



USC | School of Social Work

Social Work 562 60461R Social Work Research

Spring 2008

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Course Day: Thursday
Course Time: 1:00 – 3:50 p.m.
Course Location: VKC257
Office hours: TBA

I. Course Description

This foundation course is designed to provide an introduction to research methods and to produce an appreciation of the research process. It will explore generic issues that are related to the conduct of social work research as applied to social work practice and service delivery in complex, urban environments as well as program evaluation, and policy development.

In this course, students will review the characteristics and logical processes of social work research and understand the applicability of scientific and scholarly inquiry in advancing professional knowledge and improving social work practice to diverse clientele in urban settings. Students will gain a conceptual and operational understanding of the various quantitative and qualitative methodologies used in the conduct of social work related research. Students will be prepared to participate in a range of research activities including (a) conceptualization of research problems; (b) review of the literature; (c) research design; (d) sampling; (e) measurement and scaling; (f) data collection; (g) data analysis and (h) ethical considerations in the conduct of research on human subjects. Attention will also focus on how racial, ethnic, gender, and lifestyle issues impact each stage of the research process.

Students will not be expected to carry out an actual study; however, they will complete a series of assignments, which, together, form the basis for a research proposal. Students will hopefully achieve a level of disciplined conceptual and analytical thinking in the process of developing and critiquing their proposal.

II. Course Objectives

After completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Understand basic research principles and concepts within the framework of ethical practice.
2. Identify the ethical issues involved in social work research, including informed consent, confidentiality, use and abuse of sensitive data and the issue of withholding treatment to control groups and the honest disclosure of findings.
3. Understand and be sensitive to issues in the research process as they relate to various populations such as racial and ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, and women.
4. Formulate studies appropriate to the level of knowledge about a particular problem and conduct a review of the literature to support problem conceptualization.
5. Identify and describe the major types of designs used in social work research, including exploratory, descriptive and explanatory designs.
6. Understand basic sampling methods.
7. Understand issues and principles of measurement and scaling.
8. Distinguish among various methods of data collection, such as interviews, questionnaires, and observations.
9. Differentiate between descriptive and inferential statistics, assess and critique the benefits and drawbacks of each type, to understand what statistics to use to answer basic research questions.
10. Demonstrate the ability to draw relevant conclusions related to practice and policy.
11. Demonstrate the ability to develop a research proposal in an area relevant to social work practice.
12. Understand basics of Evidence Based Practice including evidence search, evidence appraisal, and implementation of evidence in the context of individuals, groups or communities.

III. Course Format

Two primary learning/teaching modalities will be used in class: (1) didactic presentation by the instructor and (2) critical discussion, interaction, and transaction among the instructor and students.

The online teaching and learning environment provided by the University's Blackboard Academic Suite will support and facilitate student to student communication and interaction outside of class as well as access to instructor support. The URL for Blackboard is <https://blackboard.usc.edu>.

Please note that it may be necessary for the instructor to make adjustments to the syllabus during the semester.

IV. Course Assignments

Course grades will be based upon the following:

 Research paper, Assignments & Critiques	50 points
Class presentation	10 points
 Quizzes	30 points
 Class Participation / Reading	<u>10 points</u>
	100 points

Each of the major assignments is described below.

Research Paper

A research paper, which will be described in detail in a handout, is required. Preliminary assignments and critiques will precede the completion of this paper. A power point-presentation to the class summarizing this project will also take place.

The scholarly research paper, assignments and critique address and contribute to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12.

Quizzes

There will be three in-class quizzes each worth 10 points. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice, true- false, and/or short answer items.

The quizzes address and contribute to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 12.

Class Participation / Reading

Students are expected to contribute to the development of a positive learning environment and to demonstrate their learning through written and oral assignments and through active, oral class participation. Class participation should consist of meaningful, thoughtful, and respectful participation based on having completed required and independent readings and assignments prior to class. When in class, students should demonstrate their understanding of the material and be prepared to offer comments or reflections about the material, or alternatively, to have a set of thoughtful questions about the material.

Students are further expected to complete assignments on or before the due date and notify the instructor if they are having difficulty comprehending the course material or

keeping up with the assignments. Failure to meet these expectations will result in the reduction of grades.

Class participation addresses and contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12.

NOTE: Additional details for each of the assignments will be disseminated and discussed in class.

V. Course Grading

Course grades will be based on the following:

3.85 – 4	A
3.60 – 3.84	A-
3.25 – 3.59	B+
2.90 – 3.24	B
2.60 – 2.87	B-
2.25 – 2.50	C+
1.90 – 2.24	C

Final grades for the course will be determined on the basis of points earned on each assignment and on course participation. Following are the assignments and corresponding points:

93 – 100	A
90 – 92	A-
87 – 89	B+
83 – 86	B
80 – 82	B-
77 – 79	C+
73 – 76	C
70 – 72	C-

Within the School of Social Work, grades are determined in each class based on the following standards which have been established by the faculty of the School:

Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates very good mastery of content but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades would be determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student.

A grade of B+ will be given to work which is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material being evaluated in the assignment.

A grade of B will be given to student work which meets that basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations.

A grade of B- will denote that a student's performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations.

A grade of C would reflect a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.

Grades between C- and F will be applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student's performance on the assignment.

VI. Course Textbooks and Resources

Required Textbook

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008) *Research methods for social work* (6th ed.) Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Recommended Guidebook for APA Style Formatting

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Ed.). Washington: APA.

Recommended Websites

National Associate of Social Workers: <http://www.naswdc.org>.

National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (NGC) – A public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines: <http://www.guideline.gov>.

The Elements of Style – A rule book for writing. You can read it online: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.

USC Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm.

Forum: Qualitative Research – An online journal of qualitative research: <http://www.qualitative-research.net>.

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research: <http://www.iaswresearch.org>.

Society for Social Work Research: <http://www.sswr.org>.

American Evaluation Association: <http://www.eval.org>.

NOTE: Additional required and recommended readings may be assigned by the instructor throughout the course.

VII. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every class and to remain in class for the duration of the session. Failure to attend class or arriving late may impact your ability to achieve course objectives which could affect your course grade. Students are expected to notify the instructor by telephone or email of any anticipated absence or reason for tardiness.

University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class, without penalty, for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations which conflict with students' observance of a holy day. Students must make arrangements *in advance* to complete class work which will be missed, or to reschedule an examination, due to holy days observance.

Please refer to Scampus, pg. 86 and to the USC School of Social Work Student Handbook, pp. 12-14.

VIII. Academic Accommodations

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. *Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible.* DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

IX. Emergency Response Information

To receive information, call main number (213)740-2711, press #2. "For recorded announcements, events, emergency communications or critical incident information."

To leave a message, call (213) 740-8311

For additional university information, please call (213) 740-9233

Or visit university website: <http://emergency.usc.edu>

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, please go to the following locations carefully and using stairwells only. Never use elevators in an emergency evacuation.

University Park Campus

MRF
SWC
WPH
VKC

Lot B
Lot B
McCarthy Quad
McCarthy Quad

City Center

Front of the building (12th & Olive)

Orange County Campus

Faculty Parking Lot

Skirball Campus

Front of building

Do not re-enter the building until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel.

X. Complaints

If you have a complaint or concern about the course or the instructor, please discuss it first with the instructor. If you feel can't discuss it with the instructor, contact the chair of the research sequence. If you don't receive a satisfactory response or solution, contact your advisor and/or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for further guidance.

Tips for Maximizing Your Learning Experience in this Course

- ✓ Complete required readings and assignments BEFORE coming to class.
- ✓ BEFORE coming to class, review the materials from the previous session AND the current session, AND scan the topics to be covered in the next session.
- ✓ Come to class prepared to ask any questions you might have.
- ✓ Participate in class discussions.
- ✓ AFTER you leave class, review the materials assigned for that session again, along your notes from that session.
- ✓ If you don't understand something, ask questions!! Ask questions in class, during office hours, and/or through email!
- ✓ Keep up with the assigned readings.
- ✗ Don't procrastinate or postpone working on assignments.

Session	Topics	Assignments
1	Introductions and course overview	
2	Research and Social Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evidence-Based social work practice ▶ The philosophy and theory of research 	
3	Ethical and political considerations	
4	Problem Formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The formulation of researchable problems ▶ Critiquing knowledge bases and reviewing the literature ▶ Writing research proposals and reports 	
5	Research Design I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Research Design & Causal inference ▶ Experimental /Quasi-experimental designs ▶ Internal & External Validity ▶ Randomized Controlled Design 	
6	Research Design II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Survey Research ▶ Program evaluation ▶ Outline: Description and Summary of Research Articles 	
7	Measurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Operationalization and measurement ▶ Reliability and Validity ▶ Developing questionnaires, scales and items ▶ Locating instruments, tests, and other measures 	Quiz 1
8	Measurement and Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection procedure ▶ Application of different types of measurement 	
9	Sampling	
SPRING RECESS / NO CLASSES MARCH 17 - 22		
10	Qualitative Studies	Quiz 2
11	Quantitative Studies and Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Inferential Statistics / Hypothesis Testing ▶ Descriptive Statistics 	
12	Inferential Statistics	
13	Presentation of Project I	Paper Due
14	Presentation of Project II	
STUDY DAYS / NO CLASSES MAY 3 - 6		
15	Course wrap up Course Evaluation	
Exam week		Quiz 3

Session 1

Date 1/17

Topics: Introductions and course overview

Required readings:

Session 2

Date 1/24

Topics: Research and Social Work

- ▶ Evidence-Based social work practice
- ▶ The philosophy and theory of research

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 1-3

Recommended readings:

📖 Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1999). Introduction: The role of critical thinking in the helping professions. In *Critical thinking for social workers: Exercises for the helping profession* (Rev. ed., pp. 3-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Session 2 addresses and contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1 & 12.

Session 3

Date 1/31

Topics: Ethical and political considerations

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 4-5

Recommended readings and video:

🎬 Aspell, P. S. & Dilanni (1993) *The deadly deception*. Boston, MA: WGBH Educational Foundation. A 60-minutes long PBS documentary of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

📖 Haney, C., Banks, C. and Zimbardo, P. (1973). "Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison." *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, 1, 69-97.

📖 Humphreys, L. (1976). Methods: The sociologist as voyeur. In M. P. Golden (Ed.). *The research experience* (pp. 100-114).

📖 Jones, J. H. (1981). *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. London: Free Press (Chapter 1 – A Moral Astigmatism).

📖 Milgram, S. (1963). "Behavioral study of obedience." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 4, 371-378.

📖 NASW Code of Ethics: <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/>.

📖 Shavers, V. L., Lynch, C. F., & Burmeister, L. F. (2000). Knowledge of the Tuskegee study and its impact on the willingness to participate in medical research studies. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 92(12), 563-572.

📖 Shuster E. (1997). Fifty years later: The significance of the Nuremberg code. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 337 (20), 1436-1440.

📖 Also see USC's IRB at: <http://www.usc.edu/admin/provost/irb/>.

Session 3 addresses and contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 12.

Session 4

Date 2/7

Topics: Problem Formulation

- ▶ The formulation of researchable problems
- ▶ Critiquing knowledge bases and reviewing the literature
- ▶ Writing research proposals and reports

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 6, 23, & Appendix A.

Recommended readings:

📖 Sherraden, M. (2000). Asking questions well: The role of theory in applied social research, keynote address. *Proceedings of the twelfth national symposium on doctoral research in social work*. (pp. 1-21). Columbus, Oh. Ohio State University, College of Social Work.

📖 <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.

📖 http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm.

Session 4 addresses and contributes to the achievement of Objectives 4 & 10.

Session 5

Date 2/14

Topics: Research Design I

- ▶ Research Design & Causal inference
- ▶ Experimental /Quasi-experimental designs
- ▶ Internal Validity & External Validity
- ▶ Randomized Controlled Design

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10, 11

Recommended readings:

📖 Krajewski, S.S., Rybarik, M.F., Dosch, M.F. & Gilmore, G.D. (1996). Results of a curriculum intervention with seventh graders regarding violence in relationships. *Journal of family violence*. 11 (2): 93-112.

📖 Piper, W. E., J. S. Rosie, et al. (1993). A randomized trial of psychiatric day treatment for patients with affective and personality disorders. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 44(8): 757-763.

📖 Reid, W.J., Kenaley, B.D. & Colvin, J. (2004) Do some interventions work better than others? *A review of comparative social work experiments*. *Social Work Research*. 28 (2): 71-81.

Session 5 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, & 12.

Session 6

Date 2/21

Topics: Research Design II

- ▶ Survey Research
- ▶ Program evaluation
- ▶ Outline: Description and Summary of Research Articles

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 12 & 15

Recommended readings:

📖 Proctor, E. K. (1990). Evaluating clinical practice: Issues of purpose and design. *Social Work Research & Abstracts*, 26(1), 32-40.

Session 6 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, & 12.

Session 7

Date 2/28

Topics: Measurement

- ▶ Operationalization and measurement
- ▶ Reliability and Validity
- ▶ Developing questionnaires, scales and items
- ▶ Locating instruments, tests, and other measures

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 7-8.

✍ Quiz #1

Recommended readings:

📖 <http://www.apa.org/science/faq-findtests.html>.

Session 7 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, & 12.

Session 8

Date 3/6

Topics: Measurement and Data collection

- ▶ Data collection procedure
- ▶ Application of different types of measurement

Required readings:

 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9

Session 8 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, & 12.

Session 9

Date 3/13

Topics: Sampling

Required readings:

 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 14

Recommended readings:

 Miranda, J., Azocar, F., Organista, K.C., Munoz, R.F. & Lieberman, A. (1996). Recruiting and retaining low-income Latinos in psychotherapy research. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 64, 868-874.

Session 9 addresses and contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6, & 10.

SPRING RECESS / NO CLASSES MARCH 17 - 22

Session 10

Date 3/27

Topics: Qualitative Studies

- ▶ Qualitative data collection methods
- ▶ Qualitative data analysis

Required readings:

 Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 17-18

Quiz #2

Session 10 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 & 12.

Session 11

Date 4/3

Topics: Quantitative Studies and Statistics

- ▶ Inferential Statistics / Hypothesis Testing
- ▶ Descriptive Statistics

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 20

Recommended readings:

📖 Bae, S.-W., & Brekke, J. S. (2003). The measurement of self-esteem among Korean Americans: A cross-ethnic study. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 9(1), 16-33.

Session 11 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 9, & 12.

Session 12

Date 4/10

Topics: Inferential Statistics

Required readings:

📖 Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 21-22

Recommended readings:

📖 <http://www.animatedsoftware.com/statglos/statglos.htm>.

📖 http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/logic_hypothesis.html.

📖 <http://www.stats.gla.ac.uk/steps/glossary/nonparametric.html#wmwt>

Session 12 contributes to the achievement of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 9, & 12.

Session 13

Date 4/17

Topics: Student Presentation I

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

📄 **Research Project Paper Due**

Session 14

Date 4/24

Topics: Student Presentation II

STUDY DAYS / NO CLASSES MAY 3 - 6

Session 15

Date 5/1

Topics:

- ▶ Course wrap up
- ▶ Course evaluations