Description
This is a seminar about the nature of research and scholarship for the first year cohort of students admitted to the joint program in Social Work and Social Science. The basic motivating question for the seminar is a daunting one. It concerns the nature, place and practice of scholarship in a complex multidisciplinary context that emphasizes learning about not only the requirements of developing basic knowledge as an end in itself but also the skills, processes, procedures and routines associated with the use of that knowledge to help solve problems that impinge on, or directly disrupt the quality of peoples lives. A central assumption is that similar to other forms of scholarship, expertise in scholarship in a combined professional/academic context is not automatic. Instead it involves the purposive acquisition of habits, skills and attitudes that enable people to contribute to professional and academic advances in their chosen field of inquiry. This seminar focuses on the early stages of this development. As such, it seeks to establish an orientation to the development of scholarship that will continue once the seminar is over. That is to say, it seeks to engage students in an examination of the practices, styles and domains of scholarship in the multidisciplinary contexts of social work and social welfare so that they may begin to evolve an approach to scholarship suited to their own interests, inclinations and capabilities.

Throughout this term, various topics pertinent to making explicit the requirements and practices of scholarship will be discussed, based on focused readings on each topic. Next semester, a number of faculty will make presentations about their own work and the research domain in which their research is located. We will discuss theoretical and empirical advances that have been made in these various domains and consider their implications for policy and practice. In addition faculty will describe their own research, how its was conceived, executed and disseminated, so as give students a direct sense of different styles of scholarship, as well as increased knowledge of domains of research with which they may wish to be associated in the future.

Design
The course has a seminar format. Consequently, the emphasis is on discussion, and on the exchange of ideas and information. We will be meeting every two weeks over the next two semesters (fall and winter). Each class will involve reading a fair number of pages from the assigned texts or from other assigned readings. In addition, and as noted, we will be engaging next semester in discussion and exchange with a number of faculty who will talk to us about different fields of scholarly inquiry, as well as about their own work as scholars and researchers. In the first semester, you will also write about an assigned topic each class to get you engaged in the theme of the session or in the faculty member’s domain of inquiry and research. In the second semester, you will write about an assigned topic for four of the seven sessions; for the other three sessions you will prepare one to two questions that you will share with the class prior to the beginning of that week’s seminar.

Text and other Reading Material
There are two textbooks for the course. Both are available for purchase online and also will be available at Ulrick’s Bookstore. I anticipate that most of the other readings will be available for you to copy either through the doctoral office or the Social Work Library. Certain of the readings will be available online.


Grading and Requirements
The overall grade for the course will be based on class participation and completion of bi-weekly assignments. Their respective weightings are 20% and 80%. There are weekly writing assignments that are due each week before class. These are to be submitted electronically via our course tools website by no later than noon on the day they are due.

SCHEDULE FOR READING, WRITING AND DISCUSSION

1. Monday, September 8.
   Introductions, distribution of the course syllabus, and outline of first writing assignment.

   Topic: Getting oriented and getting started
   Invited speaker: none
   Reading:
Writing due at the beginning of the class.

The title of this paper is “Forming Opinions about Scholarship in Social Work and the Joint Program.” In this paper focus on yourself and your experience of getting to know about social work and the joint program. What do you think these authors would say about the joint program and its implications for scholarship in social work? What can you use from these readings that will make you a better scholar within the multidisciplinary context of the joint program, as you understand it currently? What points/depictions/arguments from these readings do you think the scholars (students and faculty) you have met at UM so far may have forgotten, ignored, or not yet learned? Discuss. What other reactions do you have? Use no more than 4 double-space pages.

3. Monday, September 22
Topic: Background on the social work, social science, and the joint program
Invited speaker: None
Reading:


Writing due at the beginning of class.

The title of this paper is “Seeing the Present in Light of the Past: What good is History?” In this paper focus on yourself and the reasons why you decided to come to U-M. What did you learn from these readings about the joint program and interdisciplinary scholarship that was new or different? What “model or relevance” do you believe underpins the joint program? What effect, if any, does this information have on how you feel about your decision to come into the joint program? What are the implications for your development as a scholar? Discuss. Use no more than 4 double-space pages.
4. Monday, October 4
Topic: Scholarship in a multidisciplinary context
Invited Speakers: None
Reading:
  Maclean, pp. 1-139.

Writing due at the beginning of the class.
The title of this paper is “Reflections on my Future as a Scholar?” Think about what the readings say about the motivation to write and do scholarly work, as well as about the nature of scholarly/research work and its requirements. Focus on a question or issue about research/scholarship that interests you, examine it by reading/talking with others and by reflection, and write about what you learned. Use no more than 4 double-space pages.

5. Monday, October 20.
Topic: The skills of scholarship
Invited speaker: none
Reading:

Writing due at the beginning of the class.
The title of this paper is “Behind the Specifics: General Rules for Research?” What did you learn about doing research from these pages that you did not know before? What in these reading struck you as particularly stimulating and valuable, as boring and irrelevant? Would you recommend these chapters to others? Discuss your answers? Use no more than 4 double-spaced pages.

Topic: Choices and Trans-disciplinary Identities
Invited speaker: None
Reading:
Writing due at the beginning of the class.

The title of this paper is “What I always wanted to know about career choices and how they are managed.” Think about these articles and discuss them with others if you have a chance. How do you imagine you will identify yourself professionally in the future? Why? Do you think identity makes a difference? Why? If you were asked to invent a new term to describe someone who graduates from this joint program, what would it be? Use no more than 4 pages.

7. Monday, November 17.
   Topic: More on the skills of scholarship
   Invited speaker: none
   Reading:
   Maclean, pp. 143-301
   Writing due at the beginning of class.

   The title of this paper is “A Review of Young Men and Fire: Reflections and Future Directions.” Now that you have finished reading the Maclean book, write a review summarizing your evaluations. In the review, you should comment somewhere on the suitability, or lack thereof, of the book for use in orienting students to the requirements of research and scholarly work in the joint program and interdisciplinary study. In addition, you should briefly describe, with rationale, what was not included in the Maclean book that would be particularly valuable for students to learn as they begin the task of becoming scholars. Use no more than 5 double-space pages.

   Topic: The University as Context.
   Invited Speaker: None
   Reading:

   Writing due at the beginning of the class.

   The title of this paper is “Do I Really Want to be Here?” Think about the article and discuss it with others if you have an opportunity. Write a brief summary (no more that one page) of the article. Now, elaborate on what did you think about Gumport’s observations and arguments? Do they seem valid to you? Why or why not? How did you imagine universities as places to work? Have Gumports’s observations changed your view? What are the implications for you in thinking about a career as an academic? What are the implications for how you understand the kind of training you are getting? No more that four pages.