

USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck

School of Social Work

Science of Social Work

SOWK 546

Section #67048

Section #67049

3 Units

“Most of the world will make decisions by either guessing or using their gut. They will be either lucky or wrong.” ~ Suhail Doshi

Spring 2019

SYLLABUS



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Course Day & Times: Section #67048 Monday 4:45 – 6:05 pm PST
Section #67049 Monday 6:25 – 7:45 pm PST
Course Folder: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=19wXhO3oJ8izHlpcEaimSZ9yS5F9XpxPL>

NOTE: ALL COURSE MATERIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE GOOGLE DRIVE COURSE FOLDER.

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 this course will develop an appreciation for the historical and contemporary roles of the science of social work, that is the use of empirical evidence and inquiry to advance the goals of professional social work. They also will develop a strong understanding of how the science of social work can inform and improve their own professional practice.

The course is designed to provide students with inspiration and training on harnessing their own critical and creative thinking. Emphasis is placed on the process of conceptualizing social work practice problems and questions (or “practice dilemmas”) that can be addressed by the science of social work.

Students will enhance their ability to effectively and efficiently locate the best available evidence for informing their professional practice, with a focus on locating evidence presented in articles published in high-impact journals. They also will develop strategies for appraising the level, quality, and applicability of empirical evidence as it relates to their practice questions and areas of professional interest. Additionally, students will strengthen their ability to translate and apply the best available evidence while considering their clients’ values and wishes, their own practice knowledge and abilities, and contextual factors. Throughout the course, students will reflect on and come to better understand the role that cultural diversity and difference play in the location, appraisal, and application of social work evidence.

By the end of the course students will be well-versed in the concept of the science of social work and in how to apply the concept as consumers of social work knowledge. They will be prepared to enter subsequent courses designed to enhance their ability to use the science of social work to evaluate professional practice (including their own) in a specialized area of practice.

IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Objective #	Objective
1	Appreciate how the science of social work is integral to professional social work and to one’s own identity and development as a professional social worker.
2	Use reflection and self-assessment as part of routine professional practice in order to identify practice problems and questions (i.e., practice dilemmas) that could be addressed by enhancing one’s own professional knowledge. Formulate practice questions and effectively and efficiently locate the best available evidence for addressing specified practice questions.
3	Apply critical and creative thinking when appraising the strength of quantitative and qualitative research findings.
4	Use the best available empirical evidence to address practice problems and questions. Consider context, diversity and difference, and ethical and political considerations when adapting and translating empirical evidence in professional practice.
5	Be prepared to enter more advanced courses that provide training in the use of the science of social work to evaluate professional practice in a specialized area of practice.

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) self-reflection;
- (b) didactic and interactive presentation of material;
- (c) small and large group discussion;
- (d) student-led discussions; and
- (e) experiential activities.

Overall, students will have substantial involvement in the shared identification of materials for discussion in the course as instructor and students work together to address meaningful practice and policy questions. A number of course assignments and activities ask students to address practice problems and questions of interest to them. Through task-centered assignments and activities, students will assume responsibilities for learning and for creating an engaging learning environment that responds to their passions, interests, goals, and abilities, and that address some of the challenges related to the application of the science of social work in professional practice. Online teaching and learning environments and platforms 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.

Instructor's Oath

"As your instructor, to each of you, I pledge the following:

- *To appreciate you, your time and your effort;*
- *To be available and responsible;*
- *To be encouraging and supportive;*
- *To be objective and fair;*
- *To be prompt and timely;*
- *To be respectful, professional and appropriate;*
- *To accommodate when appropriate and within reason;*
- *To try to be an engaging and effective instructor; and*
- *To strive for excellence in carrying out my responsibilities as an instructor as described in the USC Faculty Handbook.*

If at any time you feel I have not honored this oath, please contact me so that I am aware of your concerns and have an opportunity to address them."

VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following table lists the nine Social Work competencies as defined by the Council on Social Work Education’s 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.

Social Work Competencies	
1	Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior*
2	Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice
3	Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4	Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice*
5	Engage in Policy Practice
6	Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7	Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8	Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9	Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities*

* Indicates competencies highlighted in this course

The following table shows the competencies highlighted in this course, the related course objectives, student learning outcomes, and dimensions of each competency measured. The final column provides the location of course content related to the competency and methods for assessing whether the outcomes have been achieved.

Competency	Objectives	Behaviors	Dimensions	Content
<p>Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice</p> <p>Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.</p>	<p>1. Appreciate how the science of social work is integral to professional social work and to one's own identity and development as a professional social worker.</p> <p>2. Use reflection and self-assessment as part of routine professional practice in order to identify practice problems and questions (i.e., practice dilemmas) that could be addressed by enhancing one's own professional knowledge. Formulate practice questions and effectively and efficiently locate the best available evidence for addressing specified practice questions.</p>	<p>4a. Identify ways in which professional interests and goals can be enhanced through reflection, the use of empirical evidence, and inquiry.</p> <p>4b. Use professional knowledge and experience to inform the use of empirical evidence and inquiry.</p> <p>4c. Apply critical and creative thinking to engage in appraisal of types and sources of empirical evidence.</p>	<p>Values, Knowledge, Skills, and Cognitive and Affective Processes</p>	<p>Units 1 - 4</p> <p>Assignment 1</p> <p>Class Participation</p>
	<p>3. Apply critical and creative thinking when appraising the strength of quantitative and qualitative research findings.</p>	<p>4d. Apply critical and creative thinking to engage in appraisal of the strength of quantitative and qualitative research findings.</p>	<p>Knowledge, Skills</p>	<p>Units 5 - 14</p> <p>Assignment 2</p> <p>Assignment 3</p> <p>Class Participation</p>
	<p>4. Use the best available empirical evidence to address practice problems and questions. Consider context, diversity and difference, and ethical and political considerations when adapting and translating empirical evidence in professional practice.</p>	<p>4e. Use and translate empirical evidence to inform and improve social work practice, policy, and service delivery.</p>	<p>Knowledge, Skills</p>	<p>Units 11 - 14</p> <p>Assignment 3</p> <p>Class Participation</p>

Competency	Objectives	Behaviors	Dimensions	Content
<p>Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities</p> <p>Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.</p>	<p>4. Use the best available empirical evidence to addressing practice problems and questions. Consider context, diversity and difference, and ethical and political considerations when adapting and translating empirical evidence in professional practice.</p> <p>5. Be prepared to enter more advanced courses that provide training in the use of the science of social work to evaluate professional practice in a specialized area of practice.</p>	<p>9a. Apply evaluation findings to improve professional practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.</p>	<p>Knowledge, Skills</p>	<p>Units 11 - 14</p> <p>Assignment 3</p> <p>Class Participation</p>

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

Assignments

Assignments for the course consist of 3 written assignments, including (1) a Professional Knowledge Critical Reflection and Self-Assessment, (2) a Professional Resource Collection and Research Article Appraisal, and (3) a Professional Practice Brief. All assignments are designed to relate to and build on one another. As such, it is imperative that assignments be submitted by their due dates. Assignments should be submitted as described in the guidelines for the assignment.

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 <i>Professional Knowledge Critical Reflection and Self-Assessment</i>	Unit 5 Feb 4	25%
Assignment 2 <i>Professional Resource Collection and Research Article Appraisal</i>	Unit 11 Mar 18	30%
Assignment 3 <i>Evidence-Based Practice Brief</i>	Exam Week Apr 22	35%
Active and Proactive Learning, & Meaningful Class Participation	Units 1 – 14	10%

Assignment 1 - Professional Knowledge Critical Reflection and Self-Assessment (25% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 1 is to increase your appreciation of the science of social work by helping you to identify ways in which personal passions and professional interests and goals can be nurtured and enhanced through reflection and self-assessment. The assignment consists of three parts. The first part of the assignment addresses the connection between your cultural characteristics, life experiences and professional identity as a social worker. The second part of the assignment relates to current areas of professional interest and the professional knowledge you currently have in your specified area of interest. Finally, in the third part of the assignment, you will develop practice questions related to your specified areas of interest.

Assignment 2 - Professional Resource Collection and Research Article Appraisal (30% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 2 is to enhance your ability to effectively and efficiently locate information and empirical evidence relevant to specialized practice in areas that are consistent with your professional goals and interests. The assignment consists of three parts. The first part of the assignment involves locating different kinds of information relevant to one of the practice questions that your formulated in Part 3 of Assignment 1. The second part of the assignment focuses on locating academic articles describing empirical research studies relevant

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.

to the practice question that you formulated. During the course, you will learn a core set of concepts and terminology related to scientific inquiry that you will be expected to understand and apply in the final part of the assignment, which consists of a critical appraisal of a research article and study.

Assignment 3 – Evidence-Based Practice Brief (35% of course grade)

The overarching aim of Assignment 3 is to prepare you for professional practice by enhancing your ability to integrate, translate, apply, and adopt the best available empirical evidence with client characteristics and goals, your professional knowledge and expertise, 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 best available empirical evidence related to the practice question and the process of searching for evidence. The 3rd and 4th parts of the assignment involve critically appraising the **body** of empirical evidence and using the best available empirical evidence to address your specified practice question in the context of a hypothetical practice situation.

**Active and Proactive Learning, & Meaningful Class Participation (10% of course grade)
Units 1 – 15**

You are expected to be active participants in your learning and proactive. This will require mental, physical and perhaps emotional effort from you, both inside and outside the formal classroom. **Active learning** involves assuming responsibility for learning; completing required readings and materials 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, you 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 you participate in or help create an environment that is open, professional, engaging, fun, challenging, supportive, and effective. “Environment” refers to the formal 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, between 0 and 2 points can be earned, for a maximum of 10 points.

Criteria	Never or Rarely	Regularly	Often or Always
<input type="checkbox"/> Student demonstrates active and proactive learning.	0	1	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Student communicates with the instructor about (a) the course, (b) her/his/their performance in the course, and (c) the instructor’s performance in the course.	0	1	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Student’s communication, behavior, and participation are respectful, professional, and appropriate (this includes appropriate use of	0	1	2

desktops/laptops and mobile devices during class).			
<input type="checkbox"/> Student participates in a meaningful way and helps to maintain a positive learning environment.	0	1	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Student helps <i>create</i> a positive learning environment.	0	1	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

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](#)>.

Required and recommended course readings are presented in the detailed course schedule. The readings are available in the course textbook and through ARES.

Recommended Supplements

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

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

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>

Course Overview

The table below presents the topics for each unit of instruction. You are expected to attend class having already completed the required reading and material.

Unit	Topic	Due
PART I – SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND POLICY		
1 Jan 7	Engaging in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome and Introductions ▪ Overview of Course and Syllabus ▪ Introduction to Evidence-based Practice (EBP) 	
2 Jan 14	Introduction to the Science of Social Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction to the Science of Social Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using Research to Inform Decision-making vs. Conducting Research ▪ Exploring Your Professional Interests and Goals ▪ Review Assignment 1 Guidelines 	
3 Jan 21 MLK Day NO CLASS	<p style="color: red; text-decoration: underline;">NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES.</p> <p>Formulating Practice Questions (NOTE: THIS CONTENT WILL BE COVERED IN UNIT 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessing Clients and Identifying Professional Knowledge Needs ▪ Identifying Practice Issues, Dilemmas and Professional Knowledge Needs ▪ Using the PICO Framework to Formulate Practice Questions ▪ Using Evidence and Research Hierarchies to Determine the “Best Available Evidence” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels of Empirical Evidence ▪ Strategies for Appraising Levels of Evidence 	
4 Jan 28	Searching for Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary sources of Information, Professional Knowledge, and Empirical Evidence ▪ Finding Relevant Empirical Knowledge and the Best Available Evidence ▪ Strategies for Appraising Sources of Knowledge 	
PART II – APPRAISING THE QUALITY AND APPLICABILITY OF RELEVANT EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE		
5 Feb 4	The Research Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding and Appraising Research Articles 	<u>ASSIGNMENT 1</u> <u>DUE</u>

Unit	Topic	Due
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying Research Goals and Questions ▪ Strategies for for Appraising Quality of Evidence ▪ Review Assignment 2 Guidelines 	Practice Knowledge Critical Reflection and Self-Assessment
6 Feb 11	Measurement Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantitative and Qualitative Measurement 	
7 Feb 18 <i>PRESIDENTS DAY</i> <i>NO CLASS</i>	<u>NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES.</u> Appraising Measurement Methods and Instruments (NOTE: THIS CONTENT WILL BE COVERED IN UNIT 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Validity and Reliability ▪ Appraising Measurement Methods ▪ Appraising and Selecting Instruments for Professional Social Work Practice 	
8 Feb 25	Sampling Methods and Appraising Sampling Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Populations and Samples ▪ Nonrandom and Random Sampling Methods ▪ Appraising Sampling Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External Validity and Threats to External Validity ▪ Strategies for Appraising Applicability of Evidence 	
9 Mar 4	Group-based Design Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs ▪ Non-Experimental Designs 	
10 Mar 11 <i>SPRING BREAK</i> <i>NO CLASS</i>	<u>NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE BREAK.</u> Appraising Evidence from Studies Using Group-based Designs (NOTE: THIS CONTENT WILL BE COVERED IN UNIT 9) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Causality and Criteria for Inferring Effectiveness ▪ Internal Validity and Threats to Internal Validity ▪ Appraising Research Designs 	
PART III – USING EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE TO INFORM PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE		
11 Mar 18	Using Single-Case Design Evidence and Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appraising Evidence from Studies Using Single-System Designs ▪ Using Single-System Design Methods to Monitor Implementation, Change, and Impact 	<u>ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE</u> Professional Resource Collection and Research

Unit	Topic	Due
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Assignment 3 Guidelines 	Article Appraisal
12 Mar 25	Using Existing and Qualitative Data and Records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from Qualitative Studies 	
13 Apr 1 & Apr 8	Using Quantitative Data and Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from Quantitative Studies 	
14 Apr 15	Using the Science of Social Work to Improve Practice, Policy, Services, and Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting and Translating Evidence into Effective Practice Next Steps for the Science of Social Work Course Review and Wrap-Up 	
Apr 22	EXAM WEEK	<u>ASSIGNMENT 3</u> <u>DUE</u> Professional Practice Brief

IMPORTANT DATES:

- **January 28 – Last day to add/drop without a mark of “W”**
- **April 4 – Last day to drop with a mark of “W”**

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
JAN 7

Objectives

- 1) To provide an overview of the course.
- 2) To establish the relationship between the Science of Social Work and EBP.
- 3) To illustrate the diverse ways in which the Science of Social Work and EBP are integral to professional social work practice.

Topics

- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview of Course and Syllabus
- Introduction to Evidence-based Practice (EBP)
- The EBP Process

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice*:

Chapter 1 - Introduction to evidence-based practice (pp. 3-27).

Chapter 2 - Steps in the EBP process (pp. 28-49).

Recommended Reading

Soydan, H., & Palinkas, L. A. (2014). *Evidence-based Practice in Social Work: Development of a New Professional Culture*:

Chapter 2 - Evidence-based practice (pp. 11-35).

Introduction to the Science of Social Work

UNIT 2
JAN 14

Objectives

- 1) To deepen your understanding of the mission of the social work profession and to enhance your identification with the profession, including the profession's emphasis on social work knowledge and science.
- 2) To introduce the Science of Social Work and establish its value and role in professional social work practice.

Topics

- Introduction to the Science of Social Work
 - Using Research to Inform Decision-making vs. Conducting Research
- Exploring Your Professional Interests and Goals
- Review Assignment 1 Guidelines

Required Reading

Please carefully review the Course Syllabus.

Brekke, J. S. (2012). Shaping a science of social work. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(5), 455-464.

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

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.

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>

Recommended Reading

Council on Social Work Education (2015). *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, Competencies 4 and 9*. Washington, DC.

National Association of Social Work (2017). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC.

MLK DAY – NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS ACTIVITIES.

**UNIT 3
JAN 21**

Formulating Practice Questions

Objectives

- 1) To strength your ability to accurately assess clients, identify professional knowledge needs, and formulate practice questions.
- 2) To enhance your capacity to use evidence and research hierarchies to determine what type of evidence is considered the most appropriate for enhancing professional knowledge.

Topics

- Identifying Practice Issues, Dilemmas and Professional Knowledge Needs
- Using the PICO Framework to Formulate Practice Questions
- Using Evidence and Research Hierarchies to Determine the “Best Available Evidence”
 - Levels of Empirical Evidence
- Strategies for Appraising Levels of Evidence

Required Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work:*

Chapter 4 - Assessment in clinical social work and identifying practice information needs (pp. 55–77).

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner’s Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice:*

Chapter 3 - Research hierarchies: Which types of research are best for which questions? (pp. 50-67).

Searching for Evidence

UNIT 4
JAN 28

Objectives

- 1) To expand your ability to use different resources to locate information, knowledge and evidence efficiently and effectively.

Topics

- Multi-disciplinary sources of Information, Professional Knowledge, and Empirical Evidence
- Finding Relevant Empirical Knowledge and the Best Available Evidence
- Strategies for Appraising Sources of Knowledge

Required Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work*:
Chapter 5 - Locating practice research (79-89).

Erren, T. C., Cullen, P., & Erren, M. (2009). How to surf today's information tsunami: On the craft of effective reading. *Medical Hypotheses*, 73(3), 278-279.

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Appendix A - Using the Library (pp. 373-380).

SOWK 546 Course Guide and Social Work Research Guide:
<http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork/sowk546>

Recommended Reading

Soydan, H., & Palinkas, L. A. (2014). *Evidence-based Practice in Social Work: Development of a New Professional Culture*:
Chapter 3 - Evidence and its sources (pp. 35-65).

USC Social Work Research Guide:
<http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork>

PART II – APPRAISING THE QUALITY AND APPLICABILITY OF RELEVANT EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE

The Research Process

UNIT 5
FEB 4

Objectives

- 1) To provide you with a foundational understanding of the logic and process of scientific inquiry.
- 2) To strengthen your ability to identify research goals and questions and to determine the methods appropriate for addressing different types of goals and questions.

Topics

- Identifying Research Goals and Questions
- Strategies for Appraising Quality of Evidence
- Review Assignment 2 Guidelines

Required Reading

Nadeau, J., & Camp, S. (2006). Interpreting research studies. *In Brief*, 2, 1-4
(https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ib_interpreting.pdf).

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Chapter 7 - Problem Formulation (pp. 119-140).

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 1 – PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE CRITICAL REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Measurement Methods

UNIT 6
FEB 11

Objectives

- 1) To strengthen your ability to understand conceptualization and measurement in research.

Topics

- Quantitative and Qualitative Measurement

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Chapter 8 - Measurement in quantitative and qualitative inquiry (pp. 141-156).

PRESIDENTS DAY – NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES.

**UNIT 7
FEB 18**

Appraising Measurement Methods and Instruments

Objectives

- 1) To enhance your ability to appraise the strengths and limitations of measurement methods and instruments in the science of social work.

Topics

- Validity and Reliability
- Appraising Measurement Methods
- Appraising and Selecting Instruments for Professional Social Work Practice

Required Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work*:
Chapter 7: Evaluating research: Other issues of research methodology in evidence-based medicine/evidence-based practice (pp. 113-125).

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice*.

Chapter 11 - Critically appraising and selecting assessment instruments (pp. 275-298).

Recommended Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Chapter 9 - Quantitative and qualitative measurement instruments (pp. 157-176).

Sampling Methods and Appraising Sampling Methods

**UNIT 8
FEB 25**

Objectives

- 1) To enhance your understanding of different kinds of strategies for obtaining research participants, including their strengths and weaknesses.
- 2) To clarify how the selection of research participants impacts interpretation of results and application of results to practice questions.
- 3) To deepen your understanding of external validity and how it impacts the use of science in social work practice and policy.

Topics

- Populations and Samples
- Nonrandom and Random Sampling Methods

- Appraising Sampling Methods
 - External Validity and Threats to External Validity
- Strategies for Appraising Applicability of Evidence

Required Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work*:

Chapter 7 - Evaluating research: Other issues of research methodology in evidence-based medicine/evidence-based practice (pp. 107-113).

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*.

Chapter 11 - Sampling (pp. 203-228).

Group-based Design Methods

UNIT 9
MAR 4

Objectives

- 1) To enhance your understanding of different kinds of research designs, including their strengths and weaknesses in terms of addressing different kinds of research aims and questions.

Topics

- Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs
- Non-Experimental Designs

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016): *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:

Chapter 12 - Experiments and quasi-experiments (pp. 231-258).

Recommended Reading

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(7), 811-819.

Mourão, L., & Ferreira, M. C. (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.

Murray, L. K, Skavonski, S., Michalopoulos, L. M., Bolton, P. A., Bass, J. K., Familiar, I., Imasiku, M., & Cohen, J. (2014). Counselor and client perspectives of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for children in Zambia: A qualitative study. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 43(6), 902-914.

SPRING BREAK!!! NO LIVE SESSION. PLEASE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE BREAK.

UNIT 10
MAR 11

Appraising Evidence from Studies Using Group-based Designs

Objectives

- 1) In terms of its relevance to specific practice and policy questions, to strengthen your ability to interpret and appraise data and evidence from studies using different types of research designs.

Topics

- Causality and Criteria for Inferring Effectiveness
- Internal Validity and Threats to Internal Validity
- Appraising Research Designs

Required Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work:*

Chapter 6 - Evaluating research: Research designs in evidence-based medicine/evidence-based practice (91-104).

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice:*

Chapter 4 - Criteria for inferring effectiveness: How do we know what works? (pp. 71-98).

PART III – USING EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE TO INFORM PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Using Single-Case Design Evidence and Methods

UNIT 11
MAR 18

Objectives

- 1) In terms of its relevance to specific practice and policy questions, to strengthen your ability to interpret and appraise data and evidence from single-case design methods.
- 2) To prepare you to use single-case evidence and methods in the context of professional social work practice.

Topics

- Appraising Evidence from Studies Using Single-System Designs
- Using Single-System Design Methods to Monitor Implementation, Change, and Impact
- Review Assignment 3 Guidelines

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work:*

Chapter 13 - Single-Case Evaluation Designs (pp. 259-282).

Recommended Reading

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice:*

Chapter 12 - Monitoring client progress (pp. 299-319).

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 2 – PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE COLLECTION AND RESEARCH ARTICLE APPRAISAL

Using Existing and Qualitative Data and Records

**UNIT 12
MAR 25**

Objectives

- 1) To increase your understanding of different approaches to analyzing qualitative data and your ability to interpret results from analyses of qualitative data with respect to specified research aims and questions.
- 2) To enhance your ability to apply results of qualitative data analysis to address professional questions and to inform professional practice.
- 3) To strengthen your capacity to summarize qualitative data and results in ways accessible to appropriate clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Results from Qualitative Studies

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Chapter 18 - Qualitative data analysis (pp. 361-386).

Using Quantitative Data and Results

UNIT 13
APR 1 & APR 8

Objectives

- 1) To increase your understanding of different approaches to analyzing quantitative data and your ability to interpret results from analyses of quantitative data with respect to specified research aims and questions.
- 2) To enhance your ability to apply results of quantitative data analysis to address professional questions and to inform professional practice.
- 3) To strengthen your capacity to summarize quantitative data and results in ways accessible to appropriate clients and constituencies.

Topics

- Results from Quantitative Studies

Required Reading

Rubin, A., & Babbie, R. (2016). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work*:
Chapter 17 - Quantitative data analysis (pp. 345-360).

Recommended Reading

Drisko, J. W., & Grady, M. D. (2012). *Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Social Work*:
Chapter 7 - Evaluating research: Other issues of research methodology in evidence-based medicine/evidence-based practice (pp. 125–135).

Rubin, A., & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidence-based Practice*:
Appendix B - What you do and don't need to know about statistics when critically appraising studies (pp. 327-333).

Using the Science of Social Work to Improve Practice, Policy, Services, and Organizations

UNIT 14
APR 15

Objectives

- 1) To improve your ability to synthesizing evidence from multiple studies and to use the best available evidence to inform professional social work practice, including engagement of clients in the decision-making process.
- 2) To critically reflect on the science of social work and the EBP process, including strengths and limitations, with an emphasis on understanding how to use research evidence in complex, real-world contexts.
- 3) To identify strategies for incorporating the science of social work into professional social work practice from the perspective of life-long learning.

Topics

- Adapting and Translating Evidence into Effective Practice
- Next Steps for the Science of Social Work
- Course Review and 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.

**EXAM WEEK
APR 22**

DUE: ASSIGNMENT 3 – EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE BRIEF

University & School Policies and Guidelines

IX. ATTENDANCE POLICY

As a professional school, class attendance and participation is an essential part of your professional training and development at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. You are expected to attend all class sessions for the full duration of class. For both Ground and VAC courses, having 2 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by a half grade. Additional absences can result in further grade deductions. For VAC courses, attendance requires maintaining an active presence during live sessions with clear and reliable video and audio. Unless otherwise directed by your course instructor, VAC students are expected to complete all asynchronous content and activities prior to the scheduled live session. Failure to complete two asynchronous units prior to the scheduled live session will result in the lowering of your final course grade by a half grade. Not completing additional units can result in further grade deductions.

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.

X. ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

XI. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.
equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and micro aggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.
dsp.usc.edu

USC Support and Advocacy (USCSA) – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

XII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR VAC STUDENTS

Students enrolled in the Virtual Academic Center can access support services for themselves and their families by contacting Perspectives, Ltd., an independent student assistance program offering crisis services, short-term counseling, and referral 24/7. To access Perspectives, Ltd., call 800-456-6327.

XIII. 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.”

XIV. POLICY ON LATE OR MAKE-UP WORK, EXTRA CREDIT, AND RE-GRADING ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments are due on the day specified by midnight PST. Extensions will be granted only for extenuating circumstances. Late submissions may be accepted by the instructor for review and feedback at the instructor’s discretion, but they will not be graded. Also note that extra credit is not permitted, nor is re-doing an assignment with the expectation that it will be re-graded. Grades may not be changed once they have been assigned unless there was an error in determining the grade.

XV. 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.

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

Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 2017 NASW Delegate Assembly [<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>]

Preamble

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being 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 well-being in a social context and the well-being 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.

XVII. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY SANCTION GUIDELINES

Some lecture slides, notes, or exercises used in this course may be the property of the textbook publisher or other third parties. All other course material, including but not limited to slides developed by the instructor(s), the syllabus, assignments, course notes, course recordings (whether audio or video) and examinations or quizzes are the property of the University or of the individual instructor who developed them. Students are free to use this material for study and

learning, and for discussion with others, including those who may not be in this class, unless the instructor imposes more stringent requirements. Republishing or redistributing this material, including uploading it to web sites or linking to it through services like iTunes, violates the rights of the copyright holder and is prohibited. There are civil and criminal penalties for copyright violation. Publishing or redistributing this material in a way that might give others an unfair advantage in this or future courses may subject you to penalties for academic misconduct.

XVIII. 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 appropriate Lead Instructor for SOWK 546—either Dr. Jan Nissly at nissly@usc.edu (VAC) or Dr. Devon Brooks at devon.brooks@usc.edu (Ground). If you do not receive a satisfactory response or solution, contact your academic advisor and/or Associate Dean and MSW Chair Dr. Leslie Wind for further guidance.

XIX. TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THIS COURSE

- ✓ Be proactive! TOGETHER, let's do everything we can to make this an educational and enjoyable experience for you. Try to anticipate issues that could present challenges and PLEASE REACH OUT TO ME so that we can problem-solve before rather than after the fact.
- ✓ Be mindful of getting proper nutrition, exercise, rest and sleep!
- ✓ Complete required readings, assignments and activities 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!
- ✓ Stay offline while in class.
- ✓ Form study groups with other students in the class or in another section of the class.
- ✓ Take advantage of office hours and extra review/discussion sessions offered by your instructor. Contact me if you are concerned about or are struggling in class.
- ✓ If you believe it is necessary to receive support from a content tutor or Writing Support, please inform or involve me. I want to be able to help and support you in any way possible, but I need to know that you want/need support!! I am also happy to meet with you and your tutor.
- ✓ Keep an open mind and positive attitude!