

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number: SW313
Unique Number: 62625
Semester: Fall, 2012
Meeting Time: M & W 9:30-10:45
Classroom: SSW 2.122
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Instructor's Name: Michele A. Rountree, Ph.D.
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Office Phone Number: 471-7160
Office Hours: M & W, 10:45-1:00, F 11:30-1:00
or by appointment

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS
(BSW Program Required Course)

I. Standardized Course Description

This course is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. The course introduces students to the social work values base, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research design and inference, single subject designs and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW313 is a prerequisite to entry into the social work major.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

The goal of the course is to help students develop basic understanding of research process. Upon completion of this course the students 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 quasi-experimental 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;
8. Determine feasibility, practicability, and generalizability of research findings.

III. Teaching Methods

Teaching involves a partnership between the instructor and the student in a collaborative and passionate commitment to the mutual learning process. My philosophy of teaching is to provide students with relevant content in the form of presentation, text, and instructional activities that assist students in the integration of the material. Within the field of social work, content delivered without its applicability to micro and macro level practice is irrelevant to the student that gravitates to the profession to be an agent of social change. Essentially, as an instructor I see my role as 1.) creating a safe learning environment that 2.) allow for the sharing of ideas, in-depth critical analysis and integration of the material.

IV. Required Readings

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2007). *Essential research methods for social work*. Third Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Texts can be purchased at University Co-op, 2246 Guadalupe, 476-7211, website:
<http://www.universitycoop.com>.

Required Readings:

The readings are posted on blackboard according to week. The instructor reserves the right to provide and/or assign additional reading to supplement the texts and reader.

Assigned readings and other materials such as additional readings are expected to be completed before each class. Additional readings shall be posted on Blackboard or can be directly accessed on the UT Library Web site.

SW 381S: Course and University Policies

COURSE POLICIES

1. Social work students adhere to the Student Standards for Professional Conduct of the NASW Code of Ethics and assume responsibility for their conduct. Scholastic honesty and integrity are to be consistent social work values.
2. The instructor will comply with University guidelines regarding scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism.
3. Social work practitioners respect others. Therefore, differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected.
4. Punctuality and timeliness are important for social work practitioners. Class attendance is expected. Missing more than two class will result in loss of a letter grade. It is your responsibility to sign the weekly attendance sheet and check blackboard to ensure your attendance record is accurate. The instructor should be notified in advance of any planned absence and as soon as possible in the case of an unforeseen, serious emergency.
5. Students are expected to be active in the learning process, to do the assigned readings and participate in the class activities and discussions. If you do not have a personal computer with Internet access, there are computers available for your use at the SW Learning Resource Center (LRC), the Flawn Academic Center, campus and public libraries.
6. Assignments should be turned in at the beginning of class on the date they are due, barring serious, unforeseen medical illness or family emergencies. Late assignments will not be accepted.

7. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Sixth Edition (APA) is the style manual to be used by all students. The manual is available at the library or for purchase at the Co-op.

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

Electronics in Class

Turn off and put away your cell phones and laptops before class begins.

Requirements for all Written Assignments

- All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and formatted in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). The instructor will evaluate your writing on the basis of content, format, and writing style (organization, clarity, grammar, punctuation, etc.). See handout, *Writing Guidelines*, for further information.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active Learning Contract: Cooperative, Active, Student-Directed Learning (10 points)

The B.S.W program is a concentrated and rigorous program. It requires a high level of commitment from you with regard to your professional learning. In addition, it requires you to be: a.) the chair of your agenda, understanding that no one else can do your learning for you, b.) aware of external or internal distractions keeping you from the "here and the now" purpose and successful completion of this course, and c.) responsible for asking questions, finding information, and challenging yourself to

facilitate your learning. Relevant articles will be posted periodically on blackboard where students are able to continue to reflect and discuss the topics covered during class. Participation in these blackboard conversations is encouraged but not mandatory. Instructor will award half of the active learning points based upon observation, and students, based upon their own individual assessment, will award themselves the remaining points. *Turn in your active learning contract points with a 2 sentence explanation as to why you have earned those points on 11/28.*

Expectations: Active Learning

- Participate in an interactive educational process grounded in course readings. Content (e.g., readings and lecture material) and process (e.g., classroom experiences) as being interdependent and mutually enhancing. Both are necessary for an optimal learning experience.
- Active, cooperative learning is a requirement of this course. You will learn via listening, talking together, reading with a critical eye, and writing in response to what you read and experience. Your thoughtful contributions in each of these modes of active learning are an important aspect of the learning environment.
- Raise questions, express your viewpoints, and engage in small and large group discussions and experiential exercises.
- Participate in a professional manner that includes respectfulness with regard to difference. If you have any questions or concerns about this requirement, please talk to me before you continue in the class.

In summary, the seminar process reflects an interdependent and reciprocal system of relationships among all the members of the learning community.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- ✓ Evidence that you have reflected upon and integrated material learned via readings, class, projects and discussions.
- ✓ Degree to which your communication is relevant.
- ✓ Evidence that you are present (mind, body, and spirit).
- ✓ Attendance, students are expected to attend all classes, missing two classes will result in a drop in one letter grade.
- ✓ Arrival on time.
- ✓ Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics (included in required reader).

Social Issue of Interest: Role of Research (10 points)

To assist you in beginning the course, write a three page double-spaced essay that answers the following questions:

1. What life and work experiences have informed your decision to become a social worker?
2. What are your professional goals?
3. What role do you see research playing as part of your day to day work as a social worker?
4. Even if a social worker never designs and conducts research, why does a social worker need to know the correct ways to conduct research?
5. Ask a social work practitioner or a social work student who has been doing their field placement. (If you need a referral for a social worker or student to ask, please let me know) Ask them about the interventions or techniques they most strongly believe in. What do they base those beliefs on?
6. Select a social issue that is of interest to you. Discuss your beliefs about this social issue, for example its causes. What is the source of these beliefs? What type of policy, program, and intervention for helping resolve this social issue would be consistent with your beliefs?

7. What role does research play in policy, program and intervention development to address the social issue you discussed above?

Criteria of Evaluation:

- ✓ Timely completion of the assignment
- ✓ Adherence to the Manuscript Guidelines (attached).

Due: 9/5

Group Journal Research Entries (14 points - 2 point for each reflection piece)

The group journal research entries are the research team's opportunity to reflect on the core elements of the course and a specific research interest.

Follow these steps:

- Read the assigned readings for the week.
- Based on the research team's topic reflect on the social issue and the questions summarized below.
- One hard copy of the group journal entry will be turned into the instructor for the entire research team.

2 pages, typewritten, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Headings for each reflection should appear left aligned as shown below:

Names of Research Team/Date/Group # (1-7)

Group Journal Entry I: Due 9/19 (2 Points)

- Develop four questions that you might investigate about the topic you selected. Each question should reflect a different research motive: description, exploration, explanation, and evaluation, be specific.
- Which questions most interests you? Explain.
- Would you prefer to attempt to answer the questions with quantitative or qualitative methods? Why?

Group Journal Entry II: Due 9/26 (2 Points)

- What is the problem for study?
- Why is this important for social workers to address?
- Jot down questions that have puzzled the group in some area of having to do with the social issue of interest. These may be questions that have come to mind while reading textbooks or research articles or things you might have heard about in the news. Try to identify at least 3 questions that really the group is really interested in.
- Which of the research questions no longer seem feasible or interesting? What additional research questions come to mind? Pick out a question that is of interest and seems doable?

Group Journal Entry III: Due 10/3 (2 Points)

- What is known about the problem? Search the literature on the research question the group has identified. Try to identify recent citations to articles. Get the articles (at least 10), and remember to inspect their bibliographies for additional sources. Write a brief description of

each article and website consulted. As you read the literature, try to identify the theories used to explain the problem, the methodological approaches used to study the problem, and the results of the studies.

- What additions or changes to the group's thoughts about the research question are suggested by the various articles?

Group Journal Entry IV: Due: 10/10 (2 Points)

- How does your proposed study build on the current literature?
- What will be the specific objectives of your study?
- Write out your research question in one sentence, and elaborate on it in one paragraph.
- Identify the specific hypotheses that will be addressed by your study?
- List at least three reasons why it is a good research question for you to investigate.

Group Journal Entry V: Due 10/17 (2 Points)

- Identify the concepts (variables) the group will use in your study. Provide a nominal definition (a dictionary definition that uses a set of words to help us understand what a term means) for each concept. When possible, this definition should come from the existing literature, either a book you have read for a course or a research article.
- How will the concepts (variables) be operationally defined (the concrete and specific definitions of something in terms of the operations by which observations are categorized)? Which of these are independent or dependent variables?
- Identify from the existing literature an instrument that may be used to measure these variables. If the instrument will collect quantitative data, describe the evidence for the instrument's reliability and validity in the article from which you identified the measure.

Group Journal Entry VI: Due 10/31 (2 Points)

- Propose a sampling design that would be appropriate for your research study. Define the population.
- Indicate the procedure for selecting people to be included in the sample?
- Specify any specific selection criteria. How many subjects will you need?
- What are your procedures for recruiting?
- How generalizable would the group expect the study's findings to be? What can be done to improve generalizability?

Group Journal Entry VII: Due 11/7 (2 Points)

- How will you gather the data? What specific data collection method will you use (e.g., mail, telephone interview, self-administered)?
- List the advantages and disadvantages to the way you will collect the data.
- Will you collect qualitative data? What qualitative method will you use to collect the data (e.g., participant observation, interviews, etc.) Please justify why the group chose this qualitative method of data collection?
- How will you assure the quality of the data collected?

Criteria for Evaluation:

- ✓ Relevance of discussion to the journal entry questions

- ✓ Clarity and timely completion of the assignment (late journal entries will not be accepted)
- ✓ Adhere to the Manuscript Guidelines (attached)

Human Subjects Training Assignment (10 Points)

Social Sciences research usually deals with data containing human subjects. Due to the sensitivity issue, all human subjects research (including but not limited to recruitment) conducted at the university level must be approved by the University 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 subject's research (justice). Therefore, this course requires students to take the human subjects protection course (all four sections of the training) at

www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html After taking the training students are required to turn into the instructor a copy of the human subjects training certificate.

Due: 9/17

Group Assignment: Research Proposal (36 Points)

During this course, the readings, lectures, class discussions and journal entries are meant to provide Student's with an understanding of basic social work research skills pertinent to the profession of social work. The purposes of the research proposal are to:

- Assist in your integration of the course content.
- Sharpen your critical analysis skills.
- Give you practice in progressing from problem formulation of a social issue, design of a study, identify data collection method to writing a research proposal; and
- Give you an opportunity to work within a group.

At a minimum, excluding the title and reference pages the length of the paper should be no less than 5 single spaced pages. On 10/10, students are required to pass into the instructor a one paragraph summary describing the topic of the research proposal.

- What topic will your group focus on if you could design a social work-related research project without any concern for costs or time?
- What are your reasons for studying this topic?

Your paper should include the following sections:

- a. Introductory statement of the research problem (2 pages). Clarify what it is that you are interested in studying and the significance of the problem. This section should present the specific problem under study, highlight why such a study is important. Identify the issue and ensure this section is written to engage the reader's attention with proper scholarly citations. Describe the need for the research. Include the research question and proposed theory (ies) used to explain the issue.
- b. Literature Review (2 pages): Discuss the literature relevant to the topic (at least 10 scholarly articles), including what is known about the particular topic and what has been left unanswered. Conceptually define the variables and formally state the hypotheses.

- c. Method (3 pages). This section will detail how the study will be carried out. Use the following headings:
- Research Design*: Describe the research design chosen (e.g., experimental, single-subject, participant observation, multiple methods). Justify from the Rubin & Babbie (2007) text the chosen design.
 - Setting*: The location of the study or where data are collected. Why was this location chosen?
 - Participants or Sample*. Describe the criteria used to include participants in the study. How the sample is to be recruited and sample size.
 - Measures*. Identify the independent and dependent variables, nominal and operational definitions. If scales are used, provide information about the reliability and validity of the measures and demonstrate the measures are appropriate for the population with whom they are used. Discuss how the proposed methods and measurement techniques are sensitive to diverse groups, including women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and gays and lesbians.
 - Ethical issues*. Discuss any minor or major ethical issues to be considered.
 - Data Collection*. Brief description of the data collection process, such as self-administered mail questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, or observation.
 - Generalizability*. Discuss thoughts given to what can be done to improve the generalizability of the findings.
- d. Conclusion (1 page). Describe how you think the results of this study will inform social work practice, policy, program development and/or interventions.

Due: 11/28

PowerPoint Presentation & Handouts (20 points)

Power point Presentation (15 of the 20 points)

The purpose of the PowerPoint presentation is to share with your colleagues the group's proposed research study; the presentation should be 25 minutes and leave 10 minutes for questions from the audience.

Criteria of Evaluation:

Your PowerPoint presentation will be evaluated based on the extent to which you maximize the medium of verbal/non-verbal communication, substantive content related to the research proposal and a visual presentation to educate your audience on the proposed research study.

Handouts (5 of the 20 points)

The purpose of this assignment is to share what you have learned and to educate your colleagues about the proposed research study. Present a 1 page handout and bring copies for the class and instructor. The handout is an annotated bibliography of the 10 most useful sources related to this issue (include APA style reference with a 2-3 sentence description of the contents of the article).

Criteria for Evaluation:

Your handout will be evaluated based on:

- ✓ The importance of the journal articles you have chosen to include in your annotated bibliography and the extent to which you have summarized the key content of the article.

Due: 11/19, 11/21, 11/26, 11/28

GRADING

Grades will be assigned according to the cumulative number of points the student has earned on the required assignments:

A= 90-100 B=80-89 C=70-79 D= 60-69

A = 100-96 SUPERIOR: Significantly exceed assignments/performance expectations, Demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis that involved coherence and integration of ideas.

A- = 95-90

B+ = 89-87 GOOD: Assignment/overall performance in course meets all the requirements with evidence of critical thinking and analysis.

B = 86-84

B- = 83-80

C+ = 79-77 AVERAGE: Assignment/performance meets the requirements, lacks evidence of in depth and analysis of the material.

C = 76-74

C- = 73-70 (Class failed/no credit: 73 and below)

D+ = 69-67 BELOW AVERAGE: Requirements for assignments and critical thinking and analysis skills is lacking.

D= 66-64

D- = 63-60

59 and below F

COURSE SCHEDULE

Complete reading assignment for each date before coming to class. Bolded readings are required readings for each week.

DATE	DESCRIPTION	ASSIGNED READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Week 1 8/29 9:30-10:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Course• Review Syllabus• In Class Exercise		
Week 2 9/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasoning About the Social World• Social Scientific Approach	Text: Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 1 & 2	Social Issue of Interest: Role of Research

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence-Based Practice 	Reader: Bronson (2009) Eckholm (2010) Gamboa (2010)	
Week 3 9/10 9/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and Practice as Problem-Solving Methods Elements of Social Work Research: Purpose, Use Approaches to Research Steps of the Research Process Theory in science and research 	Text: Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 3 Gartrell (2005)	
Week 4 9/17 9/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical & Scientific Guidelines of Social Work Research Basic Principles of Ethical Social Research Common Types of Misuse in Evaluation Research 	Text: Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 4	Human Protections Course (All 4 Sections of Training) Turn in Copy of Certificate Group Research Journal Entry I
Week 5 9/24 9/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting a Research Topic & Developing a Research Question Formulating Hypothesis & Defining Variables of 	Text: Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 6, How to Read a Research Article	Group Research Journal Entry II

	Interest		
Week 6 10/1 10/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culturally Sensitive Research Culturally Sensitive Research 	Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 5 Crowe (2002) Hyun (2001) Kulis (2002)	Group Research Journal Entry III
Week 7 10/8 10/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conceptualization in Quantitative & Qualitative Research Measurement in Quantitative & Qualitative Research 	Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 7, 8, 9	Group Research Journal Entry IV One paragraph summary describing the topic of the research proposal.
Week 8 10/15 10/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Sampling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches 	Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 10, 11	Group Research Journal Entry V
Week 9 10/22 10/24	Group Work Day on Final Presentation & Paper: No Class Group Work Day on Final Presentation & Paper: No Class	Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Appendix A Writing Research Proposals	
Week 10 10/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Designs for Evaluating Programs 	Text Rubin & Babbie	

10/31	<p>& Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Evaluation 	<p>(2007), Chapter 12</p> <p>Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 13</p>	Group Research Journal Entry VI
<p>Week 11</p> <p>11/5</p> <p>11/7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-Case Evaluation Design • Qualitative Inquiry 	<p>Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 14, 17</p> <p>Text Rubin & Babbie (2007), Chapter 15, 16,18</p>	Group Research Journal Entry VII
<p>Week 12</p> <p>11/12</p> <p>11/14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Work Micro & Macro Practitioner Perspective: How I use evidence based practice? • Social Work Researcher Perspective: 		
<p>Week 13</p> <p>11/19</p> <p>11/21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Final Group Presentations • Two Final Group Presentations 		
<p>Week 13</p> <p>11/26</p> <p>11/28</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Final Group Presentations • Two Final Group Presentations 		Submit Research Proposal

			Turn in your active learning contract points with a 2 sentence explanation as to why you have earned those points.
Week 14 12/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Social Work Research 		
12/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Reflections • Wrap-UP 		

Bibliography:

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