1. 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, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation; and behavioral and social science research.

2. Course Content:

This course will cover 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 critique 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **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.

- **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.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.** 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.

- **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.

6. 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.

7. Assignments:

(A) Research Project Report. (50%)

(Note: Rubin and Babbie (2001) Appendix C (pp. 620-626) has some guidelines on writing research reports. For this assignment, you should write in the form of articles published in an academic journal.)

This project aims to give you an opportunity to conduct a study with ‘real’ data. You can choose one of the data sets provided by the instructor for this project. Permission from the instructor is required if you prefer to use data from other sources. To make the project manageable, I broke it down into four assignments which are due on different dates over the term. Only the last assignment will be graded for quality, however, late submission of any assignment will result in a deduction of points. You can choose to work as a group (no more than 3 persons) or as an individual for this project, however, grading for group work will be harder. The final report should be within 20 pages, typed with a 12-point font, and double spaced.

Assignment 1: Research problem formulation and justification. Due: 2/12/01 (Session 5)

In assignment 1 answer the following three questions in no more than 4 pages:
(i) What research problem do you want to investigate?
(ii) What does the literature say about this problem? Your literature review should use no less than 6 empirical references.
(iii) What is your research question (or questions) and/or hypothesis (hypotheses)?

Assignment 2: Sample and measures. Due: 3/5/01 (Session 7)

In assignment 2 describe the sample and the measures of your study. The following questions should be answered in this assignment.

Sample:
(i) What sampling method was employed?
(ii) What was the response rate?
(iii) Are there differences between those who did and did not respond?
(iv) How large is the sample?
(v) What are the characteristics of the sample?

Measures:
(vi) What are the key variables?
(vii) How are the key variables conceptualized and operationally defined?
(viii) How is each variable treated, e.g., specify independent, dependent variable, and controlled variables?
(ix) Is there any evidence or indication of the validity and reliability of the measures?
Assignment 3: Data analysis and results. Due: 3/26/01 (Session 10)

In assignment 3 report how the data were analyzed and the results.

Data Analysis:
(i) How were data analyzed? That is, what method of data analysis did you use and why?

Results:
(ii) What are the findings? Do the findings support your hypothesis (hypotheses)?

Assignment 4: Final report Due: 4/16/01 (Session 13)

If you have done a fairly good job on the previous assignments, the final report should be a matter of editing and integration. I recommend you to organize your final report into following sections:

• Title page - include the title of the study, and information about the author.
• Abstract - a brief, comprehensive summary of the content of the report. Must be less than 150 words.
• Introduction - include background, literature review, research questions and hypotheses.
• Methods - include sample, measures and data Analysis as sub-headings.
• Results - report the findings of your analysis.
• Discussion - should address the following three questions:
  1. What do you conclude about the research problem that you investigated?
  2. What are the limitations of your study?
  3. What are the implications of your results?
• References

(B) Homework: Critique of empirical studies. (36%)

(Note: Rubin and Babbie (2001) Appendix D (pp. 627-631) provides a consumer’s guide to social work research.)

Four homework assignments will be given throughout the term. The purpose of these assignments is to enhance your ability to be a competent consumer of social science research. Most of the assignments involve writing a critique of a particular section of an empirical study. Specific instruction will be given in the class. The due date of each homework assignment is listed in the course outline. Please do not turn in more than 3 pages for each homework.

(C) Weekly response to required reading. (14%)

Weekly reading assignments are listed in the course outline. You are required to send me your response to these readings through coursetool before the class (no later than 10 am Monday). Your response should limit your response to one page. Specifically, address the following two questions in your response:
(1) How does the reading contribute to your professional development?
(2) What question or questions do you have after reading the assigned materials?

8. Writing Policy:

Appropriate referencing is required for all written assignments (except weekly response). Use
the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th edition), which is also available online through Social Work Library, for reference format. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. You should be aware that plagiarism may result in severe penalties.

9. Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>86-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;70</td>
<td>not passing</td>
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</tbody>
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10. Readings:

**Required text:**

**Supplemental text:**

** Additional readings may be assigned throughout the term.**

11. Software:

SPSS for windows will be used in the computer lab and classroom.

12. Data sets

You can choose one of the following databases for your research project. We will also use these databases for class exercises. Instructions will be given on downloading and using these data in class.

- General Social Survey
- Midlife Development in the United States
- Ethical Practice in Social Work
- Job Satisfaction and Job Stress of Social Workers
## Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (Session)</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
<th>Lab Activities</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jan. 8 (Session 1) | INTRODUCTION  
• Why should I learn about research?  
• Overview of syllabus  
• Introduction to data sets | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-24)  
• APA referencing style | • Open data files  
• Processing data  
• Practice on using coursetool for weekly response assignment | None |
| Jan. 15 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day — No Class | | | |
| Jan. 22 (Session 2) | PROBLEM FORMULATION  
• Overview of research process  
• Problem identification  
• Purposes of research  
• The time dimension  
• Unit of analysis | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 5 (pp. 105-137)  
• Univariate analysis | • Response to required reading of Session 1 & 2. |
| Jan. 29 (Session 3) | CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION  
• Different types of relationships  
• Operational definitions | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 6 (pp. 139-169)  
• Bivariate analysis | • Response to required reading of Session 3.  
• Homework #1: Critique on problem formulation |
| Feb. 5 (Session 4) | MEASUREMENT  
• Levels of measurement  
• Measurement errors  
• Validity and reliability  
• Existing scales | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 7 (pp. 171-206)  
• Examine some of the measures in the data sets | • Response to required reading of Session 4. |
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</table>
| **Feb. 12 (Session 5)** | SAMPLING  
- Theory  
- Probability and non-probability sampling  
- Sampling designs | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9 (pp.249-291)  
• Not required but recommended: Weinbach & Grinnell, Chapter 6 (pp. 98-114) | • Sampling methods of your study  
• Examine sample characteristics | • Response to required reading of Session 5  
• Assignment 1: Problem formulation and justification |
| **Feb. 19 (Session 6)** | RESEARCH DESIGN — Part I  
- Threats to internal validity  
- Experimental design  
- External validity | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10 (pp. 292-310) and (pp. 321-322)  
• Not required but recommended: Weinbach & Grinnell, Chapter 10 & (pp. 187-208)& 11 (pp. 216-239) | • Analysis of group designs | • Response to required reading of Session 6  
• Homework #2: Critique on sampling methods and measures |
| **Feb. 26** | Spring Break – No Class | | | |
| **Mar. 5 (Session 7)** | RESEARCH DESIGN — Part II  
- Quasi-experimental design  
- Single-subject design | • Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10 (pp. 310-318) and 11 (pp.326-355)  
• Not required but recommended: Weinbach & Grinnell, Chapter 8 & (pp. 135-153) & 9 (pp.¹ 64-181) | • Analysis of single-subject design  
• Multivariate analysis | • Response to required reading of Session 7  
• Assignment 2: Sample and measures |
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| March 12 (Session 8) | DATA ANALYSIS — Part I  
- Descriptive and inferential statistics | Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 16 (pp/179-486) & 17 (pp. 511-534) | Examine central tendency of variables  
Data analysis of research project | Response to required reading of Session 8  
Homework #3: Critique on internal and external validity |
| March 19 (Session 9) | CONSULTATION ON RESEARCH PROJECT | TBA | TBA | Questions regarding your research project |
| March 26 (Session 10) | QUALITATIVE RESEARCH — Part I  
- Guest Lecture | TBA | TBA | Response to required reading of Session 10  
Assignment 3: Data analysis and results |
| April 2 (Session 11) | QUALITATIVE RESEARCH - Part II  
- Guest Lecture | TBA | TBA | Response to required reading of Session 11  
Homework #4: Analysis of qualitative data |
| April 9 (Session 12) | DATA ANALYSIS — Part II  
- Inferential statistics  
- Power analysis | Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 18 (pp. 537-550)  
Not required but recommended: Weinbach & Grinnell, Chapter 7(pp. 116—129) | Regression analysis | Response to required reading of Session 12 |
| April 16 (Session 13) | ETHICS AND POLITICS OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH | Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 4 (pp. 72-101) | TBA | Response to required reading of Session 13  
Assignment 4: Final report |