Science of Social Work

SOWK 546

3 Units

VAC MASTER SYLLABUS

I. COURSE PREREQUISITES

None

II. CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to the role of scientific inquiry in advancing social work goals. Inspires students to include science in their social work identity and professional decision-making.

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students taking part in this course develop an appreciation for and come to value the historical and contemporary role that scientific thinking and research have played in advancing the goals of the social work profession. Students also develop a strong understanding of and intuition for how data, science, and research inform professional social work today.

The course is designed to provide students with inspiration for harnessing their own scientific thinking and for thinking about how different kinds of data and research evidence can contribute to efforts to improve social wellbeing and reduce inequities. Particular emphasis is placed in the middle of the course on the process of thinking about social work practice problems that can be informed by data and science.

Students learn how to locate, interpret, appraise, and integrate available data and research. They evaluate the strengths and limits of existing research for informing specific practice problems and confront the challenge of how to combine such evidence with other critical information sources, including client values and one's practice knowledge and experience. Students learn to carefully consider the role that diversity and difference play in the generation, interpretation, and utilization of various forms of data and information.

By the end of the course students are well-versed in how to conceptualize questions in the areas of practice and policy and the application of data, scientific thinking, and research to informing those questions. They are prepared to enter a course that will deepen understanding of specific research skills and that will allow them to apply their own scientific thinking, creativity, and problem-solving fluidly in field practice settings.

IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Support students in developing a clear sense for how data, science, and research serve as part of their own professional identity and resource toolkit, with clear ideas about capabilities that they would like to develop further in themselves.

2. Orient students to the logic and interpretation of different types of empirical evidence and strategies so that students are comfortable reading and communicating with diverse clients and constituencies about the meaning of research evidence.

3. Clearly and consistently demonstrate and practice how to incorporate existing empirical evidence into the process of addressing well-formed practice and policy questions. Emphasize the centrality of considering context, diversity and difference, and ethical and political considerations in how empirical evidence is developed and integrated with other sources of information.

4. Familiarize students with the logic and basic interpretation of statistical information to enable meaningful understanding of numeric results encountered through a variety of information sources.

5. Prepare students to enter into more advanced courses that provide training in and utilize more specific empirical methods to accomplish a variety of goals relevant to social work professionals and the clients and constituencies they serve.

V. COURSE FORMAT / INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Delivery of this course assumes that student interests and active participation are fundamental to a dynamic, high-functioning learning environment that promotes discussion, questions, self-reflection, and critical thinking. Operating from this basic assumption, this course will utilize multiple formats, including:

(a) didactic and interactive presentation of material on the Virtual Academic Center platform

(b) short periods of information presentation;

(c) active small and large group discussion;

(d) student-led discussions;

Overall, students will have substantial involvement in the shared identification of focal materials for discussion in the course as instructor and students work together to address meaningful practice and policy questions. A number of course experiences ask students to select focal issues or questions of interest to them, The online teaching and learning environment provided by the virtual Academic Center (VAC) will support and facilitate student learning, communication and interaction, as well as access to instructor support.

Please note that it may be necessary for the instructor to adjust the syllabus and/or course during the semester.

VI. STUDENT COMPETENCIES & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning for this course relates to one or more of the following foundation-year social work competencies. Further, competencies relate to one or more course objective, as presented in the following table.

	Competencies	SoWk 546	Course Objective
1	**Ethical and Professional Behavior**	*	1 & 3
2	Diversity and Difference in Practice		
3	Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice		

4	**Practice-informed Research and Research Informed Practice**	*****	**2, 4 & 5**
5	Policy Practice		
6	Engagement		
7	Assessment		
8	Intervention		
9	Evaluation		

* Indicates core competencies highlighted in this course

The table on the next page presents the competencies for the course, along with the values, knowledge and/or skills that comprise the competencies. The table also presents corresponding learning outcomes and methods for assessing whether the outcomes have been achieved.

Competencies: Knowledge, Values and/or Skills	Student Learning Outcomes	Methods of Assessment
Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior	1. Understand the role of science in the profession's value base, mission and history.	– Assignment 1 – Participation
	2. Clearly articulate multiple ways in which Social Work professionals make use of research knowledge and scientific thinking in their work and find inspiration for ways they can use or contribute to Science in Social Work.	– Assignments 1 & 2 – Participation
	3. Understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks.	– Assignment 1 – Participation
Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice	4. Know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and ethical approaches to building knowledge [for diverse populations and settings].	– Assignment 3 – Mid-term Exam – Participation
	5. Formulate meaningful questions that can be informed by existing research or the use of scientific reasoning.	– Assignment 1 - 4 – Mid-term Exam
	6. Appropriately and efficiently locate existing data sources, data, and research evidence from multi-disciplinary sources.	– Assignment 2
	7. Engage in critical analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings.	– Assignment 3 – Mid-term Exam
	8. Recognize and grapple with the need to integrate multiple types of information, including research, practice experience, and client values in the face of ambiguity.	– Assignment 3 – Participation
	9. Use and translate research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.	– Assignment 3 & 4
	10. Interpret the meaning of foundation-level statistical information presented in a wide range of information sources.	– Assignment 3 & 4

VII. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES & PERCENT OF FINAL GRADE

Assignments

Assignments for the course consist of 4 written assignments, including (1) a practice knowledge self-assessment, (2) a professional resource collection, (3) an evidence-based practice brief, and (4) a grand challenges awareness final project. Assignments also consist of a mid-term exam and class participation. All assignments are designed to relate to and build on one another. As such, it is imperative assignments are completed and submitted by their due dates. **Written assignments should be submitted by class time on the specified due date.**

The table below presents all course assignments, due dates, and the percent of the final grade comprised of by each assignment.

Assignment	Unit Due[1]	% of Final Grade
Assignment 1 *Practice Knowledge Self-Assessment*	Unit 3	10%
Assignment 2 *Professional Resource Collection*	Unit 6	20%
Assignment 3 *Evidence-based Practice Brief*	Unit 13	25%
Assignment 4 *Grand Challenges Awareness Final Project*	Exam Week	15%
Mid-term Exam	Unit 10	25%
Active and Proactive Learning, & Meaningful Class Participation	Units 1 - 15	5%

Assignment 1 - Practice Knowledge Self-Assessment (10% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 1 is to increase student's appreciation of the science of social work by helping you to identify ways in which practice goals and aspirations can be enhanced through reflection, empirical knowledge, and scientific inquiry. The assignment consists of three parts. The first part of the assignment addresses the connection between one's life experiences and professional identity as a social worker. The second part of the assignment relates to current areas of interest and the professional knowledge one currently has in their specified area of interest. Finally, the third part of the assignment students will develop practice questions regarding their specified areas of interest.

Assignment 2 - Professional Resource Collection (20% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 2 is to enhance the student's ability to effectively and efficiently locate practice information and knowledge relevant to specialized practice in areas of interest that are consistent with their professional goals and aspirations. The assignment consists of four parts. The first part of the assignment involves locating sources of information and existing knowledge relevant to one of the practice questions that were formulated in Part 3

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[1] Please note that in some instances assignment due dates may differ among sections of this course. In those instances, due dates have been adapted to reflect the number of lesson weeks and University holidays for particular course sections.

of Assignment 1. The second and third parts of the assignment focuses on locating empirical research studies relevant to the practice question that was formulated. The final part of the assignment consists of a working list of references and resources related to the practice question that was formulated.

Assignment 3 - Evidence-based Practice Brief (25% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 3 is to prepare students for evidence-based practice (EBP) by enhancing their ability to integrate professional expertise, available scientific evidence, client factors, and contextual factors. The assignment consists of four parts. The first part of the assignment presents a refined practice question, the rationale for the question, and contextual factors relevant to the practice question. The second part of the assignment focuses on the empirical evidence related to the practice question and the process of searching for evidence. The 3rd and 4th parts of the assignment involving critically appraising the evidence and using it to address the specified practice question.

Assignment 4 - Grand Challenge Awareness Final Project (15% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 4 is to facilitate a student's ability to use the science of social work to raise awareness about grand challenges facing social workers and to trigger others to take action to positively impact social work grand challenges. The assignment consists of two parts. The first part of the assignment presents an overview of a project presented in Part 2 of the assignment. While the first part of the assignment consists of short answer responses, the approach and format of the project presented in the second part of the assignment will be determined by the student.

Mid-term Exam (25% of course grade)

Throughout the course students will learn a core set of scientific and research related concepts and terminology that they will be expected to understand and apply within an examination format. Students will complete an in-class mid-term, comprehensive exam designed to measure their ability to apply the knowledge acquired up to the time of the exam.

Active and Proactive Learning, & Meaningful Class Participation (5% of course grade)

Students are expected to be active participants in their learning and proactive. This will require mental, physical and perhaps emotional effort from students, both inside and outside the formal classroom. **Active learning** involves assuming responsibility for learning; completing required readings and the asynchronous content on the VAC Platform, including knowledge checks and other assignments prior to class; and coming to class with thoughtful comments, reflections or questions about concepts, readings and assignments. **Proactive learning** involves anticipating workload and challenges, and taking the initiative to reach out to the instructor when concerned about possible challenges in the class.

Along with active and proactive learning, students are expected to participate meaningfully in class and to contribute to the development of a positive learning environment. **Meaningful participation** consists of thoughtful and respectful participation based on having completed required readings and assignments prior to class. For our purposes, "contributing to the development of a positive learning environment" refers to the extent to which students participate in or help create an environment that is open, professional, engaging, fun, challenging, supportive, and effective. "Environment" refers to the virtual classroom, small group settings, other settings in which learning or teaching might occur, and the overall climate and culture of the class.

Please refer to the rubric below for the criteria that will be used to determine the participation grade. For each of five criteria, 0 to 1 point can be earned, for a maximum of 5 points.

Criteria	Never or Rarely	Regularly or Often
☐ Student demonstrates active and proactive learning.	0	1
☐ Student communicates with the instructor about (a) the course, (b) their/her/his performance in the course,	0	1
☐ Student's communication, behavior, and participation in class are respectful, professional, and appropriate; student contributes to a positive learning environment in the classroom.	0	1
☐ Student completes the reading and the asynchronous course material prior to class, including the embedded exercises and ungraded quizzes.	0	2

Grading

Class grades will be based on the following:

Grade Point Average / Letter Grade		Corresponding Numeric Grade / Letter Grade	
3.85 – 4.00	A	93 – 100	A
3.60 – 3.84	A-	90 – 92	A-
3.25 – 3.59	B+	87 – 89	B+
2.90 – 3.24	B	83 – 86	B
2.60 – 2.87	B-	80 – 82	B-
2.25 – 2.50	C+	77 – 79	C+
1.90 – 2.24	C	73 – 76	C
1.89 & below	C- **(Failing Grade)**	70 – 72	C- **(Failing Grade)**

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 demonstrated by the student.

A grade of B+ is 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 tested in the assignment.

A grade of B is given to student work which meets the 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- denotes 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 reflects a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.

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

VIII. REQUIRED AND SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Required Textbook & Course Readings

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2016). *Essential research methods for social work, 4th Edition*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning. <Control click here to purchase or rent a hard or electronic copy from Cengage Learning>.

Other required and recommended course readings are presented in the detailed course schedule. These readings are all available through links in the syllabus and the asynchronous lessons. ARES is not used for the readings in this course.

Throughout the semester, additional readings may be assigned by the instructor as needed.

Recommended Supplements

Best, J. (2001). *Damned lies and statistics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2013). *Evidence-based practice in clinical social work*. New York: NY: Springer.

Kirk, S, & Reid, W. J. (2012). *Science and social work: a critical appraisal.* Columbia University Press.

Pyrczak, F. (2012). *Evaluating research in academic journals: a practical guide to realistic evaluation.* Pyrczak Publishing.

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice. (Second Edition). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Soydan, H., & Palinkas, L. A. (2014). *Evidence-based practice in social work: development of a new professional culture.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Wheelan, C. (2013). *Naked statistics: stripping the dread from the data,* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Guides for Academic Integrity, APA Style Formatting, Writing & Research

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

APA formatting and style guide. (1995-2015). The OWL at Purdue. Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/

USC guide to avoiding plagiarism: http://www.usc.edu/libraries/about/reference/tutorials/avoiding-plagiarism/story.html

USC Libguides

Sample papers using APA style: http://libguides.usc.edu/ld.php?content_id=9235241

APA citation guide: http://libguides.usc.edu/APA-citation-style

Evidence-based practice resources: http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork/socialworkEBP

Tests and measures: http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork/measurements

Writing guide: http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide

Recommended Social Work Organizations

National Associate of Social Workers. Available at http://www.naswdc.org

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research. Available at http://www.iaswresearch.org

Society for Social Work Research. Available at http://www.sswr.org

American Evaluation Association. Available at http://www.eval.org

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

Course Overview

Unit	Topic	Due
	PART I – SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND POLICY	
1	**Engaging in Practice-Informed Research & Research-Informed Practice** ▪ Welcome and Introductions ▪ Overview of Course and Syllabus ▪ Social Work Values and Empirical Evidence ▪ Professional Social Worker Roles in Science ▪ Identifying Social Work Concerns and Problems ▪ Developing Professional Areas and Populations of Interest	
2	**The Role and Importance of Evidence and Science in Culturally-informed, Ethical, and Effective Professional Social Work Practice** ▪ Evidence-based Practice (EBP) ▪ Enhancing Professional Knowledge – Identifying Professional Goals and Knowledge Needs Related to EBP – Formulating EBP Questions ▪ Finding and Appraising EBP Interventions	
3	**The Ethical, Historical, Cultural and Political Context of the Science of Social Work** ▪ The Ethics in Social Science ▪ Historical and Contemporary Issues and Examples	**ASSIGNMENT 1** **Practice Knowledge Self-Assessment**
4	**Using Multidisciplinary Sources and Technology to Efficiently Locate Different Types of Practice-Related Information** ▪ Efficient Location and Review of Existing Knowledge and Data – Theoretical and Conceptual Knowledge – Empirical Evidence and Knowledge – Policies – Tests and Measures – Data and Databases ▪ Appraising Sources of Information	
	PART II – APPRAISING RESEARCH METHODS & EVIDENCE	
5	**Problem Formulation, Research and Practice Questions, and Variables and Measurement in the Science of Social Work** ▪ Methods of Scientific Inquiry ▪ Conceptualization & Measurement of Social Work Concepts ▪ Data and Data Collection	

Unit	Topic	Due
6	**Appraising Measurement Methods in the Science of Social Work** ▪ Appraising Assessment and Measurement Instruments ▪ Implications for Practice and Policy Questions ▪ Applying Critical Thinking to the Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Findings – Interpreting Findings	**ASSIGNMENT 2** **Professional Resource Collection**
7	**Sampling Methods and Appraising Existing Scientific Studies in Social Work** ▪ External Validity and Threats to External Validity ▪ Appraising Types of Sampling Methods ▪ Conceptual Application to EBP and Practice Decision-making	
8	**Research Design, Appraisal, and Evidence Hierarchies in the Science of Social Work** ▪ Design Methods ▪ Internal Validity and Threats to Internal Validity ▪ Appraising Design Methods ▪ Studies using Experimental Designs	
9	**Appraising Processes and Outcomes with Group-Based Designs** ▪ Appraisal of Studies Using Experimental, Quasi-Experimental and Pre-Experimental Designs in Social Work – Examples of Studies Using Experimental Designs – Examples of Studies Using Non-equivalent Comparison Groups Designs and Time Series Designs – Examples of Studies using Pre-experimental Designs	
10	**Demonstration of Knowledge and Skills in the Appraisal of Research Methods and Evidence**	**MID-TERM EXAM** **Methods of Inquiry**
	Part III – USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE PRACTICE, POLICY & SERVICES	
11	**Evaluating Processes and Outcomes with Single-Case and Program Evaluation Designs** ▪ Use of Single-Case Designs in Social Work Practice – Designs – Strengths and Weaknesses – Evaluating and Measuring Practice Outcomes ▪ Use of Program Evaluation in Social Work Practice – Politics of Program Evaluation	
12	**Appraising, and Analyzing and Applying Results from Qualitative Studies** ▪ Qualitative Research Overview ▪ Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Research	

Unit	Topic	Due
	▪ Qualitative Research Methods ▪ Data Analysis and Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research	
13	**Analyzing and Applying Results from Quantitative Studies** ▪ Analyzing Quantitative Data ▪ Descriptive Statistics – Measures of Central Tendency – Measures of Dispersion	**ASSIGNMENT 3** **Evidence-based** **Practice Brief**
14	**Analyzing and Applying Results from Quantitative Studies (Cont'd)** ▪ Inferential Statistics and Hypothesis Testing ▪ Statistical Significance ▪ Statistical Significance vs. Practical Significance	
15	**Adapting and Translating Evidence into Effective Practice** ▪ Adapting and Translating Evidence for Practice and Policy ▪ Reflections on the Grand Challenges ▪ Course Wrap-up	
	STUDY DAYS – NO CLASS	
	EXAM WEEK – NO CLASS	**ASSIGNMENT 4** **Grand Challenges Awareness Final Project**

Detailed Course Readings and Topics

PART I – SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND POLICY

Engaging in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice   UNIT 1

Objectives

1) To deepen students' understanding of the mission of the social work profession and to enhance their identification with the profession, including the profession's emphasis on social work knowledge and science.
2) To establish the value of science and scientific training in the USC MSW program.
3) To provide an overview of the course.

Topics

- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview of Course and Syllabus
- Social Work Values and Empirical Evidence
- Professional Social Worker Roles in Science
- Identifying Social Work Concerns and Problems
- Developing Professional Areas and Populations of Interest

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential research methods for social work* (4th ed.).

   Chapter 1: Why study research?

Brekke, J. S. (2012). Shaping a Science of Social Work. *Research on Social Work Practice, 22*(5), 455-464. Retrieved from http://rsw.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/04/03/1049731512441263

Council on Social Work Education (2015). Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. Retrieved from: http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=81660
   Competencies 4 and 9

National Association of Social Work (2008). Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Worker. Retrieved from: https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp

Social Work Policy Institute (2016). Research: Why do We Need Social Work Research? Retrieved from: http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/research.

Sherraden, M., Stuart, P., Barth, R. P., Kemp, S., Lubben, J., Hawkins, J.D., Coulton, C., McRoy, R., Walters, K., Healy, L., Angell, B., Mahoney, K., Brekke, J., Padilla, Y., DiNitto, D., Padgett, D., Schroepfer, T., & Catalano, R., (2014). Grand Accomplishments in Social Work. (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative, Working Paper No. 2). Baltimore, MD: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare. http://aaswsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/FINAL-Grand-Accomplishments-4-2-2015-formatted-final.pdf

The Role and Importance of Evidence and Science in Culturally-Informed, Ethical, and Effective Professional Social Work Practice	UNIT 2

Objectives

1) To demonstrate how data and science have advanced the mission of social work.
2) To illustrate the diverse ways in which Evidence Based Practice and science are integral to contemporary social work practice.
3) To provide a framework for using data to "tell stories"

Topics

- Evidence-based Practice (EBP)
- Enhancing Professional Knowledge
  - Identifying Professional Goals and Knowledge Needs Related to EBP
  - Formulating EBP Questions
- Finding and Appraising EBP Interventions

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential research methods for social work* (4th ed.).

   Chapter 2: Evidenced-based practice

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2nd Edition).* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

   Chapter 1: Introduction to Evidence-Based Practice (pp. 3-18)

   Chapter 2: Steps in the EBP Process (pp. 19-37)

Gehlert, S. (2015). Social work and science. *Research on Social Work Practice, February 2015, 1-6.* doi:10.1177/1049731515570138.

The Ethical, Historical, Cultural and Political Context of the Science of Social Work	UNIT 3

Objectives

1) To enhance students' capacity to think critically about ethical issues related to the science of social work and the use/misuse of data.
2) To deepen students' awareness of how historical, cultural, & political experiences and factors influence beliefs about and trust in the role of science in improving human lives, particularly for vulnerable and disenfranchised groups.

Topics

- The Ethics in Social Science
- Historical and Contemporary Issues and Examples

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Chapter 5: Ethical issues in social work research

Chapter 6: Culturally competent research

Longhofer, J., & Floersch, J. (2014). Values in a science of social work: values-informed research and research-informed values. *Research on Social Work Practice, 24*(5), 527-534. Retrieved from http://rsw.sagepub.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/24/5/527.full.pdf+html

Recommended Resources

Websites

a. National Association of Social Workers
http://www.socialworkers.org/nasw/ethics/default.asp
b. University of Southern California Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
http://oprs.usc.edu/about/human-subjects-protection-program/

Videos

a. Human Subjects Research training: 'Protecting Human Subjects' – Module 2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up09dioFdEU

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 1 – PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Using Multidisciplinary Sources and Technology to Efficiently Locate Different Types of Practice-Related Information	UNIT 4

Objectives

1) To help students conceptualize types of data and science that can inform their practice and policy-relevant questions
2) To train students to use technological resources to locate data and scientific information efficiently and effectively.

Topics

- Efficient Location and Review of Existing Knowledge and Data
  - Theoretical and Conceptual Knowledge
  - Empirical Evidence and Knowledge
  - Policies
  - Tests and Measures
  - Data and Databases
- Appraising Sources of Information

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential research methods for social work* (4th ed.).

Chapter 3: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods of inquiry

Chapter 4: Factors influencing the research process

USC Libraries Research Guides. Access at: http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork

Recommended Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Appendix A: Using the Library

PART II – APPRAISING RESEARCH METHODS AND EVIDENCE

Problem Formulation, Research and Practice Questions, and Variables and Measurement in the Science of Social Work	UNIT 5

Objectives

1) To strengthen students' ability to conceptualize meaningful practice questions through problem formulation, identification of variables and the measurement of key concepts
2) To enhance students' capacity to critically appraise measures and data collection used in the science of social work

Topics

- Methods of Scientific Inquiry
- Conceptualization & Measurement of Social Work Concepts
- Data and Data Collection

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Chapter 7: Problem formulation

Appraising Measurement Methods in the Science of Social Work	UNIT 6

Objectives

1) To help students conceptualize types of data and science that can inform their practice and policy-relevant questions.
2) To strengthen students' ability to appraise the strengths and limitations of selected measures and measurement techniques in the science of social work.

Topics

- Appraising Assessment and Measurement Instruments
- Implications for Practice and Policy Questions
- Applying Critical Thinking to the Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Findings
- Interpreting Findings

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

> *Chapter 8: Measurement in quantitative and qualitative inquiry*

Recommended Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

> *Chapter 9: Quantitative and qualitative measurement instruments*
> *Chapter 10: Surveys*

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 2 – PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE COLLECTION

Sampling Methods and Appraising Existing Scientific Studies in Social Work	UNIT 7

Objectives

1) To help students conceptualize how the selection of research subjects impacts interpretation of results and application to practice questions
2) To deepen students' understanding of external validity and how it impacts the use of science in social work practice and policy

Topics

- External Validity and Threats to External Validity
- Appraising Types of Sampling Methods
- Conceptual Application to EBP and Practice Decision-making

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

> *Chapter 11: Sampling: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*

Research Design, Appraisal, and Evidence Hierarchies in the Science of Social Work	UNIT 8

Objectives

1) To prepare students to interpret and appraise science based on evidence hierarchies, as relevant to specific practice or policy questions
2) To develop students' ability to recognize and assess research designs and internal validity, when relevant to practice questions
3) To improve students' ability to summarize scientific approaches, results, and knowledge so that it is understandable, meaningful, and engaging to clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Design Methods
- Internal Validity and Threats to Internal Validity
- Appraising Design Methods
- Studies using Experimental Designs

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

> *Chapter 12: Experiments and quasi-experiments*

Appraising Processes and Outcomes with Group-based Designs	UNIT 9

Objectives

1) Strengthen students' ability to interpret and appraise data and evidence from studies using group based designs in terms of its relevance to specific practice and policy questions.
2) To improve students' ability to summarize scientific approaches, results, and knowledge so that it is understandable, meaningful, and engaging to clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Appraisal of Studies Using Experimental, Quasi-Experimental and Pre-Experimental Designs in Social Work
  – Examples of Studies Using Experimental Designs
  – Examples of Studies Using Non-equivalent Comparison Groups Designs and Time Series Designs
  – Examples of Studies using Pre-experimental Designs

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).
   Review Chapter 12: Experiments and quasi-experiments

Additional Reading linked in the online content.

Demonstration of Knowledge and Skills in the Appraisal of Research Methods and Evidence	UNIT 10

Objectives

1) An assessment of students' ability to understand an apply a core set of scientific and research related concepts and terminology via a comprehensive in-class exam designed to measure ability to apply the knowledge acquired up to the time of the exam.

MID-TERM EXAM

PART III – USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE PRACTICE, POLICY & SERVICES

Evaluating Processes and Outcomes with Single-Case and Program Evaluation Designs	UNIT 11

Objectives

1) In terms of its relevance to specific practice and policy questions, strengthen students' ability to interpret and appraise data and evidence from single case an [program evaluation designs
2) To improve students' ability to summarize scientific approaches, results, and knowledge so that it is understandable, meaningful, and engaging to clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Use of Single-Case Designs in Social Work Practice
  – Designs
  – Strengths and Weaknesses

  – Evaluating and Measuring Practice Outcomes
- Use of Program Evaluation in Social Work Practice
  – Politics of Program Evaluation

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Chapter 13: Single-case evaluation designs

Chapter 14: Program evaluation

Appraising Data, and Analyzing and Applying Results from Qualitative Studies	UNIT 12

Objectives

1) In terms of its relevance to specific practice and policy questions, strengthen students' ability to interpret and appraise data from qualitative research studies and data.
2) To improve students' ability to summarize qualitative approaches, results, and knowledge so that it is understandable, meaningful, and engaging to clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Qualitative Research Overview
- Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- Qualitative Research Methods
- Data Analysis and Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Chapter 15: Additional Methods in Qualitative Inquiry

Analyzing and Applying Results from Quantitative Studies	UNIT 13

Objectives

1) To prepare students to interpret and appraise data as relevant to specific practice or policy questions.
2) To develop students' ability to understand and summarize the meaning of data tables and descriptive data and to summarize quantitative data in ways accessible to appropriate clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Analyzing Quantitative Data
- Descriptive Statistics
  – Measures of Central Tendency
  – Measures of Dispersion

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).

Chapter 17: Quantitative Data Analysis

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 3 – EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE BRIEF

Analyzing and Applying Results from Quantitative Studies (Cont'd)	UNIT 14

Objectives

1) To prepare students to interpret and appraise data as relevant to specific practice or policy questions.
2) To develop students' ability to understand and summarize the meaning of inferential statistics and to summarize statistical relationships between variables in ways accessible to appropriate clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Inferential Statistics and Hypothesis Testing
- Statistical Significance
- Statistical Significance vs. Practical Significance

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). Essential research methods for social work (4th ed.).
> *Review Chapter 17: Quantitative Data Analysis*

Adapting and Translating Evidence into Effective Practice	UNIT 15

Objectives

1) To critically reflect on science in social work and EBP process, including its strengths and limitations, with an emphasis on understanding how to use evidence in complex, real-world contexts.
2) To consider situations in which social workers may need to think beyond the limits of existing evidence and how they may contribute to enhancement of social work knowledge.
3) To address the evidence-based practice process from the perspective of life-long learning.

Topics

- Adapting and Translating Evidence for Practice and Policy
- Reflections on the Grand Challenges
- Course Wrap-up

Required Reading

Brekke, J. S. (2014). A science of social work, and social work as an integrative discipline: have we gone too far, or not far enough? *Research on Social Work Practice, 24(5)*, 517-523. *doi: 10.1177/1049731513511994*

NO CLASS	EXAM WEEK

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 4 – GRAND CHALLENGES RAISING AWARNESS EVIDENCE FINAL PROJECT

School of Social Work & USC Policies and Guidelines

IX. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend every real time virtual class and to remain for the duration of the class. Failure to attend class or arriving late may impact the student's ability to achieve course objectives which could affect their course grade. Students are expected to notify the instructor by email of any anticipated absence or reason for tardiness.

University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class 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 that will be missed, or to reschedule an examination, due to holy days observance.

Please refer to *Scampus* and to the USC School of Social Work Student Handbook for additional information on attendance policies.

X. STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus,* the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.

Additionally, it should be noted that violations of academic integrity are not only violations of USC principles and policies, but also violations of the values of the social work profession.

XI. STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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 open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Students from all academic centers (including the Virtual Academic Center) may contact the DSP office at 213-740-0776 or ability@usc.edu.

XII. STATEMENT ABOUT INCOMPLETES

The Grade of Incomplete (IN) can be assigned only if there is work not completed because of a documented illness or some other emergency occurring *after* the 12th week of the semester. Students must NOT assume that the instructor will agree to the grade of IN. Removal of the

grade of IN must be instituted by the student and agreed to be the instructor and reported on the official "Incomplete Completion Form."

XIII.   POLICY ON LATE OR MAKE-UP WORK

Assignments are due on the day and time specified. Late assignments may be accepted by the instructor for review and feedback at the instructor's discretion, but they might not be graded.

XIV.   POLICY ON CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS AND/OR COURSE REQUIREMENTS

It may be necessary to make some adjustments in the syllabus and/or course during the semester in order to respond to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances. Any such adjustments would be made for the express purpose of accommodating students and with input from students. Adjustments that are made will be communicated to students both verbally and in writing.

XV. CODE OF ETHICS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 2008 NASW Delegate Assembly [http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/Code/code.asp]

Preamble

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual wellbeing in a social context and the wellbeing of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

XVI.   COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint or concern about the course or the instructor, please discuss it first with the instructor. If you feel you cannot discuss it with the instructor, contact the SOWK 546 VAC Lead Instructor, Dr. Marcia Wilson at mrwilson@usc.edu. If you do not receive a satisfactory response or solution, contact your academic advisor for further guidance.

XVII.   TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THIS COURSE

✓ Be proactive! Try to anticipate issues that could present challenges and please reach out to your instructor to problem-solve before rather than after the fact.

✓ Be mindful of getting proper nutrition, exercise, rest and sleep!

✓ Complete required readings, asynchronous content and assignments before coming to class.

✓ Keep up with the assigned readings and assignments. Don't procrastinate!!

✓ Come to class and participate in an active, respectful and meaningful way.

✓ Come to class prepared to ask any questions you might have. If you don't understand something, ask questions! Ask questions in class, during office hours, and/or through email!

✓ Form study groups with other students in the class.

✓ Take advantage of office hours. Contact your instructor if you are concerned about or struggling in class.

✓ If necessary to receive support from a content tutor or VAC Writing Support, please inform or involve your instructor.

✓ Keep an open mind and positive attitude!