

The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work

Doctoral Research Methods II
Spring 2013

Course Number:	SW 388R2	Instructor:	Sanna Thompson, Ph.D.
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Semester:	Spring 2013	Office Phone:	(512) 232-0604
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Meeting Time:	Tuesday 11:30-2:30 Rm: 2.140	Office Hours:	Wednesday 11:30-1:30 and by appointment

I. Course Description

This research seminar attempts to equip students with the knowledge and competence in quantitative research methods that they will need in order to conduct future independent research activities aimed at increasing the social work knowledge base. The course is designed to pick up where the first doctoral research seminar leaves off and focuses largely on the application of concepts learned in the first seminar. In line with the research production thrust of the course, it involves a heavy experiential component, in which much class time will be devoted to critiquing student projects. The expectation is that you will learn primarily by applying what you studied "by doing," by receiving critical feedback on what you've done and by attempting to improve your performance in light of that feedback.

II. Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Conduct independent research;
2. Write methodologically sound research papers on important research topics;
3. Write publishable research articles;
4. Develop methodologically sound measurement instruments based on empirical item analyses, and test their reliability and validity;
5. Provide and incorporate constructive critical feedback to and from colleagues regarding their colleagues' or their own research activities.

III. Methods of Instruction

The methods of instruction will be in a seminar format, with informal lectures (questions and answers are encouraged), class discussions, class exercises, and student presentations. This course will focus on experiential learning through development of written assignments, oral presentations, and in-class activities. Reading of new material will be related to the student's topic area and focus of assignments; the bulk of student work will focus on experiential projects that draw upon what students have previously studied. The instructor will function as a mentor in this process. As each topic area is discussed in class, the the process of writing that area of the manuscript will be required in weekly assignments meant to break the process into manageable activities. The class sessions will be organized to provide direction for each section of the manuscript with a collaborative approach that relies on instructor and peer suggestions/critiques.

IV. Course Readings

Research Articles and Book Chapters. The instructor will provide an on-line link to these readings or provide a hard copy in advance of the assigned reading. Examples of various components of empirical research articles will be provided. Articles used for class presentations will be emailed to each student and also posted on the course BlackBoard site. Most of the reading for this course is self-directed; your own research interests and the substantive focus of your empirical article will comprise the majority of your reading. The following texts are meant as guides to various activities associated with developing an empirically-focused manuscript for publication.

Optional texts:

Osborne, Jason, W. (2008) *Best Practice in Quantitative Methods*, New York: SAGE Publications.

Turabian, K.L.: revised by Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., Williams, J.M. (2007). *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pyrzczak, Fred. (1999). *Evaluating Research in Academic Journals*. Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak publishing.

Pyrzczak, Fred & Bruce, Randall R. (2005). *Writing Empirical Research Papers (5th Ed)*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak publishing.

V. Class & University Policies

All written assignments are to be typed in double space. E-mail submissions are required. Remember that as a Ph.D. student you are ultimately responsible for your own learning and development. The instructor is there to support and facilitate your learning, but you need to take the initiative for your own education.

1. Students are expected to attend class sessions and participate in seminar-type, interactive discussions between students and professor. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions. Regular attendance to class meetings, demonstration of comprehension of readings, and contribution to thoughtful discussions will be considered in assigning the final grade. Students are to notify the professor if they are going to be absent. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences or assignments that were to be submitted on that day.
2. Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. NO weekly assignments will be accepted late and there will be no “make-up” of weekly assignments. Students are expected to email all required assignments on the due date set by the professor. Assignments turned in after the 10:00 a.m. deadline will be considered late. If accepted, late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of 10% each day it is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student should see the professor and negotiate another due date WELL in advance of that due date. Note that the professor will send a reply email when the paper is received; if you do not receive a reply before the end of the day the paper is due, contact the professor immediately.
3. Student feedback is welcome and highly valued. Students are encouraged to provide feedback during office hours, by phone, by e-mail, and by appointment if they desire. Students will also be asked to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal means. It is important for the instructor to know the students’ reactions to course assignments, classroom activities, and discussions. Student feedback helps ensure that together the instructor and students create an environment that is effective for teaching and learning.

4. If students are concerned about their class performance, the professor is more than willing to work with students to help them improve their course grades prior to the end of the semester. Final grades assigned in the course are not negotiable.

University 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 like 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.

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://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

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 email 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're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, or the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

VI. Course Requirements and Grading

100 - 94 = A
93 - 90 = A-
89 - 87 = B+
86 - 84 = B
83 - 80 = B-
79 - 77 = C+
76 - 74 = C
73 - 70 = C-
69 - 67 = D+
66 - 64 = D
63 - 60 = D-
59 and below = F

A = 100 – 90 points Superior work: The assignment significantly exceeds expectations listed in the syllabus. Student does more than is required in the assignment and demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis (i.e., writing coherent, ideas synthesized, discussion well developed).

B = 89 – 80 points Good Work: The assignment meets all the requirements and demonstrates evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

C = 79 – 70 points Average Work: The assignment meets the requirements or has minor gaps but lacks evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis. Remember, a C- or lower will require re-taking the course.

D-failing = 69 and below Poor/failing Work: The assignment has important gaps, both in terms of not meeting the requirements and lacking in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

Accumulated points and grading scale:

1. Weekly Writing Assignments (10 points each of 10)	100 points
2. Article critique Presentation	50 points
3. Methods section of Article	50 points
4. Final Research Article	150 points
5. Presentation of Student Research Article	50 points
6. Attendance and participation in Presentations (5 pts/class)	70 points

Total 470 points

Course Requirements (Points possible)

- Weekly Writing assignment (10 points each):** Weekly assignments will be required to facilitate development of the final empirically-based research article. Sections of the final manuscript will be submitted, by email, each week and reviewed before the next scheduled class with “track changes” feedback from the instructor. There will be 10 specific and targeted writing assignments, each of which is worth 10 points. One of these weekly assignments will also include an informal presentation to the class that will provide feedback from peers concerning research questions and scope of project. Assignments must be emailed to the instructor by 11:00 a.m. on the date they are due. Weekly assignments will not be accepted late and cannot be made up for credit.
- Article Critique Presentation (50 points):** The student will chose one journal article that reports findings from an experimental or quasi-experimental study in the student’s area of interest. The student must get the instructor’s approval of the article to be presented. Once approved, the student will email copies of the article to everyone in the class, including the instructor, one week prior to the critic/presentation of that article. Students will have approximately 30-45 minutes to present the paper and pose/answer questions from the class and instructor concerning the article’s methods and findings. Focus of this critique presentation should be on research methodology highlighted during that week in class, while describing the overall research methods used. Students are to also provide suggestions for possible improvements to address limitations. See specific required elements for presentation at the end of the syllabus.

3. **Empirical research article:** A team of 2 students (or one student if desired) will develop an empirical research article, based on data from the GSS or another source to which the students have access. Development of this manuscript aims to familiarize students with the process of developing research-based publications, while employing appropriate research methodology. The final manuscript should be written as required for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal that is identified by the student. The various components of research methods will be incorporated in the development of these manuscripts, as well as utilizing actual data and analyses to answer research questions/hypotheses of interest. All members of the same team will receive the same grade on the following assignments:
 - 3a. **Methods section of article only (50 points):** The student will submit only the “Methods” section of their article. This will have been developed during the previous weekly writing assignments. Feedback from the weekly assignments should be incorporated in this draft. This section of the final paper will be graded with feedback from instructor to be incorporated into the final draft of the manuscript.
 - 3b. **Final Draft of Research Article (150 points):** The final manuscript will include all revisions suggested by instructor’s feedback of all weekly and previous drafts of the manuscript. The instructor will review the manuscript and provide each student with written (track changes) feedback that will hopefully lead to further revisions of the manuscript after the course is complete.
4. **Presentation of Final Manuscript (50 points):** The student will present their final paper in a 20-minute *PowerPoint* presentation, with an additional 10 minutes for a question/answer period. This presentation is intended to mirror how a presentation would be delivered at a national conference, such as Society for Social Work and Research. The presentation must include all sections of the paper: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion/conclusions/implications.
5. **Participation in class discussions (5 pts each class = 70 points):** The student will be graded on the overall attendance, engagement and critical thinking they demonstrate during class discussions and other interactions. The student will actively participate in class presentations by offering constructive critical feedback and asking insightful, thoughtful questions concerning the presenter’s final empirical research article and the presentation of article critiques. Students will not read the presenter’s paper before listening to the presentation of the empirical research article. This activity aims to mirror the process of participating as an audience member at a conference, where active audience participation is necessary for developing continued dialog of research findings and implications.

DATA SOURCES

ICPSR, The Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research has huge archive of datasets, many available for public use with little or no cost. Type a search term in the search box. To download the data you need to go through the UT library to access UT’s account - you will register to access it. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>

OR

<http://sociology-data.sju.edu/#codebook>

has many interesting and easily downloadable datasets for public use

OR

Other datasets to which you have access and familiarity

VII. Class Schedule

Date	Description	Readings	Course assignment DUE on this day by 11:00 a.m.
Jan. 15	<p>Introduction to Course, familiarize with areas of interest</p> <p>Role of Scientific writing in Social Work Research.</p> <p>What is research and how to develop a research career.</p> <p>Locating datasets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up for Article Critique Presentations 		
Jan. 22	<p>Conceptualization of social work research problem areas</p> <p>Defining your questions: What is your interest? Why is it important? What will your answers contribute? What part of it is doable? How to phrase research questions and hypotheses - differences and similarities between them. Variables and the relationship to research questions</p> <p>IRB issues</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch.6 & 7</i></p>	<p>Locate and Finalize dataset to be used for the empirical paper</p>
Jan. 29	<p>Review of variables and research questions that will provide core conceptualization and direction for manuscript</p>	<p>Reading your own relevant literature</p>	<p>Student informal Presentation to class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List possible variables from dataset will be using for manuscript • Describe scope and conceptualization of study • Present research questions to guide the study <p>(10 points)</p>
Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #1 • Focus on use of theoretical framework in study <p>Conceptual bases to guide research questions and/or hypotheses. Theoretical vs conceptual frameworks. Developing and modifying theories, drawing models.</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 3</i></p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualize study with research questions that are important and merit publication in a professional journal • State research questions or hypotheses - include 2-3 <i>research questions with rationale for these questions</i> <p>(10 points)</p>

Date	Description	Readings	Course assignment DUE on this day by 11:00 a.m.
Feb.12	<p>Specific components of Methods section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design ○ Sample ○ Measures (variables) ○ Procedures ○ Data Analysis plan <p>Discussion of how each of these areas are developed in a research manuscript</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch.10-13, 15</i></p> <p>Campbell & Stanley, 1963 (see blackboard)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify one theory that might be used in developing study • Explain the theoretical framework for choosing variables • Provide rationale for study (10 points)
Feb. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #2 • Focus on issues of sampling <p>Review Research Methodology: Sampling description and how include/describe in manuscript</p> <p>Measurement / instrumentation as they relate to manuscript development</p> <p>Reliability/validity of measure for population of interest</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 14</i></p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of METHODS used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design ○ Sample <p>(10 points)</p>
Feb. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #3 • Focus on issue of measurement and instrumentation <p>Review of statistical analysis choices: univariate bivariate multivariate</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 8 & 9</i></p> <p>Thompson SPSS manual</p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of Measures used in dataset • Develop a table that lists and describes at least 15 variables to be tested. • Provide brief description of the variable, identify which are DV and IVs, their level of measurement and how coded, and any reliability or validity from literature. <p>(10 points)</p>
Mar. 5	<p><u>One-to-one meetings with instructor</u> to discuss issues of statistical analysis</p> <p>No Formal class</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 20, 21, & 22</i></p>	<p>Bring to meeting with instructor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table of sample characteristics (Table 1) • Univariate table of IVs and DVs (Table 2) • Data analysis plan with DV and IVs being tested <p>(10 points)</p>
Mar. 12	SPRING BREAK!	NO CLASS	

Date	Description	Readings	Course assignment DUE on this day by 11:00 a.m.
Mar. 19	<p>One-to-one meetings with instructor to discuss Methods section before final draft submitted</p> <p>No Formal class</p>	Reading your own relevant literature	Bring working draft of Methods section to review
Mar. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #4 • Focus on 'procedures' <p>Writing Results of univariate analyses Use of tables</p>	<p>Review: <i>Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 23</i></p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #4</p>	Entire METHODS Section Due (50 points)
Apr. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #5 • Focus on writing & reporting of multivariate analyses. Discuss use of tables <p>Writing results of multivariate analyses, issues of effect sizes, clinical vs statistical significance, misuses or misinterpretations of statistics</p>	<p>Reading your own relevant literature</p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of RESULTS section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Univariate analyses • Sample characteristics text and table <p>(10 points)</p>
Apr. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Discussion #6 • Focus on Introduction & Discussion sections (tie) <p>Conducting literature reviews and Organizing the Introduction</p>	<p>Reading your own relevant literature</p> <p><i>Evaluating introductions and literature reviews (Ch.4 & 5)(Pyrszak)</i> (see on Blackboard)</p> <p>Article for Critique Presentation #6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of RESULTS section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bivariate/ • Multivariate analyses and tables <p>(10 points)</p>
Apr. 16	<p>Discussion section</p> <p>Formal presentation options and descriptions (i.e. SSWR)</p> <p>Journal review process, critiques, revisions</p>	Reading your own relevant literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTRODUCTION section that introduces topic of interest, relevant research, and ends with research questions posed for manuscript. <p>(10 points)</p>
Apr. 23	<p>One-to-one meetings with instructor to discuss Results section and possible content for Discussion section</p>	Reading your own relevant literature	<p>Bring to meeting with instructor:</p> <p>Outline of DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conclusions ○ Implications for practice ○ Implications for future research <p>(10 points)</p>

Date	Description	Readings	Course assignment DUE on this day by 11:00 a.m.
Apr. 30	Class Presentations Course evaluations		All students present final papers and receive feedback from class (50 points)
May 7	No Class		Final Manuscript Due MAY 7 th by 5:00 p.m. (150 points)

JOURNAL ARTICLE CRITIQUE GUIDELINES (50 points total)

One article is to be critiqued and a copy of article being critiqued must be emailed to each member of the class in the week BEFORE your presentation – no exceptions. The article must be an empirical one, preferably in a top-tier journal, that relates to your area of interest. The article MUST include the four areas listed below.

The presentation of the article for critique must address the following:

I. Provide an overall summary of the article (no critique in this section) (20/50 points)

Introduction

- a). What is the rationale or purpose for the study?
- b). What in the literature has created an interest in the subject?
- c). What is the stated or implied research question(s) and/or hypotheses?
- d). What do the researchers intend to accomplish?
- e). Is the study important to social work? Explain.

Methods

- a). Design: name and describe the research design
- b). Sample: name type, number (n=?), recruitment and selection criteria
- c). Procedures: describe what the participants were required to do
- d). Dependent variable(s): describe, including how at least one is measured
- e). Independent variables(s): describe, including how at least two are measured
- f). Measurement instrument(s) used: describe validity and reliability of instruments
- g). Statistical Analysis: describe the types of analyses conducted and why these were chosen

Results

- a). Findings: what were the core/overall results? What were the primary significant relationships between variables?
- b). Describe univariate and bivariate findings specifically.

Discussion

- a). Describe the authors' conclusions and implications for the field
- b.) What 'limitations' were described by authors?

II. Critically analyze the article & lead a discussion of the pertinent research issue assigned (30/50 points)

Also address the following areas:

- a). Describe whether the purpose/rationale of the study is plainly stated with research questions/hypotheses
- b). Describe what you see as methodological strengths of this study – other than those described by the authors
- c). Describe what you see as methodological limitations of the study – other than those described by the authors
- d). Offer at least two suggestions for methodological changes that could have been done to make this study more scientifically sound
- e). How important is the study to the field; describe the implications of this study for future research, practice, and policy
- f). Describe how the conclusions of the authors are supported by the findings and tied to previous research .