

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 388R1	<b>Instructor's name:</b>	Catherine Cubbin, PhD
<b>Unique Number:</b>	63360	<b>Office Number:</b>	SWB 3.130E, CLA 2.622G, Hartland Plaza, Suite 295
<b>Semester:</b>	Fall 2014	<b>Office Phone:</b>	512-232-0625; 512-232-7064
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	Tues 9:30am-12:30pm	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tues 1:30-2:30pm; & by appt.
<b>Meeting Place:</b>	SSW 2.140	<b>Instructor's email:</b>	ccubbin@austin.utexas.edu

### **I. Course Description**

This is the first in a series of research courses required for social work doctoral students. This course introduces students to the basic elements of research design in the social sciences with particular attention to social work research.

### **II. Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, students should:

1. Have knowledge of aspects of epistemology relevant to the social sciences, especially social work;
2. Have working knowledge of the language of research in order to use research terminology precisely and accurately;
3. Know the elements and phases of research;
4. Be able to evaluate the quality of research done by others;
5. Have increased facility in designing research, especially in aspects preceding data analysis;
6. Have increased knowledge of tools useful in planning, conducting, and reporting the results of research such as data collection instruments and publication formats;
7. Have increased knowledge of the type of writing needed to describe research designs and report findings;
8. Be familiar with standards for the ethical conduct of research, including human subjects protection, and their relationship to the social work value base;
9. Be familiar with gender and ethnic sensitivity in conducting research;
10. Understand the impact of political and other ideological forces on social work research and program evaluation.

### **III. Teaching Methods**

The primary means of instruction will be interactive lectures, guest lectures, in-class exercises, and class discussions from the assigned readings. Students will be expected to have done the assigned reading before class and to actively participate in class and collaborate with one another.

**II. Required Text and Readings** (Students are responsible for the material in the assigned readings whether or not the material is discussed in class.)

#### **Required text:**

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research methods for social work*, 7th edition, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. The 8<sup>th</sup> edition (2011, 2014) is also fine to use.

**Recommended texts:**

Rubin, A. (2010). *Statistics for Evidence-Based Practice and Evaluation*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd edition). University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

**Required journal articles:** Most of the following articles will be available on the course Blackboard. Additional articles will be posted during the semester or distributed in class.

Baron, R.M. and Kenny, D.A. The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1986;51:1173-1182.

Bell, H. Case Management with Displaced Survivors of Hurricane Katrina: A Case Study of One Host Community. *Journal of Social Service Research* 2008;34:15-27.

Cubbin, C., Pollack C., Flaherty B., Hayward M., Sania A., Vallone D., Braveman P. Assessing alternative measures of wealth in health research, *American Journal of Public Health* 2011;101:939-937.

Drisko, JW. Strengthening qualitative studies and reports: Standards to promote academic integrity. *Journal of Social Work Education* 1997;33(1):185-197.

Fischman, J. The pressure of race. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 12, 2010.

Floyd, L., Sobell, M., Velasquez, M.M., Nettleman, M., Sobell, L., Dolan Mullen, P., von Sternberg, K., Skarpness, B & Nagaranja, J., and the Project Choices Efficacy Study Group. Preventing Alcohol Exposed Pregnancies: A randomized controlled trial. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2006;32(1):1-10.

Frieden, T.R., and Collins, F.S. Intentional Infection of Vulnerable Populations in 1946-1948, *JAMA* 2010;304:2063-2064.

Hughes, R.C., Rycus, J.C., Saunders-Adams, S.M., Hughes, L.K., Hughes, K.N. Issues in Differential Response. *Research on Social Work Practice* 2013;23:493-520.

Kraemer HC, Kiernan M, Essex M, Kupfer DJ. How and why criteria defining moderators and mediators differ between the Baron & Kenny and MacArthur approaches. *Health Psychology* 2008;27(2 Suppl):S101-8.

Margerison-Zilko CE, Cubbin C, Jun J, Marchi KS, Fingar K, Braveman P. Neighborhood poverty histories and preterm birth: Comparing cross-sectional to longitudinal measures, under review, *American Journal of Public Health*.

The Project CHOICES Research Group. Alcohol-exposed pregnancy: Characteristics associated with risk. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2002;23(3):166-173.

The Project Choices Intervention Research Group. Reducing the risk of alcohol-exposed pregnancies: a study of a motivational intervention in community settings. *Pediatrics* 2003;111(5):1131-1141.

Rubin, A., & Parrish, D. Validation of the Evidence-Based Practice Process Assessment Scale. *Research on Social Work Practice* 2011:106-118.

### **III. Websites that are relevant to this course**

<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org> (meta analysis of the effects of interventions in the social, behavioral, crime and justice, and educational arenas)  
<http://www.cochrane.org/reviews> (meta analysis of the effects of health and mental health interventions)  
[http://www.psych.org/psych\\_pract/treatg/pg/prac\\_guide.cfm](http://www.psych.org/psych_pract/treatg/pg/prac_guide.cfm) (practice guidelines for psychiatrists for each psychiatric/mental/cognitive disorder)  
<http://evidencebasedprograms.org> (Social programs that work)  
<http://www.uk.sagepub.com/richards/default.htm> (Qualitative data analysis)  
<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/landing.jsp> (Data sources)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/> (Health-related data sources)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/> (Health-related data sources)  
<https://www.gem-beta.org/public/Home.aspx?cat=0> (Measures)

### **IV. Grading and Course Requirements**

#### **Accumulated points and grading scale**

94.0 and above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

**Course requirements and grade assignment:** A mid-term (15%) and final exam (15%), one research paper (35%), human subjects assignment (5%), survey design assignment (15%) and class participation/attendance (15%)

1. Two multiple-choice/true-false exams will cover all materials assigned and/or discussed in class this semester. 15 points each, closed book: 10/21/14 and 12/2/14.
2. Journal article (35 points): The student will write a draft of the Introduction and Methods sections for a publishable journal article that will be completed during the Spring semester (Research Methods II). The goal is to submit the article by the end of summer, 2015, to a high quality social science journal selected based on the audience and topic. The article will develop a research question(s) based on a thorough literature review of a relevant social work topic using secondary data analysis of an existing dataset. The sections of the article will be approximately 1,800-2000 words. Additional details will be provided during class. The first draft will be worth 25 points (due 11/24/14), and the final draft will be worth 10 points

(due 12/9/14), based on responses to feedback the student receives on the first draft.

3. Human Subjects training assignment (5 points): Social Sciences research usually deals with data containing human subjects. All human subjects research conducted at the university level must be approved or considered to be exempt by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before commencing. The major goals of the IRB are to minimize the risk to human subjects (beneficence); ensure all subjects consent and are fully informed about the research and any risks (autonomy); and promote equity in human subjects research (justice). Therefore, this course requires students to take the human subjects protection course (CITI) at [www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html](http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html) . Upon completion, hand in the certificate (due 9/23/14) to receive credit.
4. Survey design assignment (15 points): You are required to develop a brief self-administered questionnaire (approximately 30 questions) that would allow you to test a social work research question. You will need to specify the research question, the independent, dependent, and control variables, and at least one moderating variable in a memo to the instructor, as well as the sample population. Keep in mind ordering, format, and generic guidelines for asking questions discussed in your text. Be sure to include at least one question using a Likert scale, at least one contingency question, and at least one scale. Also draft a cover letter based on guidelines discussed in your text and in class to motivate response. In addition to a copy for yourself and the instructor, bring 3 additional copies to class on Tuesday, 10/28/14. You will fill out/review questionnaire(s) developed by other students in a small group format. Then you will critique each questionnaire as a group, giving the author of the survey constructive feedback. You will then revise the questionnaire based on the critique, handing in the revised draft to the instructor, on Tuesday, 11/4/14.
5. Class attendance/participation (15 points): You are expected to learn from interacting with the other students in the class. Thus, students are expected to attend ALL classes and to arrive on time. Students who miss multiple classes without medical documentation during the semester and/or show up late will lose points (see Religious Holiday policy below). Leaving class early will be counted as an absence unless the student provides a reasonable cause for doing so in advance (i.e., before the day of class) and receives the professor's permission. Students are expected to do assigned readings before the class time and actively participate in class discussions and group exercises.

## **V. University and School Notices and Policies**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT IN CLASS. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and

political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues.

**UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the instructor. The instructor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at [www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/).

**POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including any information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in any way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY.** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

**USE OF CLASS MATERIALS.** The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of

the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

**DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT.** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

**RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS.** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time- sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

**SAFETY.** 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 notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

**BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL).** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY.** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

**Feedback on Learning:** During this course the professor may ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to inform the professor on how her teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

**VI. Additional Class Policies Affecting Course Grade**

**Late Assignment Policies:** Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the specified due date at the beginning of class. Electronic copies as e-mail attachments will be allowed only under special circumstances when the student cannot be present in class. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student must contact the professor and negotiate another due date at least **48 hours PRIOR** to the date specified in the course syllabus.

**VII. Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Text (7<sup>th</sup> edition)/Readings</b>	<b>Text (8<sup>th</sup> edition)</b>
Week 1 9/2/14	Introduction to course Evidence-based practice Philosophy and Theory	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 1, 2, and 3	Ch. 1, 2, 3
Week 2 9/9/14	Problem formulation Conceptualization and operationalization	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 6 and 7  Barron and Kenny (1986) Kraemer, Kiernan et al (2008)	Ch. 7, 8
Week 3 9/16/14	Measurement Constructing measurement instruments	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 8 and 9  Rubin and Parrish (2011)	Ch. 9, 10
Week 4 9/23/14	Program evaluation – Example of a mixed methods evaluation Sampling  <b><i>Human Subjects assignment due</i></b>	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 13 and 14	Ch. 14, 15
Week 5 9/30/14	Sampling, continued Survey Research	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 15 and 16	Ch. 16, 17
Week 6 10/7/14	Ethics Culturally competent research  Getting started with analyses Writing journal articles	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 4 and 5  Fischman (2010) Frieden and Collins (2010)	Ch. 5, 6
Week 7 10/14/14	Qualitative research methods Review for midterm exam	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 17 and 18  Bell (2008)	Ch. 18, 19

		Drisko (1997)	
Week 8 10/21/14	<b>Midterm exam</b>  Survey design homework assignment distributed		
Week 9 10/28/14	Critique of survey design assignment – <b>first draft due</b>  Journal Club 1	Cubbin (2011)	
Week 10 11/4/14	Secondary data analysis Scientific Writing  <b>Final draft of survey design assignment due</b>	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 20 and 21  Margerison-Zilko (2014). Will be distributed before class	Ch. 21, 22
Week 11 11/11/14	Journal Club 2 Review for Final Exam Getting Funded/Other topics	Hughes (2013)	
Week 12 11/18/14	Causal inference Experimental designs Quasi-experimental designs  <i>Guest instructor – Dr. Kirk von Sternberg</i>	Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 10 and 11  Project Choices (2002) Project Choices (2003) Floyd (2006)	Ch. 11, 12
Week 13 11/25/14	<b>NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING</b>		
Week 14 12/2/14	<b>Final exam</b> Budgeting exercise Discussion of research proposals Course Instructor Survey		

**\*\*FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL IS DUE BY 11/24/14 AT NOON\*\***

**\*\*FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL IS DUE BY 12/9/14 AT NOON\*\***