# Basic Social Work Research
**Winter 2005**

| **Course:** | SW522 – Section 006  
Basic Social Work Research  
Monday 11-2, Room #1804 |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| **Instructor:** | Jung-Hwa Ha, MSW, MA  
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Email: jhha@umich.edu |
| **Office hours:** | Wednesdays 3-5 or by appointment |
| **Course Website:** | [http://ctools.umich.edu/](http://ctools.umich.edu/)  
(log in and click the tab RES 522 006) |

## Course Description

This course will provide content on the logic of inquiry and the necessity for an empirical approach to practice. The process of formulating appropriate research questions and hypotheses, techniques for testing relationships and patterns among variables, methods of data collection, methods to assess and improve the validity and reliability of data and measures, and the ethics of scientific inquiry will be addressed. This course will help students understand practice through the critical examination of methods associated with decision-making, critical thinking, and ethical judgment. The course content will integrate the core themes related to multiculturalism and diversity; social justice and social change; promotion and prevention; and behavioral and social science research.

## Course Content

This course covers qualitative and quantitative research methods, commonly used statistical procedures, and approaches to the evaluation of practice. Students will learn how to understand and appreciate a scientific approach to building practice knowledge and for evaluating practice. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing one’s ability to critically analyze theoretical foundations of research, form research questions, apply research methods, conduct statistical analysis, and interpret research reports. The latest statistical, graphical, and display technologies will be used.
Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Frame research questions and develop problem statements that reflect assessment, implementation, monitoring, and outcome issues.
2. Select research designs, methodologies, and measurement strategies used in social work research, and be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, including sensitivity to ethical, multicultural, and diversity issues.
3. Understand ethical issues in the conduct of research and evaluation and their relevance and applicability in working with disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations.
4. Understand research concepts to permit a critical analysis of research and evaluation studies with respect to quality, bias, ethics, and potential applications.
5. Apply research concepts and principles in the development and use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and analytical approaches.
6. Critically examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.
7. Construct simple indices, questionnaires, and measures relevant to the evaluation of practice.
8. Use computers to conduct selected descriptive and inferential statistical analytic procedures.

Course Design

Many different methods will be used for acquiring knowledge and skills including: discussion, lectures, projects, exercises, and lab work. This course is designed to increase students’ comfort level with research methods and statistical analyses and to increase their appreciation of the relevance of research and evaluation for social work practice.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

1. Multiculturalism and Diversity. This course will include material on methods to improve the cultural inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity of research methods. This content will cover culturally sensitive measures, inclusion of diverse groups of adequate size in sampling, culturally aware interpretations of data, and culturally responsible dissemination of results. The basic purpose of research and practice evaluation will also be analyzed from culturally bound perspectives.

2. Social Justice and Social Change. Students will gain an understanding of the ways in which research and evaluation have sometimes been used against oppressed groups, for example through unethical practices, distortion of results, or fabrication of data. Examples will be given of ways in which research can be used to empower socially disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities. These examples will include studies in which the research participants were involved in the study during all of its stages.

3. Promotion and Prevention. Studies reviewed in the course will include examination of projects aimed at enhancing well-being and preventing problems. The methodological and ethical problems unique to studies of promotion and prevention efforts will be described. The
social work values consistent with promotion/prevention research will be analyzed.

4. Behavioral and Social Science Research. The unique challenges in applying social science knowledge and methods to social work settings will be covered. These challenges include the practical and ethical dilemmas of applied research. Emphasis will be placed on the way established theories and methods influence the selection of research questions and methods. Studies will be critiqued for their ability to advance social science theory and knowledge and to improve social work practice.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

The research and evaluation section of the NASW Code of Ethics will be applied throughout this course. Examples of common ethical dilemmas will be presented. Among the areas of ethics to be covered will be informed consent procedures, protection of research participants from harm, confidentiality, and accurate reporting of results. Emphasis will also be placed on the social workers’ ethical obligation to use scientifically sound practice and to continually evaluate practice and programs.

Course requirements

1. Quizzes (10 points each, 20% of the semester grade): There will be two in-class quizzes on February 14 (covering materials from session 1–4) and on March 21 (covering materials from session 5–8). Both quizzes will be a combination of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

2. Research Proposal (55% of the semester grade):

Throughout the semester, students will 1) identify a current topic or issue and develop their own research question(s), 2) find and review relevant literature, 3) design a research project, and 4) put them together as a research proposal. Each component of the research project will be due at a different time.

1. Statement of a research question and hypothesis (1 page, 5 points) Due January 24
2. Literature review (4-5 pages, 10 points) Due February 21
3. Method (including study design, description of the sample, measures, and analytic plan) (4-5 pages, 10 points) Due April 11
4. Final research proposal (including an abstract, introduction and literature review, method, and analytic plan, and the reference) (10-15 pages excluding references, 30 points) Due April 21

* Option for a group research project: You can choose to work with a partner who shares similar research interests and write a collaborative research proposal. In this case, you should address two or more inter-related research questions in your proposal. Assignment 1 and 2 will still be an individual assignment (each person will address one of the two questions). Assignment 3 and 4 will be a group assignment (5-7 pages for method section; 20 pages for final research proposal). If you choose to work in a group, you should make sure each person contributes
equitable amount of time and efforts toward each project (same grade will be given for
assignment 3 and 4). Those who would like to do a group project should let the instructor
know by January 31, and meet with the instructor in the first week of February to discuss
their plans.

* Appropriate referencing using APA style is required for the final research proposal. Please
refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th edition) for
proper format.

* Plagiarism will result in severe penalties.

* IMPORTANT:
  ✓ Please turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of the class; or you can
turn in an electronic copy of your assignments before the class via the ctool.
  ✓ Late assignments are accepted only with a penalty. A late assignment will be assessed
a 20% penalty (this means a 10 point assignment will get a maximum of 8 points).
Assignments cannot be turned in more than one week late. If an assignment is more than
one week late, 0 points will be given.
  ✓ In the case of emergency (e.g., severe illness, family emergency), an extension up to 2
days may be given if you inform me of the situation at least 2 days before the due date
(by Saturday). Computer problems (e.g., printing problems, internet connection), heavy
workload in other classes and at the field placement will not be accepted as a legitimate
excuse for late submission.

3. Presentation (10% of the semester grade)
Students will have a chance to present their work and get feedback on the last two days (April 11
and April 18). Detailed guideline for presentation will be given later in the course.

4. Lab work (10% of the semester grade)

Each week, we will spend some time in the computer lab analyzing data. The purpose of the lab
is to give hands on experience with data handling and analysis. You will be given small exercises
to work on in each lab session (except for the first session). Please turn in your completed
exercises at the end of each class. Your lab work will not be graded for correct answers (we
will usually go over the problems together toward the end of the class), but lab works turned in
incomplete will not get credit. If you do not have enough time to complete your work, you can
turn in your work at my mailbox by 10 am on Tuesday.

5. Attendance (5% of the semester grade)

Students are expected to attend every class. Please make sure that your attendance is noted each
week by signing in. If you have to miss class for any reason, please let me know in advance. If
you miss a class, you should turn in a summary of required readings (1-2 pages) before the next
class in order to get your attendance grade.
Class Policy

* Please be on time and turn off cell phones.

* Don’t be afraid of asking questions or telling others about how you approached the problems. Even if you give a wrong answer, that’s okay! We all learn by mistakes. Asking questions also helps me explain things better.

* As we are all learning in this class, I ask that we respect one another. Listen to others carefully when they talk or ask questions, especially during the lab sessions (no email checking please). Everybody learns at different paces and in different ways, so you need to be considerate of others. If you know the answer to a question, or if you know a nice way to explain difficult concepts, please share them with class. We can all learn from each other.

Grading Scale

A+ = 98-100, A = 94-97, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 82-86, B-= 78-81, C+ = 75-77, C = 70-74, not passing = <70

Required Texts


Data Sets

We will use an extract of the Changing Lives of Older Couples Study for statistical analyses in the computer lab sessions. The dataset can be downloaded from the course website. For more information on this dataset, please see http://www.cloc.isr.umich.edu.

Suggested Software

In this class, we will use SPSS to conduct statistical analyses. This program is available in campus computer labs.

Useful Websites

* Library website on evidence-based practice in social work (http://www.lib.umich.edu/socwork/rescue/ebsw.html)
  - This page is linked to several on-line databases that will be useful for your literature search. You can also get information on how to manage your bibliographic records and cite them in APA style

* ICPSR Data Access and Analysis (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/access/index.html)
  - Numerous data sets are available for public use through the Inter University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).
### Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Lecture (11:10-12:30)</th>
<th>Lab session (12:45-2)</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>(lab 1)</td>
<td>RB 1, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction and overview of class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evidence-based practice and scientific research method</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Formulating a research question</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Introduce the course website</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Learn basic skills to use SPSS (opening a file, different file extensions, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Download data &amp; codebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>* We will have a workshop given by Sally Lawler (librarian at the social work library) on “Evidence-based Practice in Social Work” (at the computer lab)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 1 due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RB 2, 3, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/31</td>
<td>(lab 2)</td>
<td>RB 6, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurement and related issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Operationalizing a research question</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Investigating and understanding the use of measurement in existing data</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>(lab 3) Coding/ recoding data using SPSS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selecting research participants – sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>(lab 4) Introduction to univariate analyses and descriptive statistics (summary measures, frequency)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quiz 1 Mid-term feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assignment 2 due</td>
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**RESEARCH DESIGN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Lecture (11:10-12:30)</th>
<th>Lab session (12:45-2)</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>(lab 5) Univariate analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research Design I – Single case</td>
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1/10: Introduction and overview of class. Evidence-based practice and scientific research method. Formulating a research question. (lab 1) * Introduce the course website * Learn basic skills to use SPSS (opening a file, different file extensions, etc.) * Download data & codebook.

1/17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

1/24: Theory, research and ethics. Values in research and practice. (lab 2) * We will have a workshop given by Sally Lawler (librarian at the social work library) on “Evidence-based Practice in Social Work” (at the computer lab).

1/31: Measurement and related issues. (lab 2) * Operationalizing a research question * Investigating and understanding the use of measurement in existing data.

2/7: Selecting research participants – sampling. (lab 3) Coding/ recoding data using SPSS.

2/14: Quiz 1. Mid-term feedback.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>continued (pie chart, bar chart)</td>
<td>RB 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>Research Design II – experimental and quasi-experimental design</td>
<td>(lab 6) Introduction to bivariate analyses (correlation, crosstabulation)</td>
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<td>8**</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Culturally competent research</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>Q &amp; A session for research design and assignment 3</td>
<td>(lab 7) Bivariate analyses continued</td>
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<td><strong>DATA ANALYSIS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>Quantitative data analysis I</td>
<td>(lab 8) Comparing groups Basic statistical tests (t-test of means)</td>
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<td>* During this week, students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss progress in their research project (Assignment #3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Quantitative data analysis II – Inferential statistics</td>
<td>(lab 9) Interpretation of inferential statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>12**</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>Using Research in Practice</td>
<td>Student presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>13**</td>
<td>4/18</td>
<td><strong>Student presentation</strong></td>
<td>Assignment 3 due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td><strong>Final paper (assignment 4) due at 5 pm</strong></td>
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