Course Information

Semester Year: XXXXX  
Section Number: XXXXX  
Location: XXXXX  
Day: XXXXX  
Time: XXXXX  

Instructor: XXXXX XXXXXXXXX  
Office: XXXX  
Email: XXXX  
Phone: XXXX  
Office Hours: XXXX

Course Description

This foundation research course assists students in developing the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to evaluate studies testing the effectiveness of social work practice. Emphasis is placed upon knowledge of qualitative and quantitative designs, methods, and techniques that inform students of best practices in social work. Students will recognize the impact of ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation on the research process and be able to critically review published studies with attention to bias in research.

Course Competencies

Council on Social Work Education (CWSE) 2015 EPAS Competencies addressed by this course.

Primary

- 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

  Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice (CSWE, 2015 EPAS, p. 8).

Secondary

- 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Course Objectives

**S502-01:** Formulate research problems, hypotheses, and research questions.

**S502-02:** Evaluate and apply research literature related to social work practice.

**S502-03:** Design quantitative and qualitative research methods that accurately address research questions and hypotheses.

**S502-04:** Demonstrate a beginning understanding of the uses and methods used in single-system and program evaluation designs.

**S502-05:** Evaluate research methods for potential biases or limitations related to diverse and oppressed populations.

**S502-06:** Identify and suggest solutions, consistent with social work values and the NASW Code of Ethics, to ethical, social, and political issues related to research.
Required Texts

Course Content
This course examines a variety of scientific methods and processes of knowledge building that provide the foundation for research in social work settings. Research processes will be examined in stages from problem formulation to data collection. The course will focus on how research problems are formulated, hypotheses or research questions are derived, and the specific designs that practice researchers may use in addressing given research topics. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods comprise the content of this course. In addition, content is included on writing research reports and evaluating the research of others.

As part of this course students will learn how the unique nature of social work practice (especially clients of cultural and social diversity) serve to affect social work research processes. Values and ethical issues are infused throughout the content of the course as they relate to research processes and methods, bias and culturally sensitive research, and ethical issues in qualitative research. A variety of teaching and learning activities will be used during class sessions. These include but are not limited to the following: lectures, class discussions and exercises, homework, and small group works.

Because an important aspect of this course is helping students critically review the empirical literature, students will evaluate and critique a quantitative research study provided to them by their instructor. In this signature assignment, students will be required to not only identify relevant research results, but identify research methodology and use critical thinking skills to evaluate and assess the value of research methods utilized in the study. Points of assessment will include sampling method, research design and method of measurement. Students will also identify the study hypothesis, the independent and dependent variables, participant eligibility requirements and any implications for social work practice or policy.

Course Outline

**MODULE 1: Research and Social Work**
Dates:

*Overview*
- Introductions, Course Objectives, and Expectations
- Why Research?
- Ways of Knowing and Understanding Our World.
- Is what social workers and researchers do really all that different?

*Assignments*
*Readings*
Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 1

**MODULE 2: The Research Process, Literature reviews. Hypothesis testing.**
Dates:

*Overview*
- What is the Research Process?
• Introduction to Measurement.
• The Importance of Theory.
• Posing a Research Question.

Assignments

Readings

Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 2


MODULE 3: Measurement

Dates:

Overview

• What is measurement?
• Operational Definitions.
• Techniques of Measurement
• Levels of Measurement.
• Reliability and validity.

Assignments

Readings

Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 4.


MODULE 4: Developing data collection instruments

Dates:

Overview

• Error in Measurement
• Random Error vs. Systematic Error
• Research Questionnaires vs. Clinical Questionnaires.
• Creating scale items

Assignments

Readings

Monette et al., 2008 Chapter 13

Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 9, pp 231 to 246.


**Individual Assignment**
- Assignment #1 (Literature Search) due.

**MODULE 5: Sampling**

**Dates:**

**Overview**
- What is Sampling?
- Sampling Theory
- Types of Samples
- Research Questionnaires vs. Clinical Questionnaires.
- Creating scale items

**Assignments**

**Readings**
Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 5.


**MODULE 6: Research designs for group comparisons.**

**Dates:**

**Overview**
- Making Causal Attributions
- Research Designs
- Internal Validity
- Threats to Internal Validity
- Research Questionnaires vs. Clinical Questionnaires.
- External Validity

**Assignments**

**Readings**
Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 6 and 7.


**MODULE 7: Ethical Principles in Research**

**Dates:**

**Overview**
- The Nuremberg Code
- Milgram Study
- The Tuskegee Syphilis Study
- Guidelines for Ethical Research
- Institutional Review Boards
- The Belmont Report

**Assignments**

**Readings**
Engel and Schutt, 2013: Chapter 3.


**MODULE 8: Unobtrusive Approaches to Data Collection Principles in Research**

**Dates:**

**Overview**
- Archival research
- Secondary Data Analysis
- Content Analysis

**Assignments**

**Readings**

Royse Chap. 10.


**Individual Assignment**
- Assignment #2 (Internal validity) due.

**MODULE 9: MIDTERM**

**Dates:**

**MODULE 10: Qualitative Research**

**Dates:**
Overview

- Quantitative vs. Qualitative
- Qualitative Research Methods
- Unobtrusive Observation
- Qualitative Research Process
- Reliability and Validity Qualitative Research

Assignments

Readings
Engel and Schutt, 2013 Chapters 10 and 11


Individual Assignment
- Assignment #3 – Due: Human Subjects Training

**MODULE 11:** Program Evaluation

Dates:

Overview

- Why Program Evaluation?
- Questionable Reasons for Evaluation
- Positive Side Effects of Evaluation
- Types of Evaluation
- Special Considerations

Assignments

Readings
Engel and Schutt, 2013, Chapter 13.


Individual Assignment
- Assignment #4 – Due: Unobtrusive Observation.

**MODULE 12:** Single Subject Designs

Dates:

Overview

- Why evaluate our practice?
- Target Behaviors and Guidelines for Choosing Them
• Types of Research Designs
• Analyzing Data

Assignments
Readings
Engel and Schutt, 2013, Chapter 8.


MODULE 13: Survey Research

Dates:

Overview
• Mail surveys
• E-mail surveys
• Telephone surveys
• Personal interviews

Assignments
Readings
Engel and Schutt, 2013, Chapter 9.

MODULE 14: Data analysis

Dates:

Overview
• Data Coding
• Cleaning and Editing the Raw Data
• Univariate Analysis
• Bivariate Analysis
• Inferential Statistics

Assignments
Readings
Engel and Schutt, 2013, Chapter 14.

MODULE 15: FINAL PROJECT DUE and Course Evaluations Due April 26th

Assignments and Grading

More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas. Instructor also will discuss details or answer any questions related to assignment during the class and office hours.

All assignments should be produced using Microsoft Word), double spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, carefully edited and proofed, using no smaller than a 12 point font, and conforming to APA style (6th ed.)
Assignments

1. Assignment #1 (Literature Search)
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ........10%

2. Assignment #2 (Internal Validity)
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......10%

3. Midterm Exam
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......20%

4. Assignment #3 (IRB Training)
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......10%

5. Assignment #4 (Unobtrusive Observation)
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......10%

6. Final Project
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......25%

7. Class Participation
   a. DUE: ........................................
   b. Final Grade Percentage: ......15%

Signature Assignment

Evaluating Empirical Research Assignment

Please review the attached study and respond to the questions below. Also, identify where in the article you found the answer (excluding the abstract).

Introduction & Literature review

- What is the key research issue?
- Why is it important? What evidence does the authors provide to support the importance of studying the issue?
- Did the article discuss prior research? If so, what were the findings?
- What is the primary purpose of the study?
- Identify at least one research question or research hypothesis.
- Identify at least one independent variable and at least one dependent variable.
Methods

- How were the variables measured? Were scales used? If so, what were they?
- Who are the study participants? What are the eligibility requirements of the study?
- What sampling technique was utilized?
  - How does the sampling method influence your level of confidence that the sample is likely to be representative of the population?
  - What are the implications of the sampling method used in terms of the study’s generalizability?
  - Do the study participants appear to have been selected without bias?
- What is the sample size?
- What research design did the author(s) utilize?
  - Based on the research design, what is your level of confidence in the study’s internal validity?
  - Does the research design appear appropriate to achieve the goals of the study?
- How were the data collected? (data collection procedures)

Results

- What are the characteristics of those in the study’s sample?
- What are the main findings of the study?

Discussion

- What do the authors conclude from the study?
- What strengths and limitations of the study did the authors identify?
- Did the article provide suggestions for future research? If so, what are they?
- Did the authors identify implications for social work practice or policy? If so, what are they?

Grading Standards

Papers are graded on the quality of the final product not on the effort you extended completing them. The grade of A is reserved for truly outstanding work that goes beyond basic requirements.

In the Indiana University School of Social Work MSW program, grades of B are the expected norm. Reflecting competency and proficiency, grades of B reflect good or high quality work typical of graduate students in professional schools. Indeed, professors typically evaluate students’ work in such a way that B is the average grade. Grades in both the A and the C range are relatively uncommon and reflect work that is significantly superior to or significantly inferior, respectively, to the average, high quality, professional work conducted by most IU MSW students. Because of this approach to grading, students who routinely earned A grades in their undergraduate studies may conclude that a B grade reflects a decrease in their academic performance. Such is not the case. Grades of B in the IU MSW program reflect the average, highly competent, proficient quality of our students. In a sense, a B grade in graduate school is analogous to an A grade in undergraduate studies. MSW students must work extremely hard to achieve a B grade. If you are fortunate enough receive a B, prize it as evidence of the professional quality of your work.

Grades of A reflect Excellence. Excellent scholarly products and academic or professional performances are substantially superior to the “good,” “the high quality,” “the competent,” or the “satisfactory.” They
are unusual, exceptional, and extraordinary. Criteria for assignments are not only met, they are exceeded by a significant margin. Excellence is a rare phenomenon. As a result, relatively few MSW students earn A grades.

Grades of B signify good or high quality scholarly products and academic or professional performance. Grades in the B range reflect work expected of a conscientious graduate student in a professional program. Criteria for assignments are met in a competent, thoughtful, and professional manner. However, the criteria are not exceeded and the quality is not substantially superior to other good quality products or performances. There is a clear distinction between the good and the excellent. We expect that most MSW students will earn grades in the B range—referring the good or high quality work expected of competent future helping professionals.

Grades of C and C+ signify work that is marginal in nature. The scholarly products or professional performances meet many but not all of the expected criteria. The work approaches but does not quite meet the standards of quality expected of a graduate student in a professional school. Satisfactory in many respects, its quality is not consistently so and cannot be considered of good or high quality. We anticipate that a minority of MSW students will earn C and C+ grades.

Grades of C- and lower reflect work that is unsatisfactory. The products or performances do not meet several, many, or most of the criteria. The work fails to approach the standards of quality expected of a graduate student and a future MSW-level professional. We anticipate that a small percentage of MSW students will earn unsatisfactory grades of C-, D, and F.

**Grading scale**

Grade minimums are as follows [Note: grades below C are Unsatisfactory in the MSW Program]:

- **A** 93% Excellent, Exceptional Quality
- **A-** 90% Superior Quality
- **B+** 87% Very Good, Slightly Higher Quality
- **B** 83% Good, High Quality (expected of most MSW students)
- **B-** 80% Satisfactory Quality
- **C+** 77% Marginal, Modestly Acceptable Quality
- **C** 73% Marginal, Minimally Acceptable Quality
- **C-** 70% Unsatisfactory Quality