1. Course Description. This course provides content on the logic of inquiry and the necessity for an empirical approach to practice. This course will address content on 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. 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, promotion and prevention, social change and social justice, and social science.

2. Course Content. The course covers qualitative and quantitative research methods, commonly used statistical procedures, and approaches to the evaluation of practice. It imparts an understanding and appreciation of a scientific approach to building practice knowledge and for evaluating practice. The course has a special focus 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, or 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 the 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 and prevention.
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

The course will use many different methods for acquiring knowledge and skills, including discussion, lectures, projects, exercises, and lab work. The 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 to Four Curricular Themes

A. Multiculturalism and Diversity. The 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.

B. Social Justice. Student’s 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.

C. Promotion and Prevention. Studies reviewed in the course will include studies 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.

D. Social Science. 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 the 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. An emphasis will also be placed on social workers’ ethical obligation to use scientifically sound practice and to continually evaluate their practice and programs.

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


SPSS Student Version 8.0. Wadsworth. CD-Rom drive, 486 personal computer or better, 16MB RAM, Windows 95 or NT 4.0, 50 MG hard drive space, Math co-processor.

Trochman. A very readable online textbook called Knowledge Base, at http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/

**Recommended Readings**


**Cognitive/behavioral procedures for trainers.** Champaign, IL: Research Press.


* These publications will be placed on reserve.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Self-Change Project.** Evaluate changes in your own attitudes, feelings or behavior regarding an aspect of your professional social work behavior. You will be the subject of your own research/evaluation project. You will report your project in 4-6 pages. Further details of this assignment are on the class web site. [20% of grade]

2. **Written Research Project.** Sections of this paper will be due at different points over the term. These sections will be: the literature review, research questions or hypotheses, methods (sampling, measures, procedures), results, and discussion (interpretation, implications, conclusions). Consultation with the professor and other students will be available. Quality of writing will be one of the criteria used in grading. Refer to the Student Handbook to make sure that you cite other’s work properly and avoid plagiarism. Further details of this assignment are attached and also appear on the class Web site. [50% of grade].

3. **Quizzes.** Almost every week there will be a 3-5 question quiz regarding the readings for that week, including assigned readings from the Marlow text and the articles from Proquest. [20% of grade]

4. **Exercises.** [10% of grade; Pass/Fail: Satisfactory completion of all assignments = A]. Exercises include summarizing a reading related to an MLK week
presentation and the selection of a measure. Due dates and assignment descriptions are posted on the class Web site.

5 Class participation: You will probably learn more the more you participate, but you will NOT be evaluated on your participation. There are too many cultural and personality variations that affect the rate of participation.

6 Attendance. You are expected to attend each class and lab session. If you miss a class for any reason, please see me for regular and additional assignments to make sure that you are grasping the material. In particular, you will be expected to summarize readings for that week and complete all lab assignments.

7 Lab Work. We will spend some time every week in the computer lab. The purpose of the lab is to give hands on experience with the building blocks of research, data handling, and data analysis. Lab work will illustrate the terms you learn in the text, such as “variable”, “value”, “case”, etc. and will lead to statistical analysis of data that you will need to know for your research project. You'll use the lab to learn how to do important steps in research rather than simply reading research studies or reading about research.

Course Outline

Class 1:
1/9/02 Science and Social Work
Research and Generalist Social Work Practice: How research can make a difference

Class 2:
1/16/02 Social Science Knowledge of Oppressed Populations
Values in Research & Practice

Required reading for today: Chapts. 1 & 2 in Marlow, “Science and Social Work” and “Research and Generalist Social Work Practice”

Special assignment due next week: You should have an opportunity to attend one of the many special events during MLK week. Search in Psycinfo in Mirlyn to find a research article related to the topic of the event. It must be a report of a research study in which original data were collected, as opposed to a theory article or a review of studies. Turn in a copy of the abstract of the article. In 1-2 pages, summarize the article, describe how the results may or may not be relevant to social work practice, and list the key words you used to find the article.

Class 3:
1/23/02 Formulating the Research Question
Required readings for today: Chapts. 3 and 4 in Marlow., “Deciding the Question” and “Developing the Question”.

**Class 4:**
1/30/02 Designing the Evaluation of Practice
Single Subject Designs

Required readings for today: Chapts. 5 and 7 in Marlow, “Designing Needs Assessments”, and “Designing the Evaluation of Practice”

**Class 5:**
2/6/02 Designing Program Evaluations
Selecting Research Participants

Required reading for today: Chapts. 6 and 8 in Marlow, “Designing Program Evaluation”, and “Selecting the Participants in the Research”.

**Class 6:**
2/13/02 Data Collection

Required readings for today: Chapt. 9 in Marlow, “Collecting the Data”. Article on Proquest: Indigenous people and the social work profession: Defining culturally competent services; Hilary N Weaver; Social Work, New York; May 1999; Vol. 44, Iss. 3; pg. 217, 9 pgs.

Recommended readings: Articles 2 in Lomand: “Psychological and Spiritual Growth in Women Living with HIV.; Heather T Dunbar; Social Work, New York; Mar 1998; Vol. 43, Iss. 2; pg. 144, 11 pgs.
Article 3 in Lomand: “Black Men’s Perceptions of Divorce-Related Stressors and Strategies for Coping with Divorce,”
Article 12 in Lomand: “An Unobtrusive Measure of Racial Behavior in a University Cafeteria”.

**Class 7:**
2/20/02 Organizing Data
Qualitative Analysis
Required readings for today: Chapt. 10 and 11 in Marlow, “Organizing the Data”, and “Analysis of Qualitative Data”.
Assignment due today: Please locate a measure for a problem you are interested in studying. Turn in a copy of the measure along with your comments on its reliability and validity. See class Web site for more details.

2/27/02  SPRING BREAK !!

Class 8:
3/6/02  Descriptive Statistics
Article 10 in Lomand and on Proquest: “Street Youth, Their Peer Group Affiliation, and Differences According to Residential Status, Subsistence Patterns, and Use of Services”. Michele D Kipke; Adolescence, Fall 1997; Vol. 32, Iss. 127; pg. 655.

Class 9:
3/13/02  Inferential Statistics
Required reading for today: Chapter 13 in Marlow, “Analysis of Quantitative Data: Inferential Statistics”.

Class 10:
3/20/02  Developing Data Analysis Skills
Required reading for today: “Work after welfare: Women's work effort, occupation, and economic well-being”; Maria Cancian; Social Work Research, Washington; Jun 2000; Vol. 24, Iss. 2; pg. 69, 18 pgs.

Recommended readings: “Ecological factors associated with adolescent pregnancy and parenting”; Jacqueline Corcoran; Social Work Research, Washington; Mar 2000; Vol. 24, Iss. 1; pg. 29, 11 pgs.

Class 11:
3/27/02  Interpretation of Data
Using Research in Practice
Required readings for today: Chapt. 15 in Marlow, “Using Research Findings in Practice and Evaluating Research”,

Article on Proquest: “The effectiveness of EMDR with adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse”; Tonya Edmond; Social Work Research, Washington; Jun 1999; Vol. 23, Iss. 2; pg. 103, 14 pgs.

Class 12:
4/3/02 Writing Research Proposals and Reports


Recommended reading: Students' perceptions of single parents and social injustice: A women's issue; Rita Rhodes; Affilia, Thousand Oaks; Fall 2000; Vol. 15, Iss. 3; pg. 434, 13 pg.

Class 13:
4/10/02 Consolidate Skills as a Research Consumer


Class 14:
4/17/02 Review of Knowledge and Skills

Assignment due today: Write an abstract of your research project of 200-300 words that describes your purpose, methods, and results. These will be made available to everyone in the class through a “poster session” that displays your projects with enlarged versions of your abstract, charts, and figures.