

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW313	Instructor:	Swathi Reddy, LMSW
Unique Number:	58860	Email:	smreddy@utexas.edu
Semester:	Spring 2020	Office:	SSW 3.130E
Meeting Time/	M/W 9:30-10:45am	Office Hours:	M 11:00-12:00pm or
Place:	SSW 1.212		via Skype by appointment

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. The course introduces students to the following topics: social work values, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research design and inference, single subject design and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW313 is a prerequisite for entry into the social work major. The goal of the course is to help students develop a basic understanding of the research process in order to engage with research for evidence-based practice.

Course credit or concurrent registration for SW318 or any approved SW318 substitution is a prerequisite for this course.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goal of the course is to help students develop a basic understanding of the research process. Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the fundamental steps of scientific inquiry and how they parallel the basic steps of social work practice.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the following basic social work research skills pertinent to the profession: 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 members of the LGBT community.
6. Discuss the usefulness of social science theory and research methods in social work practice.
7. Explain ethical issues in conducting and using research, as well as the role of the social work values in research and evaluation.
8. Determine feasibility, practicability, and generalizability of research findings.

III. TEACHING METHODS

The primary means of instruction will be interactive lectures (i.e., students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments), in-class exercises, class discussions from the assigned readings, and guest speakers. Students are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor to review their progress in the course and to ask questions regarding the course content and the social work profession. The instructor is available to meet during office hours or by appointment and is responsive to emails.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

This course requires use of the following textbook:

1. Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's guide to using research for evidence-based practice*. Wiley.

Please note that this book is available electronically through UT's library system.

The instructor reserves the right to assign additional reading or material to supplement the texts and reader. These additional required readings will be made available electronically on Canvas and announced in class and/or via Canvas.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for this course will be based on reading quizzes, an evidence-based practice group project, two individual writing assignments, and class participation/attendance.

Reading Quizzes	30 pts
Evidence-Based Practice Group Project	35 pts
Role of Research Essay	10 pts
Scholarly Poster Presentation Report	15 pts
Class Participation/Attendance	10 pts
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100 pts

Reading Quizzes (3 points each; 30 points total): Due 11:59pm the night prior to next class

Each chapter of the textbook will have a corresponding reading quiz accessible through Canvas. You may take the reading quizzes for each chapter any time until 11:59pm the night before that chapter is covered in class (typically Sundays by 11:59pm). Due dates can be found in the course schedule. The quizzes will be short, and while you are allowed and encouraged to have your textbook during the quiz, you must *read* the chapter *prior* to beginning the quiz. Each quiz will have a 15-minute time limit, so even with the book in front of you, if you have not already read the chapter you will not do well on the quiz. Questions are randomized, so while everyone will get the same number of questions, they will not all be identical, so using another student's answers will not work. As the quiz is intended to ensure you read the chapter, the questions will address the core concepts. Reading quizzes cannot be taken late for any reason, since they are in place for the sole purpose of being prepared for the corresponding class discussion. Your two lowest reading quizzes will be dropped.

Role of Research Essay (10 points): Due January 29th

To assist you in beginning the course, hand in a typed, double-spaced 12-point font 3-page 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 do they still need to know how to do it?
- 5) Ask a social work practitioner or a social work student who has been doing their field placement (please let me know if you need a referral for a social worker or student to ask). Ask them about the interventions or techniques they most strongly believe in. What do they base those beliefs on?
- 6) Select a client population you hope to work with in the future. Examples include (but are not limited to) youth gangs, depression in older adults, school violence, homeless youth, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Discuss your beliefs about this client population, for example, the causes of their conditions. What is the source of these beliefs? What type of policy, program, and intervention for helping resolve this situation would be consistent with your beliefs?
- 7) What role does research play in policy, program, and intervention development to address the specific needs and issues of the client population you discussed above?

Your essay will be graded on the quality of writing (organization, clarity, grammar) and the quality of the ideas (expression of thought, depth of thought, analytic perspective) presented.

Scholarly Poster Presentation Report (15 points): Due March 4th

To complete this assignment, attend a poster presentation sponsored by an academic department on campus and engage one-on-one with individuals presenting original, empirical research they conducted. Identify a poster topic that is of interest to you and ask the poster's author for an explanation of their research study. Write a typed, double-spaced 12-point font 3-page description and analysis of their work. Include the subject matter, research questions or hypotheses, research methods, and conclusions the author presented, your critique of the work, and other information (such as issues other listeners raised). Be sure to relate your discussion to the material that has been covered in class by directly referring to research concepts and citing the text when appropriate. For example, if you are discussing the presenter's research design, consider identifying threats against the design's validity, etc. You will not be able to cover everything about the poster presentation in under 3 pages, so after summarizing the basic idea of the presenter's research, focus on a few points. Your paper will be graded on the quality of writing (organization, clarity, grammar) and the quality of the ideas (expression of thought, depth of thought, analytic perspective) presented.

To help facilitate this process, students, whose schedules permit, will convene at the UT Austin's Thompson Conference Center for the St. David's CHPR Annual Conference's poster session on Wednesday, February 26th from 11:00am to 12:00pm (room 2.120) in lieu of our regular class meeting. The conference theme this year is "Context Matters - Addressing Social Determinants of Health to Improve People's Lives." Upon arrival, there will be a sign-in sheet for our class at the registration table – you must sign in to gain access to the poster session. Please note that registration fees have been waived for you to attend only the poster session. If you wish to stay for lunch and see the other speakers, early bird student registration is available for \$10 and open until February 11, 2020. More information about the conference can be found here:

<https://nursing.utexas.edu/events/273>.

Students who cannot attend this poster session must attend another scholarly poster presentation offered by the School of Social Work, Women's Studies, African American Studies, Population Research Center, LBJ School of Public Affairs, psychology department, sociology department, or other academic department on campus. The instructor will help you identify a poster presentation to attend upon your request and you will have until 12:00pm the following week to submit the report via email to the instructor (i.e., if the poster presentation was attended on a Friday, your report will be due at 12pm on the following Friday). Your emailed report should include a copy of the announcement for the poster presentation as a separate attachment.

Evidence-Based Practice Group Project (35 points)

This project is designed to provide students with an opportunity to engage in the Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) process to address a social work practice need. This assignment will be carried out by small groups of 3 students and is arranged into two parts which are described below. Groups will be formed by the instructor during the third week of class and all students in the respective group will be assigned the same grade.

Part 1: Research Question and Search Plan

Due: 11:59pm on March 23rd via email

Each group should submit the following using Rubin & Bellamy's (2012) Evidence-Based Practice framework:

- **Researchable question.** Report a PICO question and describe how the question incorporates each of the four elements required for a PICO question – patient, population, or problem; intervention; comparison; and outcome.
- **Search plan strategy.** Develop a strategy to search for evidence related to your practice question that includes: 1) the four elements of your question, 2) search terms that represent the same concept as those described the four question elements, 3) the appropriate Methodology Oriented Locaters for Evidence Searching (MOLES) for your question, and 4) relevant databases.

Part 2: Evidence-Based Project Paper

Due: Start of class on May 4th

The final EBP project paper should clearly and concisely describe the EBP steps as have been discussed throughout the semester, using knowledge gained from lectures and required readings.

The paper should cover the following elements:

- Researchable question (using the PICO framework)
- Search plan
- Results of the evidence search
- Critical appraisal of the evidence for its validity, impact and applicability
- Discussion of how critical appraisal will be integrated with practice experience, client/population's strengths, values, and circumstances
- Evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency in exercising the steps above
- Discussion of how you can improve upon the EBP process

This paper should be no more than 10-12 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced, and scholarly written according to APA format. Specific guidelines for the presentation and final paper will be distributed early in the semester.

Class Participation/Attendance (10 points)

The richness of the learning process is enhanced by the participation of all members of the class. Participation will be assessed by attendance as well as oral comments and questions during class. Each absence will result in a reduction of one point for the participation grade. Three late arrivals or early departure equal one absence. Three or more absences will result in a 5-point grade reduction in your final grade. It is your responsibility to sign the weekly attendance sheet.

VI. GRADES

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

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

Grading of all written assignments will take into account **the quality of the writing, as well as the content**. The American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition format must be used to format citations and references. **Written material should be carefully proofread and errors (punctuation, typographical, spelling) corrected.** Good writing requires an iterative process for quality to improve. It is strongly encouraged that you to read your paper several times and, if possible, have someone else proofread it. Graduate writing assistance is available.

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Attendance and Participation: Punctuality and timeliness are important for social work practitioners. Class attendance is expected. Each absence will result in a reduction of one point for the participation grade. Three late arrivals or early departure equal one absence. Three or more absences will result in a 5-point grade reduction in your final grade. It is your responsibility to sign the weekly attendance sheet and check Canvas 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.

Late Assignments: Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments (reading quizzes barred) 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 when this direction has been stated explicitly in the instructions of an assignment or 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.

Incompletes: Only in documented emergency situations will a grade of X (incomplete) be assigned for the course. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed.

VIII. 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 AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. 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. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, 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. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also 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. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

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 professor. The professor 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 may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

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 (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) 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 COURSE MATERIALS. The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor 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 sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to 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). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

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, examination, work assignment, or 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.

TITLE IX REPORTING. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further

information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University's policy on concealed firearms may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.

CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

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 for keeping the university informed about a change of 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 have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between 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 in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering 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.

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

Week/Date	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
1 22-Jan	W	Social Workers as Researchers	Syllabus	
2 27-Jan	M	Evidence-Based Practice	RB: Chapter 1	Quiz 1
29-Jan	W			Role of Research Essay
3 3-Feb	M	Steps in the EBP Process	RB: Chapter 2	Quiz 2
5-Feb	W			
4 10-Feb	M	Research Designs	RB: Chapter 3	Quiz 3
12-Feb	W			
5 17-Feb	M	Error and Bias	RB: Chapter 4	Quiz 4
19-Feb	W			
6 24-Feb	M	Inferential Statistics	RB: Appendix B	Quiz 5
26-Feb	W	No Class - Poster Session @TCC		
7 2-Mar	M	Nonexperimental Designs	RB: Chapter 9	Quiz 6
4-Mar	W			Scholarly Poster Report
8 9-Mar	M	Qualitative Designs	RB: Chapter 10	Quiz 7
11-Mar	W			
9 16-Mar	M	Spring Break: No Class		
18-Mar	W			
10 23-Mar	M	No Class - Group Workday		Question/Search Plan
25-Mar	W	Experimental Designs	RB: Chapter 5	Quiz 8
11 30-Mar	M	Quasi-Experimental Designs	RB: Chapters 6 & 7	Quiz 9
1-Apr	W			
12 6-Apr	M	Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analyses	RB: Chapter 8	Quiz 10
8-Apr	W			
13 13-Apr	M	Assessment Instruments	RB: Chapter 11	Quiz 11
15-Apr	W			
14 20-Apr	M	Evaluation & Feedback	RB: Chapter 12	Quiz 12
22-Apr	W			
15 27-Apr	M	Potential Barriers to EBP		
29-Apr	W			
16 4-May	M	Final Presentations		EBP Project Paper
6-May	W			

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's guide to using research for evidence-based practice*. Wiley.