THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE TITLE: Basic Social Work Research
DIVISION NUMBER: 783
COURSE NUMBER: SSW 522
CREDIT HOURS: 3
PREREQUISITES: None
LOCATION: Foundation Course

Course Description: We investigate the logic of inquiry and an empirical approach to practice and programs. We address the process of formulating 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 research 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.

Course Content: The course covers qualitative and quantitative research methods, commonly used statistical procedures and approaches to the evaluation of practice and programs. The course has a special focus on increasing students’ ability to critically analyze theoretical foundations of research, form research questions, apply research methods, conduct statistical analysis, and interpret research reports. Students will learn various statistical, graphical, and display techniques.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- frame research questions and develop problem statements that reflect assessment, implementation, monitoring, or outcome issues.
- select appropriate research designs, methodologies, and measurement strategies. Students will be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, including sensitivity to ethical, multicultural, and diversity issues.
- design research and evaluation projects with ethical issues, and their relevance and applicability in working with disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations, at the forefront.
- conduct a critical analysis of research and evaluation studies with respect to quality, bias, ethics, and potential applications.
- apply research concepts and principles in the development and use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and analytical approaches.
- critically examine the processes by which research and evaluation findings can be used to enhance social justice, social change, promotion and prevention.
- create and ethically use questionnaires for surveys and measures relevant to the evaluation of practice.
- conduct research using selected descriptive and inferential statistical analytic procedures.

Relationship to Four Curricular Themes:
Multiculturalism and Diversity: Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement in
community related issues influence and are impacted by statistical analyses and related methodological issues.

**Social Change and Social Justice:** The ability to assess policies and programs analytically is necessary if the social work profession is to play an important role in shaping the outcome of ongoing program and policy debates to reflect issues in social change and justice. This course provides students with the capacity to understand and potentially influence the role statistical analysis and the interpretation of such analysis plays in the formation and implementation of policy, practice and program development.

**Promotion and Prevention:** Prevention and promotion activities are difficult to evaluate and therefore raise special challenges in statistical analysis. It is important to expose students to basic statistical techniques such as t-tests, F-tests, correlation, and Chi-Square that they can use to analyze and evaluate promotion and prevention activities prior to the development, implementation, and analysis of any relevant policy issue or initiative encountered in the course of their professional activities.

**Social Science:** Social workers need to be able to identify statistical methods that optimize a combination of rigor and feasibility. Social workers should also examine the ways in which social science data is translated into current policy and practice and the consequences (both positive and negative) which emerge. This course provides students with the capacity to understand and influence the role statistical analysis plays in the formation and implementation of policy, practice and program development.

**Relationship of this Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:** Ethical standards of social work practice (NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (Program Evaluation Standards) will be used to review issues commonly confronted in the statistical analysis of policy and program evaluation. The ethical standards of utility, feasibility, accuracy, confidentiality and propriety are particularly relevant to statistical analysis and evaluation and are therefore emphasized and discussed.

### Particulars of the Fall, 2004 Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>SSW 522—Section 03</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Sherrie A. Kossoudji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>2788 SSW Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>734-763-6320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>734-763-3372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kossoudj@umich.edu">kossoudj@umich.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Time</td>
<td>Mondays 9:00—12:00</td>
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<td>Class Location</td>
<td>SSW Building—B696, computer classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>Monday. 1:00-2:30, and appointments can easily be made by email</td>
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**Resources for this class:**


Our class web site will have links to numerous on-line statistics textbooks and other resources. Sometimes, students feel more comfortable looking at a subject from numerous vantage points. These online textbooks can be very useful to you if you can’t figure out what the required text says about a particular topic or if there’s something about their style that you don’t like. Just look up the online textbooks, find the chapters with the same topics and see if you like or understand an alternative presentation better.
Readings, assignments, background materials, handouts, and the course calendar are all available on the class web site. To find our site, go to http://www.ssw.umich.edu/classes and click on our class name or go to my classes on wolverine. You will need your uniqname and password to get inside the page. Weekly lecture notes, announcements, and helpful documents will be on the site. Students can also “get together” on the site to manage group projects.

**Attendance, Assignments, Exams and Grades**

In each class we will continuously conduct research of some kind (the actual work will vary by the week). Each student is responsible for participating in class activity. Weekly attendance, pop quizzes, and class work count for 20 points, or 20% of the semester’s grade. You will be responsible for making sure that your attendance is noted each week by signing in.

Please respect your classmates, me, and yourself and arrive at class on time unless there is an emergency. If you do not arrive in class on time you will not receive full credit for that day.

There will be three homework assignments in this class. Assignment #1 is an individual project and is worth 10 points. Assignment #2 is an individual assignment and is worth 15 points. Assignment #3 is a group project and is worth 15 points for each member of the group.

There will be two exams in this class. The midterm will be worth 20 points and will be held during class on March 3rd. The final will be handed out on Monday, December 13th, and students will have until Wednesday, December 15th at 11:59pm to turn it in. The final will be worth 20 points.

**Late Assignments for projects and papers are accepted only with a penalty.** A late assignment will be assessed 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.). Project assignments cannot be turned in more than one week late. If an assignment is more than one week late, 0 points will be given. Assignment #1 (if it is turned in on time) can be resubmitted for a better grade the week after getting back scores. No makeups or changes can be made for other assignments or exams.

Final Grades Are Based on Total Points:  A+ = 98-100, A = 94-97, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 82-86, B- = 78-81, C+ = 75-77, C = 70-74, not passing = <70
# Tentative Schedule, Fall, 2004

Please remember that you are expected to read the textbook’s chapters before the day of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings and Other Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td><strong>Asking Questions, Needing Answers:</strong></td>
<td>Learning SPSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Course overview</td>
<td>A Research Project from beginning to end:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The need for and uses of research</td>
<td>Initial Reaction Survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why is research important for Social Workers?</td>
<td>Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 1, Chapter 2 pages 43-65</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The research process</td>
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<td>Data preparation summary</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #1 handed out</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Class points = 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td><strong>Overview of Research Concepts and Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 3, Chapter 16 Reasoning, and what it is to be rational</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 20</td>
<td>The uses of research</td>
<td>IRB forms</td>
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<td>Research ethics and principles</td>
<td>NIH on-line Human Subjects Training</td>
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<td>Research ethics versus Social Work ethics</td>
<td>Opening new data sets and figuring them out in SPSS</td>
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<td>Attending to ethics</td>
<td><strong>Assignment #1 handed out</strong></td>
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<td>What is a research project?</td>
<td><strong>Class points = 2</strong></td>
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<td>Culturally Competent Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Working with existing data sets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td><strong>Problems in Research</strong></td>
<td>Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 27</td>
<td>How do you figure out exactly what the question is?</td>
<td>Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The practical and practice or program base of social work research</td>
<td>A sampling experiment with data</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Who are you talking about?</strong></td>
<td>Working with data--Data Preparation</td>
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<td>External validity and sampling</td>
<td><strong>Assignment #1 due</strong></td>
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<td>Understanding the difference between a sample and a population</td>
<td><strong>Class points = 2</strong></td>
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<td>Talking about the difference between a population and a sample</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Methods of sampling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fashioning a data set</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week 4  
| October 4 | **How do you specify the information used in research?**  
|           | What do you want to know?  
|           | Measurement  
|           | The importance of accurate measurement  
|           | False specificity in measurement  
|           | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 6  
|           | Experiments with Measures  
|           | What makes a good measure? Investigating and understanding the use of measurement in existing data  
|           | **Assignment # 2 Handed Out**  
|           | **Class Points = 2**  
| Week 5  
| October 11 | **The use of surveys to acquire information for the research project.**  
|           | When should surveys be used?  
|           | Approaches to survey research  
|           | Ethics in survey research  
|           | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 9  
|           | Conducting Surveys  
|           | Good and Rotten Surveys  
|           | Coding survey data using SPSS  
|           | **Assignment #2 due**  
|           | **Class Points = 2**  
| October 18th | **NO CLASS**  
| Week 6  
| October 25 | **Set up a project to get answers:**  
|           | Research Design—Part 1  
|           | Hypotheses and Hypothesis testing  
|           | Talking Research  
|           | Experimental Design  
|           | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 10  
|           | Web Resources  
|           | **Class Points = 2**  
| Week 7  
| November 1 | Midterm Exam  
|          | **Midterm Exam**  
| Week 8  
| November 8 | **Set up a project to get answers:**  
|           | Research Design—Part 2  
|           | Experimental and Non-experimental Design  
|           | Single Case Evaluation Design  
|           | Statistical Analysis (Basic one variable intro)  
|           | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 11  
|           | Web Resources  
|           | **Assignment #3 handed out**  
|           | Basic SPSS analysis  
|           | **Class Points = 2**  
| Week 9  
| November 15 | **Set up a project to get answers:**  
|           | Research Design—Part 3  
|           | Qualitative Research, Overflow.  
|           | Qualitative Research projects  
|           | Using administrative data, archives, historical records and published statistics—quantitative and qualitative methods  
|           | Talking about quantitative and qualitative results  
|           | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 14, Chapter 15  
|           | The Analysis of Qualitative Data  
|           | Critical Thinking Skills  
|           | Group work for assignment #3  
|           | **Class Points = 2**  
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Resources</th>
<th>Assignments/Points</th>
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</table>
| Week 10    | November 22 | **Finding Answers and Making them Public:**
(1) Quantitative Statistical Analysis (descriptive statistics)
Qualitative Analysis.
Project discussion-writing research
The Complete Research Project | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 18, Chapter 19, Chapter 22
Web Resources—On line statistics books
Group work for assignment #3
Writing Research Reports
**Class Points = 2** |
| Week 11    | November 29 | **Finding Answers and Making them Public:**
(2) Statistical Analysis: Descriptive and Inferential—two variable scatters, correlation, t-tests
Putting together The Complete Research Project | Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 20
Web Resources—On line statistics books
The Analysis of Data
Group work for assignment #3
**Class Points = 2** |
| Week 12    | December 6  | **Finding Answers and Making them Public:**
(3) Statistical Analysis: Descriptive and Inferential—ANOVA, single variable regression
Analyses for different design classes.
Why does statistics have such a bad name?
Lying with statistics: race, class, and statistics.
The Complete Research Project | Web Resources
The Analysis of Data
**Assignment #3 due**
**Class Points = 2** |
| Week 13    | December 13 | **Synthesis, overflow, questions.**
The answers you find aren't the end of the story: Research, Inferential Statistics and Truth | Final Exam handed out—due on Wednesday, December 15 at 11:59pm |
Save this single page to its own document. Call it sampleyourfirstnameandlastname.doc (notice that CourseTools **DOES NOT ALLOW** spaces in document names). We will submit it as our practice assignment.

I (fill in your name here) have completely read the syllabus. I understand its content, and I have asked any questions that I needed to avoid any confusion and to be aware of the ramifications of my actions in this class.

I understand that if I plagiarize on any work in this class that I will fail the course.

This affidavit is signed electronically by the fact that it has been turned into to the CourseTools site using my kerberos password,

(fill in your full name here)

(fill in the date here).