Social Work (3rd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN 0-534-36217-6, Library HV11.R84 2000.

Rubin, A. (2001). Practice-Oriented Study Guide for Research Methods for Social Work (3rd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth, Brooks/Cole. ISBN 0-534-25003-3.

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.

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:

Five 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 five quizzes will count 25/100 points toward the final grade.

The mid-term will be given on **March 8** during the regularly scheduled class period. The mid-term will be formatted similar to the quizzes including true/false, multiple choice, and short answer/essay. The mid-term examination will count 25/100 points toward the final grade.

QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY RESEARCH PROJECT:

Each student will complete an individual research project. This will allow students to apply course material to designing and implementing research aimed at answering the research question: *What kind of people are attracted to the social work profession?* A RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENT GUIDE will be provided within the first few weeks of class. Class time will be allotted for working on these projects. 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 40/100 points toward the final grade.

Attendance/Class Participation:

The only way I'm going to know if you "get it or not" is via quizzes, the mid-term exam, and the questions you ask/responses to in class exercises and instructor questions.

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
<p>WEEK 1 1-18-00</p>	<p>Introduction to Research and Ways of Obtaining Knowledge</p> <p>Role of Scientific Method in Social Work: A Framework for Integrating Research and Practice.</p> <p>In-Class Exercise: "Are you an extrovert or an introvert?"</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie: Prologue; Chapter 1: Scientific Inquiry and Social Work; Appendices A, Using the Library, and B, Social Work Research and Cyberspace</p>
<p>WEEK 2 1-25-00</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 Social Work Research</p> <p>Qualitative Research Methods [differentiating obtrusive and unobtrusive research methods]</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 3, Theory and Research, and Chapter 4: The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research, and</p> <p>Rubin & Babbie: Appendix D: A Consumer's Guide to Social Work Research</p>
<p>WEEK 3 2-1-00</p>	<p>Quiz #1: R&B Chpts. 3, 4</p> <p>Peace Corps Presentation 2:45 p.m.</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 5: 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>WEEK 4 2-8-00</p>	<p>Conceptualization and Operationalization</p> <p>Measurement [levels of measurement, sources of error, reliability and validity]</p> <p>In-Class Exercise: "How well do you cope with emotional stress?"</p>	<p>Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 6: Conceptualization and Operationalization, and Chapter 7: Measurement</p>

WEEK 5 2-15-00	Constructing and Assessing Measurement Instruments	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 7 & Chapter 8: Constructing and Measurement Instruments
WEEK 6 2-22-00	Quiz #2: R&B Chpt. 7, 8 Making Choices: Sampling In-Class Exercise: "Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 9: The Logic of Sampling, and Rubin & Babbie: Appendix D: A Consumer's Guide to Social Work Research
WEEK 7 3-1-00	Making Choices: Selecting Type of Research Design Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Design	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 10: Causal Inference and Group Designs
WEEK 8 3-8-00	MIDTERM EXAM	
3-15-00	SPRING BREAK	
WEEK 9 3-22-00	Non-Experiemental Design: Single-Subject Designs	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 10: Causal Inference and Group Designs, and Chapter 11: Single-Subject Designs
WEEK 10 3-29-00	Quiz #3: R&B Chpts. 9, 10 Qualitative Research Methods	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 13 pp. 418-434: Field Research
WEEK 11 4-5-00	Survey, Field, Historical, and Content Analysis Research	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 12: Survey Research, and Chapter 14: Unobtrusive Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

WEEK 12 4-12-00 INSTRUCT- IONAL TECHNO- LOGY CLASS- ROOM 2:30- 5:30 P.M.	Quiz #4 (Chpt. 12) Data Management and Analysis [bring blank diskette to class]	Rubin & Babbie: Chapter 15: Processing Data, and Chapter 16: Interpreting Descriptive Statistics and Tables
WEEK 13 4-19-00	Research and Effective Practice: The Social Context of Research	Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 19: Program Evaluation
WEEK 14 4-26-00 INSTRUCT- IONAL TECHNO- LOGY CLASS- ROOM 2:30- 5:30 P.M.	Quiz #5 (Chpt. 16) Data Management and Analysis continued Descriptive Statistics, Tables, Charts, and Graphs	Review Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 15 & 16 continued
WEEK 15 5-3-00	Wrap-Up: Important Considerations Due: Research Project Report	

VIII. **Bibliography**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Kish, L. (1965). Survey sampling. New York: John Wiley.
- 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.
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- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (1993). Research Methods for Social Work (2nd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Singleton, R. A. Jr., Straits, B. C., & Straits, M M. (1993). Approaches to social research (2nd Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.