Social Work Research Methods

I. STANDARIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help you gain an understanding of and appreciation for the use of research as a tool for evidence-based and culturally-grounded social work practice. You will be introduced to the concepts and skills underlying a systematic approach to social work research, including: basic research terminology; the scientific method in social work; the value of research in social work; research ethics and the social work value base; problem formulation and conceptualization; measurement; research designs to evaluate programs and practice; sampling; alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering; analytic techniques; and preparation and use of research reports. You will also learn how research tools can be misused in ways that support structural inequities and misrepresent issues for people with marginalized identities, including racialized identities, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental disabilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status.

The emphasis in the course is on equipping you with the research knowledge and skills you will need to engage in the evidence-based and culturally-grounded practice process in generalist social work practice. You will learn to critically analyze research findings and be an effective consumer of social work research. You will also learn how social work practice influences the research process and the identification of research problems and questions.

Prerequisite: Course credit or concurrent registration for SW 318, Social Work Statistics, or any approved SW 318 substitution.

II. STANDARIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

1. Define the process and steps of social work research.
2. Understand the importance of research activities in social work practice and the importance of the partnership between social work researchers and practitioners.
3. Understand how the concepts and lenses of various practice theories including, but not limited to, ecological systems theory, strengths-based perspective, critical race theory, anti-racism, and anti-oppressive theories with a focus on theories that center racialization using perspectives developed by Black, Indigenous and other scholars of color, can be applied to social work research.
4. Describe how particular values and sensitivity to ethical issues influence social work research.
5. Using a social justice lens, identify policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist and oppressive ideas and actions in research.
6. Demonstrate the following social work research skills:
   a. Completion of a literature review;
   b. Formulation of research problems;
   c. Formulation of research questions and hypotheses;
   d. Identification of gaps in knowledge;
   e. Planned use of various research methods (e.g., survey research, single subject design, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, field research, and use of secondary data);
   f. Planned collection and analysis of research data; and
g. Planned use of interpretation of research results.
7. Understand and compare quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research designs.
8. Critically analyze evidenced-based research and apply research findings to social work practice.
9. Critically appraise how social work commitment to equity and social, economic, and racial justice influences and differentiates the social work research process.
10. Explain ethical issues in conducting and using research, as well as the role of the social work values in research and evaluation.
11. Explain the ways in which inequities and assumptions (e.g., racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental disabilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status) influence research and the appraisal and use of research to guide practice and policy decisions.
12. Evaluate the ways in which social work practice and interventions influence decision making and trends in research.

EPAS Competencies
The Steve Hicks School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, the UT SHSSW engages in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE’s Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

Using a common evaluation instrument, this course measures the implementation of knowledge, skills, values, and/or cognitive and affective processes to assess the following competencies:

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Outcome 4.1: Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research
Outcome 4.2: Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings
Outcome 4.3: Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery

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 lectures, reading assignments, 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) allows for the sharing of ideas, in-depth critical analysis and integration of the material.

Class Participation: 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 five-point grade reduction in your final grade. It is your responsibility to sign the weekly attendance sheet.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS
Required Text:
- Required Weekly Peer Reviewed Articles available on Canvas

The instructor reserves the right to provide and/or assign additional reading to supplement the texts and reader.
V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Late Assignments: There is a 10% penalty for each day past the due date.  
Assignments due on the Monday before class at 11:59 PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT Human Subjects Training</td>
<td>15 Jan 29th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Practice Exercise</td>
<td>15 Feb 12th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal (DRAFT section 1: Introduction: Research Question and Literature Review)</td>
<td>5 Feb 26th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Practice Exercise</td>
<td>15 Mar 18th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal (DRAFT: section 2: Methods: Design, Data Collection, Discussion )</td>
<td>5 Apr 1st</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal Presentation</td>
<td>10 Apr 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal (DRAFT section 3: Discussion: Findings, Limitations, Future Research)</td>
<td>5 Apr 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 10 Practice Exercise</td>
<td>15 Apr 22nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL Research Proposal</td>
<td>5 Apr 29th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10 Apr 29th</td>
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TOTAL

100 points

SW 313 Research Methods Common Assignment

Research Proposal (20 points), and Research Proposal Class Presentation (5 points)

Research Proposal:
Submit a 10-15 page paper (excluding title page, references, and appendices) of your Research Proposal. The research Proposal is designed to help you deepen your understanding of the key research concepts covered in the course through practice and application.

- Formulate an answerable research question that will contribute to an evidence based social work practice;
- Literature review (in peer-reviewed journals) of the chosen problem and critical appraisal of the efficacy and effectiveness of the evidence-based practice/service/intervention;
- Research design (quasi-experimental or experimental design; description of the procedures of implementing evidence-based practice/service/intervention; sample inclusion/exclusion criteria, planned methods of subject identification, screening, recruitment, and retention; fidelity monitoring method;
- Design and methods of data collection;
- Anticipated findings and their implication for social work practice, programs, and/or policies;
- Anticipated limitations of the study with respect to its research; and
- Identify gaps in the literature and suggest areas for additional research.

Research Proposal Presentation:
Give a five-minute presentation (5-10 slides) of the highlights and key findings (as listed above) of the Research Proposal

Instructions for the course assignments are located in Canvas

VI. GRADES

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

94.0 and Above     A
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.

VII. CLASS 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 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. 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 five point grade reduction in your final grade.
5. The instructor should be notified in advance of any planned absence and as soon as possible in the case of an unforeseen, serious emergency.
6. Students are expected to be active in the learning process, to do the assigned readings and participate in the class activities and discussions.
7. 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 without penalty.
8. 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.
9. Electronics in Class: Turn off and put away your cell phones before class begins. Students may use laptops and handheld computers in class for class-related purposes only. To engage in other types of computer use and/or electronics use (e.g., accepting or making phone calls, texting, surfing the net, etc.) is unprofessional and disruptive to the course. Incidents of electronic device usage other than for class-related purposes will result in reductions of your participation grade.

VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES
Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94.0 to 93.999</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0 to 89.999</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84.0 to 86.999</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80.0 to 83.999</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0 to 79.999</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74.0 to 76.999</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70.0 to 73.999</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0 to 69.999</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64.0 to 66.999</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60.0 to 63.999</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
<td>F</td>
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Attendance and Academic Behavior. At the University of Texas at Austin, regular attendance at all class
meetings is expected. Instructors are responsible for implementing an attendance policy and must notify students of any special attendance requirements. See more information at https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/. Furthermore, students are expected to abide by the Standards for Social Work Education (available at https://socialwork.utexas.edu/student-resources/bsw/policies-and-procedures/). The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, and keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements.

**Religious Holy Days.** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the Center for Access and Restorative Engagement at https://community.utexas.edu/care/. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**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.

**Policy on Academic Integrity.** Students who violate University rules on academic 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 academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct.

**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.

**University Electronic Mail Student Notification.** Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy.

**Steve Hicks School of Social Work Policies**

**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.

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.

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 and Mental Health 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.

Resources, Prevention of Discrimination, and Safety
Disability Accommodation Statement. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A’s website for contact and more information: https://community.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

Behavior Concerns and Covid-19 Advice Line (BCCAL). 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 and COVID-19 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 https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line. The Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

Covid-19 Related Information. The University’s policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: https://protect.utexas.edu/

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/.

Title IX Accommodations for Those Pregnant, Nursing and Parenting. Pregnant, nursing and parenting students, faculty, and staff are eligible for accommodations through the Title IX Office that support equal access to education and work and prevent discrimination. Students may reach out to the Title IX Office for help with accommodations to make up missed classes, complete missed coursework, keep them safe in the classroom, apply for leaves of absence, receive priority registration and other related support. Faculty and staff, including undergraduate students who work on campus and graduate student employees, may reach out for assistance with job or schedule restructuring and obtaining modified or additional work equipment. Visit the Title IX pregnancy and parenting resource page for more information or contact the Title IX Support and Resources team connect with a Case Manager.

Campus Carry Policy. The University’s policy on campus carry may be found here: https://campuscarry.utexas.edu.

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.

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**
Complete reading assignment for each date before coming to class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Science, Society, and Social Work Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Syllabus and Semester Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/16 &amp; 01/18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engel &amp; Schutt, Chapter 1: Science, Society, and Social Work Research</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week 2 | The Process of Social Work Research | • | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 2: The Process of Social Work Research
| Week 3 | Ethical and Scientific Guidelines for Social Work Research | UT Human Subjects Training (Due Jan 29<sup>b</sup>) | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 3: Ethical and Scientific Guidelines for Social Work Research
| Week 4 | Measurement | | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 4: Measurement
| Week 5 | Sampling | Chapter 1 Practice Exercise (Due Feb 12th) | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 5: Sampling
| Week 6 | Causation and Research Design | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 6: Causation and Research Design  
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<td>02/20 &amp; 02/22</td>
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| Week 7 | Experimental Designs | Research Proposal DRAFT section 1 (Due Feb 26th) | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 7: Group Experimental Designs  
| 02/27 & 02/29 | | |
| Week 8 | Single Subject Designs | | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 8: Single Subject Designs  
| 03/05 & 03/07 | | |
| Week 9 | Spring Break | | NO CLASS |
| 03/12 & 03/14 | | |
| Week 10 | Survey Research | Chapter 6 Practice Exercise (Due March 18th) | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 9: Survey Research  
| 03/19 & 03/21 | | |
| Week 11 | Qualitative Research Methods and Qualitative Data Analysis | | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 10: Qualitative Methods  
• Engel & Schutt, Chapter 11: Qualitative Data Analysis  
| Week 12 | 04/02 & 04/04 | Quantitative Data Analysis, Secondary Data Analysis, Mixed Methods | Research Proposal DRAFT section 2 (Due April 1st) | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 12: Secondary Analysis and Mixed Methods Research  
| Week 13 | 04/09 & 04/11 | Evaluative Research | | • Engel & Schutt, Chapter 13: Evaluative Research  
| Week 14 | 04/16 & 04/18 | 1. Presentation  
2. Research Proposal DRAFT section 3 (Due April 15th) | Research Proposal Presentations | |
| Week 15 | 04/23 & 04/25 | Chapter 10 Practice Exercise (Due April 22nd) | Research Proposal Presentations  
Course Wrap Up and Review | |
| Week 16 | University Study Days | FINAL Research Proposal (Due April 29th) | | |

X. Bibliography


