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:

A. Frame research questions and develop problem statements that reflect assessment, implementation, monitoring, or outcome issues.

B. 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.

C. Understand ethical issues in the conduct of research and evaluation, and their relevance and applicability in working with disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations.

D. Understand research concepts to permit a critical analysis of research and evaluation studies with respect to quality, bias, ethics, and potential applications.

E. Apply research concepts and principles in the development and use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and analytical approaches.

F. Critically examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion and prevention.

G. Construct simple indices, questionnaires and measures relevant to the evaluation of practice.

H. 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 wellbeing 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.

7. Textbooks

Required Text


Recommended Online Text


8. Course Requirements

Overview

1) 30 % for Three Quizzes
2) 20 % for Two Sets of Homework
3) 40 % for Research Proposal & Presentation
4) 10 % for Class Participation
Total = 100%
Details

1) **Quizzes.** There will be three quizzes. **10% each, 30% total (02/04/03, 03/11/03, 04/08/03)**

2) **Homework.** There will be two sets of homework. **10 % each, 20 % total (1/28/03, 3/18/03).** A late assignment will be assessed with a 20% penalty (this means a 10 point assignment will get a maximum of 8 points, a 20 point assignment will get a maximum of 16 points, etc.).

3) **Research Project & Presentation: 40%**

   A. **Research problem formulation and justification assignment (5%): Due on 2/11/03**

   In this assignment you are to answer three questions (**page limit: 5 pages**) *(Chapters 5 & 6)*:

   ✓ What research problem do you want to investigate for you final assignment? This should be written form of a research question or questions and/or a set of hypotheses.

   ✓ What does the literature say about this problem? This is a literature review and should be about 2 pages and use no less than 10 references, 8 of which are empirically based. More may be used

   ✓ What contribution will your study make to social work practice?

   *Please note that this project will be evaluated in a way to give you feedback aimed at assisting you in getting an A for the final project.*

   B. **Methodology plan and ethical concerns (10%): Due on 3/25/03**

   In this assignment you are to answer seven questions (**page limit: 5 pages**)

   ✓ How will you research your question? What methodology will you use? Make sure to address EACH of the following (having these as headings is not a bad idea)

   ✓ Design *(Chapters 9, 10 & 11)*

   ✓ Administration *(Chapters 12, 13 & 14)*

   ✓ Analysis plan *(Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, Statistics for Social Workers)*

   ✓ Measures/tools *(5, 6, 7 & 8, Corcoran & Fisher’s Books, other sources of instruments)*

   ✓ Concerns about validity and reliability: which threats exist in your study? *(Chapter 7)*
Specifically what statistics or other methods of analysis will you use? This should lead directly to the answer to your research question and/or test of your hypotheses.

Please note that this project will be evaluated in a way to give you feedback aimed at assisting you in getting an A for the final project.

C. Research Project (25%) & Poster Presentation: Due on 04/15/03

This paper will include an introduction, a literature review, research questions or hypotheses, and research methods for your study (sampling, measures, procedures) and results, and discussion (interpretation, implications, conclusions). The papers will be presented in class in the form of posters.

Written Assignment Format

ALL written assignments must follow this format. Points will be deducted for not following the format and/or for handing in any papers late without permission from the instructor (up to 25%). DO NOT EXCEED PAGE LIMITS, I will not read more than the required number of pages for each assignment

1. Typed
2. Clarity in writing (sentences should make sense, paragraphs should start with a sentence outlining the paragraph, etc.)
3. Excellent spelling
4. Do not use material developed for, or in conjunction with, another class or educational assignment without discussing it with the instructor. Such assignments, which can be very useful, must, according the student handbook, be okayed with both instructors.
5. See the American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 4rth edition, or your student guide for instructions on how to list references. Models are also provided below in this syllabus.
6. DO NOT PLAGARIZE: any quote of more than 3 words must be cited. As the research you are doing is in my area of expertise, I may recognize non-cited quotations. Plagiarism may be grounds for expulsion. See your student guide for more information.

4) Participation and Attendance 10%

Grade Guild

Final Grades Are Based on Total Points
A+ = 98 – 100; A = 93 - 97; A- = 90 - 92
B+ = 88 – 89; B = 83 - 87; B- = 80 - 82
C+ = 75 – 79; C = 70 - 87; Not Passing below 70
9. Course at a Glance

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<td>Problem Formulation</td>
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10. Other Business

1) Coursetools Website

Readings, assignments, background materials, handouts, and the course calendar are all available on the class web site. To find our site, go to


Weekly lecture notes, announcements, data sets and helpful documents will be on the site. Students can also “get together” on the site.

If you want to have a lecture note in class, please print it out directly from our coursetool website.

2) Question & Answer session

We will have 15-20 minute question and answer session at the end of each class every week. Please feel free to ask any questions you have in class. If you don’t want to stay in class during this session, you are free to go.