

**RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

MASTER SYLLABUS

19:910:505 METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH I

Spring Semester

I. Catalog Course Description

Introduction to scientific, analytic, approach to building knowledge and skills, including: role of concepts and theory, hypothesis formulation, operationalization, research design, data collection, data processing, statistical analysis, introductory computer skills, and report writing.

II. Course Overview

Research is a critical component of the professional practice of social work. Practice on any level must be based on sound and empirically validated concepts and theory. This course, applying a problem-solving approach, introduces the student to the scientific, analytic approach in social work practice and service delivery. It focuses on its role in knowledge building. This course, along with the second course, Advanced Methods of Social Work Research, seeks to prepare the practitioner to carry out three research roles: 1) consumer of research; 2) evaluator of practice; and 3) producer of research.

The basic course, which takes students through the entire research process, encompasses the following areas: posing a research question; conducting a literature review; generating a hypothesis; identifying the different kinds of variables, ethical and political issues, gender and ethnic issues, measurement issues, questionnaire construction, sampling, data collection, coding, data analysis, and communication of results.

Students are expected to participate in several exercises that will provide them “hands-on” experience in conducting key research activities. This includes computer aided data analysis and electronic literature searching. Students are also expected to read assigned articles illustrative of diverse research designs and critical research issues.

III. Place of Course in Program

This is the first of two required research courses, this one located in the foundation year. Its purpose is to introduce all students to the basic components of empirical research so that students may begin to apply their knowledge to the critical assessment of all their readings in the program and can begin to develop habits of searching the literature and critiquing what they read.

IV. Course Objectives

At the completion of this course students are expected to demonstrate:

1. A familiarity with methods used to evaluate relevant research studies and apply findings to practice;
2. Skills in quantitative and qualitative research design, data analysis, and knowledge dissemination;
3. An understanding and appreciation of a scientific, analytic approach to building knowledge for practice;
4. An appreciation of the ethical standards of scientific inquiry;
5. A familiarity with quantitative and qualitative techniques in social work research;
6. Awareness of gender, sexual orientation and ethnic related research issues;
7. Awareness of the application of social work ethics and values to the social research process;
8. Ability to critically review published research and apply it to social work practice;
9. Familiarity with the use of the computer as a data analytic tool; and,
10. Ability to access electronic databases for the purposes of conducting a literature search.

V. Required Texts

- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research methods in social work* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Recommended Supplemental Texts

- Engel, R. J., & Schutt, R.K. (2008). *The practice of research in social work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Grinnell, R., & Unrau, Y. (2005). *Social work research and evaluation*. (Seventh Edition) New York: Oxford U. Press.
- Hoover, K., & Donovan, T. (2008). *The elements of social scientific thinking*. (Ninth Edition) Boston, MA: Thompson Higher Education.

- Monnette, D., Sullivan, T., & DeJong, C. (2008). *Applied social research: A tool for the human services*. (Seventh Edition) Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole, 2008.
- Schutt, R.K. (2006). *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Weinbach, R.W. & Grinnell, R.M. (2006). *Statistics for social workers, 6th ed.* Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

VI. Course Requirements

- 1) It is important that assigned readings be completed on a timely, weekly, basis in order to have informed class discussions. All class lectures will assume that students have read the assigned material.
- 2) Class participation and attendance are considered in evaluating grades. Students are expected to notify the class instructor if they are unable to attend class for any reason.
- 3) Homework assignments will be given during the semester. The homework assignments will be based on assigned readings, class exercises, and lectures.
- 4) There will be two written assignments to be completed during the semester. For the first assignment, students will formulate a research problem of relevance to social work and develop a research design for studying that problem. The final assignment is intended to integrate and apply the research concepts addressed in the course (i.e., sampling plan, instrument development, and data analytic plan). Specific guidelines for these assignments will be distributed during the semester.
- 5) All papers submitted for the course should adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Research ideas and study findings should be logically and coherently presented. And relevant citation of the literature must be evident for all written work.

VII. Grading

Students are required to complete a proposal for conducting original social work research. Students are also required to complete homework assignments related to their final research proposal.

VIII. Course Evaluation

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and the instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation.

IX. Academic Integrity

All work submitted in a graduate course must be your own.

It is unethical and a violation of the University's Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be constructed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited materials as your own.

Use the citation style preferred by the discipline.

Effective September 2, 2008, a revised Policy on Academic Integrity will go into effect.

The new policy is posted at

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml><file://localhost/owa/redirect.aspx>

Please Note: Violations of academic integrity by graduate and professional students will normally be penalized more severely than violations by first-year undergraduate students. Since all violations of academic integrity by a graduate or professional student are potentially separable under the Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members should not adjudicate alleged academic integrity violations by graduate and professional students, but should refer such allegations to the appropriate Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) or to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The AIF that you should contact is Antoinette Y. Farmer, 732.932.2621. The student shall be notified in writing, by email or hand delivery, of the alleged violation and of the fact that the matter has been referred to the AIF for adjudication. This notification shall be done within 10 days of identifying the alleged violation. Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade, shall be assigned until the case is resolved.

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: to paraphrase Plato's comment...and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not to be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the

bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some case, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

X. Disability Accommodation

Please Note: Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services, Kreeger Learning Center, 151 College Avenue; dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu; 732-932-2847. Students must have a letter of accommodation from the Office of Disability Services in order to receive accommodations.

XI. Course Outline

Unit I An Introduction to Social Work Research

Week 1: Course Overview

- Overview and relationship to practice; evidence-based practice

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 1: Why study research? Scientific inquiry & social work

Rubin & Babbie – Chapter 2: Evidence-based Practice

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 3: Philosophy and theory in science & research

Supplemental readings

Gambrill, E. (2006). Evidence based practice and policy: Choices ahead. *Research on Social Work Practice, 16*, 338-354.

Week 2: Ethics in Research

- Introduction to ethics, politics, factors of race/ethnicity, gender, diversity and populations at risk.

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 4: The ethics & politics of social work research

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 5: Culturally competent research

Supplemental readings

Economic and Social Research Council. (undated) Research Ethics Framework.

Available online:

http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

Mays, M., & Manaster, G. J. (1999). Research: Facts, values, theory, practice, and unexamined assumptions. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 55*, 2, 248-255.

- Valentine G., Butler R., & Skelton, T. (2001) The Ethical and Methodological Complexities of Doing Research with 'Vulnerable' Young People. *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 4, 119-125.
- Williamson, E., Goodenough, T., Kent, J., & Ashcroft, R. (2005). Conducting research with children : The limits of confidentiality and child protection protocols. *Children & Society*, 19, 5, 397-409.

Unit II Development of the Research Question

Week 3 and 4: Problem Formulation and Literature Review

- Problem identification and theory
- Development of literature review
- Problem refinement and hypothesis development
- Library Resource

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 6: Problem formulation

Supplemental readings

Krysiak, J. L. & Finn, J. (2007). Chapter 3: The research process: From problems to research questions. *Research for Effective Social Work Practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Week 5: Conceptualization

- Operationalization of concepts

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 7: Conceptualization & operationalization

Supplemental readings

Teglasi, H., Simcox, A.G. & Kim, N.Y. (2007). Personality constructs and measures. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(3), 215-228

Unit III Measurement Issues and Instrument Development

Week 6: Measurement

- Levels of measurement
- Reliability and validity
- Guidelines for asking questions
- Questionnaire construction

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 8: Measurement

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 9: Constructing measurement instruments

Supplemental readings

Krysiak, J. L. & Finn, J. (2007). Chapter 6: Measurement. *Research for Effective Social Work Practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Mowen, J.C. & Voss, K.E. (2008). On building better constructs measures: Implications of a general hierarchical model. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(6), 485-505.

Smith, G.T. (2005). On construct validity: Issues of method and measurement. *Psychological Assessment*, 17(4), 396-408.

Unit IV Sampling

Week 7: Sampling

- Types of sampling designs
- Probability-based techniques
- Non-probability sampling

Required reading

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 14: Sampling

Supplemental readings

Guo, S. & Hussey, D.L. (2004). Nonprobability sampling in social work research: Dilemmas, consequences, and strategies. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 30, 3, 1-18.

Unit V Research Designs

Week 8: Experimental Research designs

- Experimental
- Quasi-experimental
- Single-subject

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 11: Experimental designs

Supplemental readings

Conboy, A., Auerbach, C., Beckerman, A., Schnall, D., & LaPorte, H. H. (2000). MSW student satisfaction with using single-system-design computer software to evaluate social work practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 10(1), 127-138.

Reid, W.J., Kenaley, B.D. & Colvin, J. (2004). Do some interventions work better than others? A review of comparative social work experiments. *Social Work Research*, 28, 2, 71-81.

Week 9: Single-Subject Design

- AB: The Basic Single-Subject Design
- ABAB: Withdrawal/Reversal Design
- Multiple-Baseline Designs
- Multiple-Component Designs

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 12. Single-Case Evaluation Design

Supplemental readings

Cooper, M.G. (2006). Integrating single-system design research into the clinical practice class. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 26*, 3/4, 91-102.

Unit VI Survey Research

Week 10: Survey Research designs

- Self-administered questionnaires
- Interview surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Secondary analysis

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 15: Survey research

Supplemental readings

Butler, S.S. (2006). Evaluating the Senior Companion Program: A mixed-method approach. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 47*, 1/2, 45-70.

Siebert, D.C. (2006). Maximizing response rates in survey research: Issues and methods. *Advances in Social Work, 7*, 2, 1-11.

Unit VII Qualitative Research

Week 11: Qualitative Research designs

- Grounded theory
- Ethnographic inquiries
- Qualitative interviewing
- Analyzing qualitative data

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 17 Qualitative research: General principles

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 18 Qualitative research: Specific methods

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 19 Qualitative data analysis
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 16 Analyzing existing data: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Supplemental readings

Lietz, C.A., Langer, C.L. & Furman, R. (2006). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research in social work. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5, 4, 441-458.
Wilks, T. (2004). The use of vignettes in qualitative research into social work values. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3, 1, 78-87

Unit VIII Data Processing, Analysis, and Interpretation

Week 12-13: Analysis of Data

- Processing data
- Introduction to statistical concepts
- Descriptive statistics and table formulation
- Statistical tests

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 19 Qualitative data analysis
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 20 Quantitative data analysis
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 21 Inferential data analysis – Part 1
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 22 Inferential data analysis – Part 2

Supplemental readings

Hash, K.M. & Cramer, E.P. (2003). Empowering gay and lesbian caregivers and uncovering their unique experiences through the use of qualitative methods. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 15, 47-64.
Miller, J.E. & van der Meulen Rodgers, Y. (2008). Economic importance and statistical significance: Guidelines for communicating empirical research. *Feminist Economics*, 14, 2, 117-149.
Ting, L., Sanders, S., Jacobson, J.M., & Power, J.R. (2006). Dealing with the Aftermath: A Qualitative Analysis of Mental Health Social Workers' Reactions after a Client Suicide. *Social Work*, 51, 4, 329-341.

Week 14: Writing Research Proposal and Reports

- The Research Proposal
- Research Report Goals
- Research Report Types

Required readings

Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 23 Writing research proposals and reports

Supplemental readings

Miller, J. E. (2005). *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Analysis*.
University Of Chicago Press.

Week 15: Final Test and Presentation

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