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**


**Recommended Supplemental Texts**


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/redir.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**

**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**

**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**

**Week 5: Conceptualization**
- Operationalization of concepts

**Required readings**
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 7: Conceptualization & operationalization

**Supplemental readings**

**Unit III Measurement Issues and Instrument Development**

**Week 6: Measurement**
- Levels of measurement
- Reliability and validity
- Guidelines for asking questions
- Questionnaire construction

**Required readings**
Supplemental readings

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

Unit V Research Designs

Week 8: Experimental Research designs

- Experimental
- Quasi-experimental
- Single-subject

Required readings
Rubin & Babbie - Chapter 11: Experimental designs

Supplemental readings
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

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

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
Supplemental readings
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

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

**Week 15: Final Test and Presentation**

*Updated: October 26, 2009*