



# USC | School of Social Work

## **SOWK 546**

### **Science of Social Work**

**3 Units**

**Semester (Fall) Year (2015)**

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**Course Time:** Fridays 8 am  
**Course Location:** CITY CENTER Classroom C  
**Office hours:** Fridays 11 - 12

### **I. Course Pre-requisites**

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

Objective #	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

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) short periods of information presentation; (b) active small and large group discussion; (c) student-led presentations and discussions; (d) hands-on learning

opportunities; and (e) short in-class activities that promote developing student knowledge and competencies. 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. In many cases, students will be encouraged to combine interests and work in small groups organized around a similar paper, issue, or topic. For activities or assignments organized around a common focus, group members are encouraged to work together and discuss issues as appropriate both inside and outside of the course environment. However, unless noted otherwise, each student retains individual responsibility for completing his/her own assignments. Through task-centered, small group activities, students will assume responsibilities for learning and for creating an invigorating learning environment that responds to student interests and expertise, and actively addresses some of the challenging issues surrounding the integration of science and research with the values and ethics of the social work profession.

The online teaching and learning environment provided by the University's Blackboard Academic Suite (OTG) or the Virtual Academic Center (VAC) will support and facilitate student learning, communication and interaction, as well as access to instructor support.

## VI. Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning for this course relates to one or more of the following ten social work core competencies:

	Social Work Core Competencies	SOWK 546	Course Objective
1	<b>Ethical and Professional Behavior</b>	*	
2	Diversity and Difference in Practice		
3	Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice		
4	<b>Practice-informed Research and Research Informed Practice</b>	*	
5	Policy Practice		
6	Engagement		
7	<b>Assessment</b>	*	
8	Intervention		
9	Evaluation		

\* Highlighted in this course

The following set of tables explains the highlighted competencies for this course, the related student learning outcomes, and the method of assessment.

Competencies/ Knowledge, Values, Skills	Student Learning Outcomes	Method of Assessment
<b>Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the role of science in the profession's value base, mission and history.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks.</li> </ol>	<p>2, Participation</p> <p>2, Participation, Final</p> <p>Participation</p>
<b>Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and ethical approaches to building knowledge [for diverse populations and settings].</li> <li>5. Formulate meaningful questions that can be informed by existing research or the use of scientific reasoning.</li> <li>6. Appropriately and efficiently locate existing data sources, data, and research evidence from multi-disciplinary sources.</li> <li>7. Engage in critical analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>9. Use and translate research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.</li> <li>10. Interpret the meaning of foundation-level statistical information presented in a wide range of information sources.</li> </ol>	<p>2, 3 Final</p> <p>2, 3, Participation</p> <p>1, Participation</p> <p>2, 3, Participation</p> <p>2, 3, Participation</p> <p>2, 3, Participation</p> <p>Final</p>

## VII. Course Assignment(s)/Examination; Due Dates and Grading

Assignment	Due	% of Final Grade
<b>1. Location and Synopsis of Data and Scientific Info</b>	Week 7	15%
<b>2. Critical Appraisal Journal - Short Reflective Journal Entries</b>	Weeks 5, 6, 10, 12, 13	30%
<b>3. Evidence-based Practice/Policy Problem</b>	Week 15	25%
<b>4. Final Exam (Empirical Foundation)</b>	Finals Week	20%
<b>5. Class Participation</b>	Ongoing	10%

SOWK 546 contains a collection of assignments designed to support students' (a) development of a broad, critically-minded appreciation for the role of science, scientific thinking, and research in advancing the goals of the social work profession; and (b) ability to thoughtfully and critically incorporate existing research evidence into thinking about real-world practice problems.

### Assignments:

- 1. Location and Synopsis of Data and Scientific Information (15%)** - Students will locate existing knowledge relevant to their identified practice based question. Students will produce a list of selected references, representing a broad range of multidisciplinary sources and types of data and science.
- 2. Reflective Critical Appraisal Journal Entries (30%)** – Students will create and maintain a critical appraisal journal, with entries centered around social work research identity and methodological reflections from Units 7 - 12.
- 3. Evidence-based Practice Problem: Use of Data and Science for a Purpose, 25%)** – Throughout the semester, students have reflected on a meaningful practice-based question that can be informed by existing data or science. For this assignment, students will utilize the data they located, their reflective journals, and class activities to produce a creative product that summarizes and interprets the evidence and evaluates the meaning of the evidence for the particular practice problem selected.
- 4. Final Exam (20%)** – 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.
- 5. Class Participation (10%)** -- It is expected that the student will attend class, participate in class discussions, and submit work promptly. Failure to meet these expectations may result in reduction in student grades. Student participation in this course is considered essential to his/her growth. In the classroom, students will be asked to discuss the assigned reading material and make connections with their own experiences.

Course grades will be based on the following scale:

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- <b>(Failing Grade)</b>	70 – 72	C- <b>(Failing Grade)</b>

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.\*

## **VI. Course Textbooks and Other Resources**

### **Required Textbook**

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

Additional required readings are identified in the course outline under individual class sessions. These readings may be accessed in one of two ways: 1) hardcopy from the USC library journals or on-line through the USC library e-journals; and/or 2) through external links posted on Blackboard or as identified in the course outline. Readings in addition to those in the course outline may be identified and assigned during the course of the semester.

### **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.

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.

### **Recommended Resources for APA Style Formatting**

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

The OWL at Purdue. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

## Course Overview

Unit	Topic
<b>PART I: SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY</b>	
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Course Introduction and Overview Scientific Thinking and Research in the Social Work Profession. Values, Ethics, and Social Diversity
2	<input type="checkbox"/> History of Science and Research in Social Work
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Work Colleagues Today Benefitting Individuals and Society with Scientific Thinking and Research
4	<input type="checkbox"/> The Ethical, Political, and Cultural Context of Social Work Knowledge and Inquiry
<b>PART II: LOCATION AND USE OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE TO INFORM PRACTICE, POLICY, AND SERVICE DELIVERY (GUIDED APPLICATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE)</b>	
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence-based Practice and the Framing of Practice Relevant Questions
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Efficient Location of Relevant Existing Knowledge and Data Sources
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Experiments
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Non-equivalent Comparison Group Designs
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Time-Series and Single-Case Designs
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Nonexperimental Quantitative Studies
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Qualitative Studies
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Support of Independent Problem Formulation and Evidence-Informed Practice
<b>PART III: MOVING BEYOND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE TO RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE AND PRACTICE-INFORMED RESEARCH</b>	
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuing Issues in Evidence-based Practice
15	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning for Practice Evaluation and Practice-Informed Research
<b>• Final Exam to occur during Finals Week at the appropriate time for each course section.</b>	



# Course Schedule—Detailed Description

## PART I: SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY

### Unit 1 (SWI): Overview of Scientific Thinking and Research in the Social Work Profession. Values, Ethics, and Social Diversity

#### Unit Objectives:

- To provide a course overview as well as a vision for data and science-related training that students will receive over the course of their MSW program.
- To help students identify with the social work profession, with an emphasis on the importance of social work knowledge and inquiry within the profession.

#### Topics

- Welcome and introductions
- Course overview
  - Social Work and Science
  - Evidence-based Practice
  - Preparation for Other Roles (e.g., Assessment, Evaluation, Quality Assurance)
- Roots of the Social Work Profession and the Social Work Identity
- Social Work Knowledge and Inquiry and Its Connections to Social Work Values
  - Service; Social justice; Dignity and worth of the person; Importance of human relationships; Integrity; and Competence
- Science vs. Pseudoscience

## Unit 2 (SWI): History of Science and Research in Social Work – Role Models for Advancing Knowledge and Enhancing Impact

### Unit Objectives:

- To gain insight into how data and science have contributed to the mission of social work
- To develop appreciation for the process of inquiry, including openness to new ideas, creativity, progression in the growth of knowledge, and relevance to practice, policy, and/or service delivery

### Topics

- The Science of Social Work
- Outstanding historical examples for study and discussion
  - The Pittsburgh Survey
  - Assertive Community Treatment
  - Communities That Care
  - Hull House Maps and Papers
  - Housing First
- Principles for how data and science enhance the social work profession

### Required Reading

#### *All Students*

•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>

•In Unit 1, you were asked to select one of several signature efforts to study in which data and science played a major role in advancing social work goals. Student groups are expected to come to class prepared to discuss issues related to the example they have studied. Core readings for each topic are identified in a separate document. Each student in a group is expected to read one core document and to locate and read at least one more on their own beyond their selection from the core identified readings. Areas of focus include: The Pittsburgh Survey, Assertive Community Treatment, Communities That Care, Hull House Maps and Papers, and Housing First.

## Unit 3 (SWI): Social Work Colleagues Today Benefitting Individuals and Society with Scientific Thinking and Research

### Unit Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of the diverse ways in which data, science, and research are active parts of the routine work lives of professional social workers
- To inspire enthusiasm among students for the skills they would like to develop personally

### Topics

- Ways to Improve Practice, Policy and Service Delivery with Data and Scientific Inquiry
- Outstanding examples of current professional practice
  - Goal setting and effective outcome assessment with clients
  - Intervention decision-making
  - Program development and program evaluation
  - Community needs assessment
  - Program or population-level use of administrative data to inform decisions
  - Research clusters
- Principles for how scientific thinking and research enhance the social work profession

### Required Reading

•Krysiak, J. L., & Finn, J. (2013). *Research for Effective Social Work Practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Routledge: New York. Chapter 1 – The Context of Social Work Research.

•Additional resources this week include 3-6 short videos (15-20 minutes each) of current professionals discussing diverse ways in which data, science, and research inform their work and professional goals/initiatives.

## Unit 4: (SWI) The Ethical, Political and Cultural Context of Social Work Knowledge and Inquiry

### Unit Objectives:

- To debate and develop a sense of the boundaries of a Science of Social Work
- To develop awareness of how political and cultural contexts, and historical experiences influence beliefs about and trust in the role of science in improving human lives, particularly for vulnerable and disenfranchised groups.
- To enhance students' capacity to think critically about ethical issues in science and data use

### Topics

- The roles of culture and diversity in understanding social phenomena
- Biases in human understanding and research methods
- Science, research and use of data in a respect and trust-based social context

### Required Reading

- Krysiak, J. L., & Finn, J. (2013). *Research for Effective Social Work Practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Routledge: New York. Chapter 2 – The Politics and Ethics of Social Work Research
- Achenbach, Joel (2015). “The War on Science” National Geographic. March, 34-47.
- Brekke, J. S. (2012). Shaping a Science of Social Work. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(5), 455-464. doi: 10.1177/1049731512441263  
<http://rsw.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/04/03/1049731512441263>
- Gehlert, S. (2015). Social Work and Science. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 1-6.

### Recommended Resources

- 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. doi: 10.1177/1049731513511119  
<http://rsw.sagepub.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/24/5/527.full.pdf+html>

### 📄 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://opr.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>
- b. Presidential Apology – USPHS Syphilis Study at Tuskegee  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11A-YP24QwA>

## PART II: LOCATION AND USE OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE TO INFORM PRACTICE, POLICY, AND SERVICE DELIVERY (GUIDED APPLICATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE)

### Unit 5: Evidence-based Practice and the Framing of Practice-Relevant Questions

#### Unit Objectives:

- To introduce the idea of a *process* of using existing knowledge relevant to practice and policy questions
- To develop the ability to frame meaningful questions that can guide a search for empirical evidence to inform practice and policy questions

#### Topics

- Evidence-based practice
- Framing of practice relevant questions (knowledge gaps)
- Framing knowledge gap in two vignettes
  - Individual client practice example (Problem-solving therapy)
  - Policy example (Conditional cash transfers and child health)

#### Required Reading

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

(please read book chapters across Units 5 and 6)

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

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

Chapter 3: Research Hierarchies (pp. 38-58)

Chapter 4: Criteria for Inferring Effectiveness (pp. 61-84)

•Eskin, M. (2013). *Problem Solving Therapy in Clinical Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Waltham, MA: Elsevier. Chapter 1. Definition and Concepts (pp. 1-7).

•Rawlings, L. B., & Rubio, G. M. (2003). Evaluating the impact of conditional cash transfer programs: Lessons from Latin America. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3119*, pp. 1-6.

•Rosen, A. (2003). Evidence-based social work practice: Challenges and promise. *Social Work Research*, 27, 197-208.

<http://swr.oxfordjournals.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/27/4/197.full.pdf+html>

•Shlonsky, A., & Gibbs, L. (2004). Will the real evidence-based practice please stand up? Teaching the process of evidence-based practice to the helping professions. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*, 4(2), 137-153. <http://btci.stanford.clockss.org/cgi/reprint/4/2/137>

## Unit 6: Efficient Location of Relevant Existing Knowledge and Data Resources

### Unit Objectives:

- To help students conceptualize types of data and science that can inform their practice and policy-relevant questions (using vignettes from Unit 5)
- To train students to use technological resources to locate data and scientific information efficiently and effectively

### Topics

- Locating Existing Social Work Knowledge, Evidence and Resources from Multidisciplinary Sources
- Internet and Technology Literacy

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

(please read book chapters across Units 5 and 6)

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

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

Chapter 3: Research Hierarchies (pp. 38-58)

Chapter 4: Criteria for Inferring Effectiveness (pp. 61-84)

## Unit 7: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision-Making: Interpretation and Critical Appraisal of Experiments

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise experimental evidence relevant to specific practice or policy questions
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical reading and interpretation of different types of information for two vignettes
  - Experimental Designs
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 5. Critically Appraising Experiments (pp. 85-109).

•Alexopoulos, G. S., Raue, P., & Areán, P. (2003). Problem-solving therapy versus supportive therapy in geriatric major depression with executive dysfunction. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 11(1), 46-52.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/science/article/pii/S1064748112612391>

•Choi, N. G., Hegel, M. T., Marti, C. N., Marinucci, M. L., Sirrianni, L., & Bruce, M. L. (2014). Telehealth problem-solving therapy for depressed low-income homebound older adults. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 22(3), 263-271.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/science/article/pii/S1064748113000420>

•Gertler, P. (2004). Do conditional cash transfers improve child health? Evidence from PROGRESA's control randomized experiment. *American Economic Review*, 336-341.

[http://www.jstor.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/stable/3592906?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/stable/3592906?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

\*Note, in units 7 through 12, a student selected example may be identified for discussion from time-to-time and added to the required reading list.

## Unit 8: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision-Making: Critical Appraisal of Non-equivalent Comparison Group Designs

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise quasi-experimental evidence relevant to a specific practice or policy question.
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical reading and interpretation of different types of information for two vignettes
  - Quasi-experimental studies
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 6. Critically Appraising Quasi-Experiments: Nonequivalent Comparison Group Designs (pp. 110-129).

•Arean, P., Hegel, M., Vannoy, S., Fan, M., & Unutzer, J. (2008). Effectiveness of problem-solving therapy for older, primary care patients with depression: Results from the IMPACT project. *The Gerontologist*, 48, 311-323.

<http://gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/48/3/311.full.pdf+html>

• Mourão, L., Ferreira, M. C., & Jesus, A. M. D. (2012). Evaluation of the Brazilian Family Grant Program: a quasi-experimental study in the State of Rio de Janeiro. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 25(4), 719-729. <http://www.scielo.br.libproxy1.usc.edu/pdf/prc/v25n4/11.pdf>



## Unit 9: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision Making: Critical Appraisal of Time-Series and Single-Case Designs

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise time-series and single-case design evidence relevant to a specific practice or policy question
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical reading and interpretation of different types of information for two vignettes
  - Time-Series Designs
  - Single-Case Designs
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 7. Critically Appraising Quasi-Experiments: Time-Series Designs and Single-Case Designs (pp. 130-150).

•Jacobson, N. S. (1977). Problem solving and contingency contracting in the treatment of marital discord. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 45(1), 92.

<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/10.1037/0022-006X.45.1.92>

•Rubin, A., & Knox, K. S. (1996). Data analysis problems in single-case evaluation: Issues for research on social work practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 6(1), 40-65.

<http://rsw.sagepub.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/6/1/40.full.pdf+html>

## Unit 10: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision-Making: Critical Appraisal of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise systematic reviews and meta-analyses relevant to a specific practice or policy question
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical reading and interpretation of systematic reviews and meta-analyses for select vignette (Trauma-informed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)
  - Systematic literature reviews
  - Meta-analyses
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 7. Critically Appraising Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (pp. 151-178).

•Cary, C., & McMillen, C. J. (2012). The data behind the dissemination. A systematic review of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for use with children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 748-757. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0041237/>

•Kowalik, J., Weller, J., Venter, J., & Drachman, D. (2011). Cognitive behavioral therapy for the treatment of pediatric posttraumatic stress disorder: a review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 42(3), 405-413. [http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/pdfs/ptsd\\_review12.pdf](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/pdfs/ptsd_review12.pdf)

## Unit 11: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision-Making: Critical Appraisal of Nonexperimental Quantitative Designs

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise nonexperimental quantitative designs
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical orientation and reading/use of different types of information for select vignette (Targeting prevention services)
- Nonexperimental Quantitative Studies
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 9. Critically Appraising Non-experimental Quantitative Studies (pp. 181-203).

•Brown, J., Cohen, P., Johnson, J. G., & Salzinger, S. (1998). A longitudinal analysis of risk factors for child maltreatment: Findings of a 17-year prospective study of officially recorded and self-reported child abuse and neglect. *Child abuse & neglect*, 22(11), 1065-1078. [http://ac.els-cdn.com.libproxy2.usc.edu/S0145213498000878/1-s2.0-S0145213498000878-main.pdf?\\_tid=0fbf6636-4860-11e5-a543-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1440201492\\_58803a21d00e66493e7373a25f1f32b8](http://ac.els-cdn.com.libproxy2.usc.edu/S0145213498000878/1-s2.0-S0145213498000878-main.pdf?_tid=0fbf6636-4860-11e5-a543-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1440201492_58803a21d00e66493e7373a25f1f32b8)

•Putnam-Hornstein, E., & Needell, B. (2011). Predictors of child protective service contact between birth and age five: An examination of California's 2002 birth cohort. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(8), 1337-1344. <http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy2.usc.edu/science/article/pii/S0190740911001289>

## Unit 12: Incorporating Existing Knowledge Into Thinking and Decision-Making: Critical Appraisal of Qualitative Studies

### Unit Objectives:

- To prepare students to interpret and appraise studies that involve qualitative methods
- To develop students' ability to summarize the meaning of empirical evidence in ways accessible to appropriate clients/constituencies

### Topics

- Critical orientation and reading/use of different types of information
  - Qualitative Studies
- Assessment of strengths and limitations of knowledge base (synthesis)
  - Cultural/contextual relevance (generalizability)
  - Weight of evidence

### Required Reading

•Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 10. Critically Appraising Qualitative Studies (pp. 204-225).

•Murray, L. K, Skavonski, S., Michalopoulos, L. M., Bolton, P. A., Bass, J. K., Familiar, I., Imasiku, M., & Cohen, J. (2015). Counselor and client perspectives of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for children in Zambia: A qualitative study. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/libproxy2.usc.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/15374416.2013.859079>

•Cohen, J. A., Mannrino, A., Perel, J. M., & Staron, V. (2007). A pilot randomized controlled trial of combined trauma-focused CBT and Sertraline for Childhood PTSD symptoms. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 46, 811-819.

[http://www.jaacap.com/article/S0890-8567\(09\)62169-9/pdf](http://www.jaacap.com/article/S0890-8567(09)62169-9/pdf)

## Unit 13: Support of Independent Problem Formulation and Evidence-Informed Practice

### Unit Objectives:

- To facilitate ongoing independent work of students around addressing an evidence-based practice question.
- To support integration of all elements of the process of driving toward improved practice in which empirical evidence plays an important role.

### Topics

- **Instructor support for independent student projects**

## PART III: MOVING BEYOND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE TO RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE AND PRACTICE-INFORMED RESEARCH

## Unit 14: Continuing Issues in Evidence-based Practice

### Unit Objectives:

- To critically reflect on the EBP process, including its strengths and limitations, with an emphasis on understanding how to use evidence in complex, real-world contexts.
- To address the evidence-based practice process from the perspective of life-long learning
- 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

### Topics

- Challenges to Evidence-based Practice in Practice
- Social Justice and Evidence-based Practice
- Using and Translating Research Findings & Evidence in Diverse, Dynamic and Ambiguous Practice Contexts

### Required Reading

•Soydan, H., & Palinkas, L. A. (2014). *Evidence-based Practice in Social Work: Development of a New Professional Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge. Chapter 5. Challenges of using EBP in social work practice (pp. 81-95).

•Soydan, H., & Palinkas, L. A. (2014). *Evidence-based Practice in Social Work: Development of a New Professional Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge. Chapter 6. Controversies (pp. 96-112).

## Unit 15: Planning for Practice Evaluation and Practice-Informed Research

### Unit Objectives:

- To provide a course summary and to prepare students for their second semester by refreshing students regarding the multiple ways (not just the evidence-based practice process) in which social workers use science, scientific thinking and data in their professional roles.
- To motivate students to begin to think about the training they will receive in their second semester and about the kinds of problems that are of interest to them as professionals in training.
- This session should clearly communicate that students:
  - (a) Are capable and competent in participating in the use of evidence to inform meaningful practice and service delivery questions; and
  - (b) Will be expected to go considerably beyond this skill to develop further expertise that will allow them to engage in practice evaluation, use of data to plan service delivery design, and/or to contribute to the advancement of social work knowledge.

### Topics

- Planning for Practice Evaluation and Practice-Informed Research
  - Assessment
  - Evaluation
  - Research
- Course Wrap-up

### Required Reading

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

<http://rsw.sagepub.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/content/24/5/517.full.pdf+html>

•Kelly, E., Kiger, H., Gaba., R., Pancake, L., Pilon, D., Murch, L., Knox, L., Meyer, M., Brekke, J. S. (in press). The Recovery-Oriented Care Collaborative: A practice-based research network to improve care for people with serious mental illnesses. *Psychiatric Services*.

## University Policies and Guidelines

### VII. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every class and to remain in class for the duration of the unit. 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 email (mandayam@usc.edu) 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 which 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.

### VIII. 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.

### IX. 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 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.

## 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.

Students may also sign up for a USC Trojans Alert account to receive alerts and emergency notifications on their cell phone, pager, PDA, or e-mail account. Register at <https://trojansalert.usc.edu>.

UNIVERSITY PARK CAMPUS		ACADEMIC CENTERS	
City Center	Front of Building (12 <sup>th</sup> & Olive)	Orange County	Faculty Parking Lot
MRF	Lot B	San Diego	Building Parking Lot
SWC	Lot B	Skirball	Front of Building
VKC	McCarthy Quad		
WPH	McCarthy Quad		

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

### 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 form.”

## **X. Policy on Late or Make-Up Work**

Students are expected to hand in all work by the due date. If work is submitted late *for any reason*, except for approved extensions and DSP accommodations, points will be deducted as follows: after grade is assigned based on merit– 10 points will be deducted for the first day late; two points per day will be deducted for each additional day until the assignment is turned in. The instructor will not be able to provide feedback on drafts of assignments.

## **XI. Policy on Changes to the Syllabus and/or Course Requirements**



It may be necessary to make some adjustments in the syllabus during the semester in order to respond to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances. Adjustments that are made will be communicated to students both verbally and in writing.

## **XII. Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (Optional)**

*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.

## **XIII. Complaints**

If you have a complaint or concern about the course or the instructor, please discuss it first with the instructor. If you feel cannot discuss it with the instructor, contact the chair of the course,

John Brekke. If you do not receive a satisfactory response or solution, contact your advisor and/or Vice Dean Dr. Paul Maiden for further guidance.

### **Tips for Maximizing Student 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 and/or in blackboard-based virtual 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.