

# SWK-S 502 Research I (3 cr.)

## Course Information

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

**Instructor:** XXXXX XXXXXXXXXX  
**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

Engel, R.J., and Schutt, R.K. (2013) *The Practice of Research in Social Work* (Third Edition). USA: Sage.

## 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.

**Be mindful that academic and experiential content in social work courses may trigger an emotional response, especially in individuals who have prior trauma history. As social workers, it is our responsibility to be present for clients who have experienced trauma; therefore, it is necessary to cultivate compassionate self-awareness and address our personal histories in a timely manner for competent social work practice. If you are triggered in the classroom, your priority is self-care as well as continuing to gain knowledge for practice. You may need to seek consultation from faculty as to your readiness for practice and/or how to better prepare for social work practice.**

## 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

Ritter, A & Cameron, J. (2006). A review of the efficacy and effectiveness of harm reduction strategies for alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 25, 611-624.

## 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.

Fals-Stewart, W. (2003). The occurrence of partner physical aggression on days of alcohol consumption: a longitudinal diary study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 71(1), 41-52.

## 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.

Thomas, M. D. & Bennett, L. W. (2009). The Co-occurrence of Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence: A Comparison of Dual Problem Men in Substance Abuse Treatment and in a Court-ordered Batterer Program. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 9(3), 299-317.

Eckhardt, C. I. & Utschig, A. C. (2007). Assessing readiness to change among perpetrators of intimate partner violence: analysis of two self-report measures. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 319-330.

### 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.

Thomas, M. D., Bennett, L. W., & Stoops, C. (2013). The Treatment Needs of Substance Abusing Batterers: A Comparison of Men Who Batter Their Female Partners. *Journal Of Family Violence*, 28(2), 121-129.

## 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.

Conners, N. A., Edwards, M. C. & Grant, A. S. (2007). An evaluation of a parenting class curriculum for parents of young children: parenting the strong-willed child. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 16(3), 321-330.

Gitlin, L., Winter, L., Dennis, M., Corcoran, M., Schinfeld, S. & Hauck, W. (2006). A Randomized Trial of a Multicomponent Home Intervention to Reduce Functional Difficulties in Older Adults. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 41, 4-14.

Hedrick, S. C., Sullivan, J. H., Sales, A. E. B., & Gray, S. L. (2009). Mom and Pop Versus the Big Boys: Adult Family Homes as Providers of Medicaid-Funded Residential Care. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 21(1), 31-51.

## 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.

Rockwell, D.H., Yobs, A. R. & Moore, Jr., M.B. (1964). The Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis: The 30th Year of Observation. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 114(6), 792-798.

## Module 8: Unobtrusive Approaches to Data Collection Principles in Research

### Dates:

### Overview

- Archival research
- Secondary Data Analysis
- Content Analysis

## Assignments

### Readings

Royse, D. D. (2011). Research methods in social work. Belmont California: Brooks/Cole.

Royse Chap. 10.

Thomas, M. D., Guihan, M., & Mambourg, F. J. (2011). What do Potential Residents Need to Know about Assisted Living Facility Type? The Trade-off between Autonomy and Help with More Complex Needs. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 25(2), 109-124.

### 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

Strolin-Goltzman, J., Kollar, S., & Trinkle, J. (2010). Listening to the Voices of Children in Foster Care: Youths Speak Out about Child Welfare Workforce Turnover and Selection. *Social Work*, 55(1), 47-53.

Winstock, Z., Eisikovits, Z, & Gelles, R. (2002). Structure and dynamics of escalation from the batterers perspective. *Families in Society*, 83, 129-141.

### 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.

Conners, N. A., Edwards, M. C. & Grant, A. S. (2007). An evaluation of a parenting class curriculum for parents of young children: parenting the strong-willed child. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 16(3), 321-330. •

### 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.

Stubenbort, M., Greeno, C., Mannarino, A., & Cohen, J. (2002). Attachment quality and post-treatment functioning following sexual trauma in young adolescents: A case series presentation. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 30, 23-39.

## 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

### Dates:

## 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%



## Assignment Details

### *Literature Search*

Critically evaluate and synthesize previous EMPIRICAL work related to your research question/hypothesis. The key of the literature review is to make a significant and clear connection between the existing literature and your project so that it should ultimately justify your study by revealing gaps in the knowledge base and need for additional research.

1. Select a social work topic of interest to you (e.g., the relationship between alcohol use and suicide). Based on your topic, create a research question (e.g., what is the relationship between alcohol use and suicide in adult males?). See list of sample research questions below.
2. Identify the independent (e.g., alcohol use) and dependent variables (e.g., suicide completion).
3. Locate four (4) **quantitative** research studies (articles) from scholarly journals **relevant** to your research question using any of the databases stated above. These studies cannot be literature reviews or meta-analyses.
4. Describe your topic and the database(s) you used to locate the study (article). Write a short paragraph (a couple of sentences) about each article describing the findings (relevant to your research question), the independent and dependent variables in each study, and the sample size.

### *Internal Validity*

Perform a case analysis to determine internal validity of a study. Issues to examine include maturation, history, testing, instrumentation, selection bias, statistical regression.

### *Unobtrusive Observation*

You are collecting data for a qualitative research study examining interaction patterns of humans at **OPEN** 12 step groups (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous). Your task is to make a single continuous observation at an open 12 step group meeting. Record your observations using the provided guidelines. Also, see Engel and Schutt (2013) chapters 10 and 11 for further guidance.

Field notes need to include the following elements.

1. The time you entered and exited the field; the date of the field observation; location of the field observation; and a brief descriptive topic label that captures the essence of the field session. Please include the name and address of where the meeting took place.
2. A Description of the setting. This includes a description of the physical space including the furniture, decor, lighting, smells, and anything else that catches your attention. Also pay attention to the relationship of the setting to the community in which it is located and the pace or atmosphere of the place. First impressions are powerful and often convey what an outsider would have to say about the organization and its physical structure.
3. A Description of the people in the setting.
  - a. Who is in attendance? How many attended (excluding yourself and other students)? What types of people? How many females? How many people of color? What is the range of ages of the attendees? Comment on the socio-economic status of the participants. Is the group predominantly middle class? Working class? How many

attendees were mandated to attend (needed a signature from the person running the group)?

- b. How would you characterize the personality of the group (e.g., friendly warm, or people don't appear connected or interact)?
- c. Include a list of people and their roles (make your best guess, but No Names Please), short demographic and descriptive portraits of each person, and descriptions of their relationship to each other. Each time a person enters the site, notes should include a short description of the newcomer.

### *Human Subject Training*

The purpose of this assignment is to review the issues related to the protection of human subjects and to test your knowledge. Access the training at [IU Research Compliance website](#).

### *Evaluating Empirical Research Assignment (Signature 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—reflecting 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