PURPOSE

This year-long seminar is designed to develop research competence in applied issues of aging. The seminar is primarily designed for pre- and post-doctoral fellows from the NIA project on Social Research Training on Applied Issues of Aging. Other participants are welcome after prior consultation with one of the instructors.

A major theme of the training program (2000-2005) is the health and health care of the elder: socio-economic status, extreme old age, poverty, racial/ethnic variation, and mental health. During 2004-2005, the primary focus of the seminar will be on substantive, practical, and theoretical issues concerning extreme old age. During the winter term, participants will have an opportunity to work on a project of their choosing within a seminar structure that provides detailed feedback from colleagues and that is designed to assist all participants in improving their conceptualization and writing of professional materials. This seminar is designed to enhance competence in the design and conduct of applied research on the aged and aging across the life span.

During the winter term, each participant will select a topic related to this goal and a particular product on which to work. Examples of products include: an abstract for submission to the Gerontological Society of America annual meeting; a proposal for a research internship, preliminary examination, dissertation, or external funding; a concept paper for a planned research proposal; a paper for initial or revised journal submission; and a literature review that identifies gaps in research knowledge and/or research methods in the area.

The format involves participants meeting in subgroups with both course instructors on a regular basis at least four times during the term. All participants are responsible for distributing written drafts of their chosen product in advance of each subgroup meeting and for providing written and oral feedback to other subgroup members at the meetings.
The seminar structure is designed to provide detailed constructive feedback from colleagues, to assist all participants in improving their conceptualization and writing of professional materials, and to provide opportunities to raise issues about the process by which research is conceptualized, implemented, and reported upon in the context of specific research projects. The materials distributed prior to each subgroup meeting should spell out the participant's own goals for the project and point to areas in which feedback is especially desirable. Participants should choose projects that would benefit from sustained feedback from other researchers. Although it is not essential to use the same project for all subgroup meetings, it is highly desirable to do so as this usually results in the most useful feedback.

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

1.) All participants will observe the following concerning the type of feedback, and time and location of distribution of drafts.

   a. Each subgroup member as well as Berit and Ruth will receive a copy via email.

   b. Each draft will be accompanied by a note identifying any aspects of the paper on which the writer especially wants feedback.

   c. Each group member will provide constructive written feedback and be prepared to provide oral feedback at the meeting; feedback will identify both those aspects of the draft that are clear, well-written, interesting and those that are in need of improvement.

   d. When the draft documents involve reports of empirical research, the guide (see below) of KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN PREPARING AND EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES should be used.

2.) In keeping with the fellows' commitments to NIA for sustained progress in their training, redrafts of products are expected to reflect substantial effort between subgroup meetings. At the end of each subgroup meeting, each participant will define the goal for the next submission in terms of the type of revised product to be distributed prior to the next meeting. By the end of the term, participants are expected to have made substantial progress toward the goal they defined for their project.

3.) Those pre-doctoral students who are enrolled in the seminar to meet doctoral program requirements or MSW requirements are expected to register for 3 credits and to prepare a critical review of the literature on an agreed upon topic. The goals of the paper are to identify key theoretical and empirical knowledge, identify gaps in theoretical and/or empirical knowledge, identify methodological limitations in available knowledge, and point toward future directions for research and/or theory development. Students should discuss the topic for the paper with the instructors by no later than a week before the first meeting of their subgroup.
This paper should be independent of any paper for another course. The paper should be 20-30 pages double spaced. Submit a copy to each instructor by no later than April 25. The paper's topic should be related to the specific program requirement the student is meeting by the seminar. ¹

GRADING

Participants enrolled to meet program requirements will receive regular letter grades upon completion of seminar requirements. Other enrolled participants will receive a grade of Satisfactory, based upon their participation in the seminar.

REGISTRATION FOR NIA PREDOCTORAL FELLOWS: All students should register for at least 1 credit

Postdoctoral fellows have available to them tuition only for enrollment in one summer workshop/course offered through ICPSR or SRC programs in survey research and statistical methods. Regular university courses can be informally audited with permission of the instructor. Do not enroll for SW 836.

¹ The seminar meets distribution requirements in the Doctoral Program in the curriculum area of Research Methods for Practice and Policy and counts toward the five-course requirement. For doctoral students simultaneously enrolled in the MSW program, the seminar may also meet requirements in the curriculum area of Research and Evaluation without special permission. With permission, it may alternatively meet MSW requirements in the areas of: Human Behavior and the Social Environment, or Fields of Service (Social Welfare Policies and Services for the Adulthood and Aging Practice Area for students entering the MSW program F97 or subsequently); students desiring to use the seminar to meet either of these requirements should discuss with the instructors early in the semester how the paper should be adapted and get their approval for the form and content of the paper.
KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN PREPARING AND EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES:


PROBLEM

1. Clarity of study's purpose.
2. Adequacy of literature review—are relevant studies cited and described: Are gaps in the literature identified?
3. Clarity of study's potential contribution to addressing the gaps in the literature.
4. Clarity of statement of research questions and/or hypotheses.
5. Clarity of theoretical foundation for research questions and/or hypotheses.
6. Clarity of specification of independent variables.
7. Clarity of specification of dependent variables.
8. Appropriate specification of confounding variables.

METHODS

1. Clarity about how data were collected.
2. Adequacy of sample-size and representativeness.
3. Clarity of statement of research design.
4. Adequacy of the research design given the purposes of the study.
5. Clarity of the operational definition of measures.
6. Appropriateness of measures in relation to the purposes of the study.
7. Degree of validity of the measures.
8. Degree of reliability of the measures.

FINDINGS

1. Appropriateness of statistical procedures.
2. Clarity of presentation of specific findings.
3. Extent to which author's conclusions about hypotheses or answers to research questions are consistent with the data.
4. Degree to which alternative explanations of the data were dealt with.
DISCUSSION

1. Appropriateness of summary of results.
2. Adequacy of relating findings to previous literature.
3. Adequacy of relating findings to theoretical issues.
4. Appropriate attention to generalizability of the study findings.
5. Extent to which the primary study purpose was achieved.
A more detailed analysis is in the original article.

WINTER SEMINAR SCHEDULE OF GROUP MEETINGS

1. January 10: A
2. January 18: B
3. January 24: C
4. January 31: A
5. February 7: B
6. February 14: C
7. February 21: A
8. February 28: SPRING BREAK
9. March 7: B
10. March 14: C
11. March 21: A
12. March 28: B
13. April 4: C
14. April 11: A
15. April 18: B
16. April 25: C (FINAL PAPER DUE FOR 3-CREDIT ENROLLEES)

Additional Classes will be scheduled in May through early June