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 judgement. 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.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of this 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, sexual orientation, gender and other diversity issues.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical issues in the conduct of research and evaluation, and their relevance and applicability in working with disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations.

4. Illustrate skills of 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 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.

Relationship to the four curricular themes:

1. Multiculturalism and Diversity. The course will include material on methods to improve the cultural inclusiveness and sensitivity of research methods. The critical importance of bias in research problem formulation will be discussed. Additionally, this content will cover culturally sensitive measures and methods, inclusion of diverse groups of adequate size in sampling, culturally aware interpretations of data, and culturally responsible dissemination of results.

2. Social Justice. 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. An example of the instructor’s current research will help illustrate these principles. Other methods used to assist with this problem will include studies in which the research participants were involved in all of the stages of the research process.

3. 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 and illustrated. The system and funding barriers of such studies will also be discussed.

4. Social Science. The unique challenges in applying social science knowledge and methods to social work settings will be covered. In essence, this course is all about the development of social science knowledge and dissemination. We will therefore cover this curricular theme quite thoroughly.

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 practices and to continually evaluate their practice and programs.
REQUIREMENTS

1. **Group Project:** Each group must formulate 2-3 hypotheses, operationalize them, conduct appropriate statistical analyses, locate relevant research, and present the findings in class. You will provided with computerized data sets for use in this project. The presentations will be on APRIL 16 (1/3 of grade).

   The BLUE sheet provides target dates for completion of the various parts of the project. It also provides you a broad outline for your presentation.

2. **Examinations:** There will be two exams which will include material presented in lectures and in the assigned readings. The tests will be on February 19th and April 9th (each 1/3 of grade)

TEXT


READINGS & TOPICS

All term  **Research Article Roundtable**
(Read article assigned and join in class roundtable on research methods – Read the assigned article for the day! We always have fun (really) with these discussions! The articles will be assigned at various points throughout the term)


January 8  **Overview of Class**

**Theory & Research**
(Theory, concept, hypothesis, operational definition, inductive/deductive theories, ethics and politics)

Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 1, 2 & 3

January 15  **Practice & Research**
(Empirical practice, defining outcomes, specifying treatment)

Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 4 & 5


*Discuss questions for group project and form groups  
Develop tentative study questions and hypotheses*

January 22  **Measurement and Related Issues**
(Level of measurement, measurement error, reliability/validity, scale construction, measurement strategy)

Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 6.

*Examine code book for operational definitions  
Develop formal hypotheses  
Obtain literature relevant to hypotheses and modify as necessary*

January 29  **Samples, Surveys, and Questionnaires**
(Populations, sampling frames, samples, sampling strategies, survey methods, questionnaire construction)

Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 8 & 11


*Turn in formal hypotheses with operational definitions*

**February 5**  **Single Subject Designs**  
*design options, clinical/statistical significance, data analysis, baseline and measurement issues, qualitative/quantitative issues*


*Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10 & 12*

*Turn in a list of key articles. Set up possible analyses. That is, identify independent/dependent variables and be able to verbally explain your analyses.*

**February 12**  **IN CLASS EXAMINATION**

*Introduction to Statistics*  
*introduction to univariate and bivariate analyses, model elaboration, selected statistical tests, significance issues, issues of interpretation*

*Rubin & Babbie, Chaps. 15, 17, 16 (pp. 476-488)*

*Set up statistical analyses to test hypotheses*

**February 19**  **Introduction to Statistics (Continued)**

**February 26**  **No class - Spring Break**

**March 5**  **Computer Statistics Day**  
Meet in groups. Conduct preliminary statistical analyses.

*Work on formalizing your presentation  
Have a working draft of your literature review and its relationship to the hypotheses ready.*
March 12  Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs  
(design options, internal/external validity, analysis)  
Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 9  

*Conduct additional statistical analyses as necessary. Make a rough draft of your findings with respect to your hypotheses.*

March 19  Evaluating Programs  
(politics of evaluation, formative/outcome evaluation, utilization issues, needs assessment, program planning)  
Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 18  

March 26  Research Article Roundable  

*Review articles and examine for methodological strengths and weaknesses.*

April 2  Exam review - meet in groups finalize presentations  

April 9  IN CLASS EXAMINATION  

April 16  CLASS PRESENTATIONS