

SYLLABUS
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SWK 406: Research Methods for Social Work Practice I

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Course Description

Pressures for accountability in social work have never been greater. Organizations and practitioners are increasingly required to document the impacts of their services at both the program and case level. Social workers are continually challenged to improve the quality of their services and programs. Thus, the underlying theme of this course is 1) that social workers can critically assess the value of social work research so that they can apply best practice methods in their work with consumers and colleagues; and 2) that social work practitioners can use evaluative research to improve practice. The course includes both theoretical and applied content in the critical analysis of social work research and evaluative research. The theory of research and program evaluation includes topics such as: assessing goals, objectives, intervention strategies, outcomes, group designs, client-centered research, single subject research, and statistical test of significance, program evaluation and the use of computers in human service settings. Particular emphasis is given to appropriate program evaluation designs. Applied course topics: goals, objectives, intervention designs, data collection, ethical issues in research and program evaluation, cultural, gender and racial issues in research, internal and external validity of results, methods of measuring outcomes, analysis of graphically presented data, exemplars of program and practice evaluations, and the presentation of research projects.

This course is consistent with the Council of Social Work Education Curriculum Policy statement for BSW programs and includes content related to UNCW program objectives, including those related to applying critical thinking skills for understanding and appreciating a scientific, analytical approach to evaluating service delivery in all areas of practice.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand the importance of empirical research methods as a tool to be used in practice for advancing professional knowledge, improving standards of practice, and maintaining personal and professional accountability.
2. Critically examine empirical practice research literature relevant to particular programs, problems, and clients.
3. Operationalize independent and dependent variables in concrete, measurable terms.
4. Identify data collection methods used to monitor and evaluate intervention services.
5. Understand the range of possible qualitative and quantitative designs in social work and their potential usefulness in the exploration, assessment, explanation, and evaluation of social problems and interventions across rural and urban settings.
6. Understand how research designs, techniques, and procedures can express and perpetuate social stereotypes of, and prejudices against people who are disadvantaged because of racial, ethnic, class, gender, and age oppression.
7. Understand and accept the responsibility for operating within social work values and ethics in the conduct of evaluative research.
8. Understand the role of social work values in guiding ethical program and practice evaluation in the utilization of powerful information technologies in relation to vulnerable clients and populations-at-risk.
9. Understand the use of evaluative research as a tool for the advancement of social and economic justice and as a tool against discrimination and prejudice.
10. Be able to clearly and concisely critique social work research and program evaluation activity.

11. Be able to conceptualize and design a research or evaluation project and present a coherent rationale for its selection.
12. Be able to clearly organize and write a program evaluation report that effectively communicates the knowledge derived from a program or practice evaluation study.

Honor Code

UNCW is committed to the proposition that the pursuit of truth requires the presence of honesty among all students. It is therefore this course's stated policy that no form of dishonesty will be tolerated. Academic dishonesty takes many forms, from blatant acts of cheating, stealing, or similar misdeeds to the more subtle forms of plagiarism, all of which will not be tolerated in this class. Complete details of the Honor Code may be found in Section V of the ***Student Handbook Code of Student Life***.

Accommodations for Students with a Disability

I am more than happy to make appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students, who have a disability and need accommodation, need to register with the ***Office of Disability Services*** in Westside Hall (**x3746**) and bring a copy of their ***Accommodation Letter*** to me so that we may discuss how I can help. Assistance will be gladly provided.

Required Readings

The text for this course is *Research Methods for Social Workers: A Practice-Based Approach*, by Cynthia A. Faulkner and Samuel S. Faulkner, Lyceum Books, Inc., 2009

Most of the chapters in this text have discussion questions. The student should prepare an answer to each discussion question for each assigned chapter and be prepared to provide his/her answer for class discussion. The student, however, is not expected to prepare written answers to be turned in to the instructor.

Course Paper

Each student will prepare a paper that reports on the design of an evaluation study. This will include (a) the analysis of the target behavior being treated, (b) the description of the intervention in regard to goals, objectives, structure, model, and personnel, (c) the description of the study population and sample, (d) the description of the tools for measuring success, (e) the research design that will be employed, (f) the research hypothesis, and (g) statistical test that will be employed to test the hypothesis.

An outline for this paper will be handed out by midterm.

Attendance Requirements

You are expected to attend at least 90% of the classes for this course. In this case, since there are 29 classes, you are expected to attend 26 of them. More than 3 absences will seriously affect your grade. If you miss more than 6 times, your grade is an automatic "F". Attendance will be taken at every class. If you come in late, please let the TA know so that you can be counted as present. If you are more than 10 minutes late, it counts as an absence.

Assignments

There will be a number of short assignments for this class. When there is a deadline for an assignment, you are required to turn it in on time. If you need more time, please request an extension **before** the due date.

Grading

Grading will be done based on the class curve.

Course Outline

Class Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
8-20-09	Introduction		
8-25-09	What is Research	Chap 1	
8-27-09	What is Research		
9-1-09	What is Research		
9-3-09	Ethical Issues in Research	Chap 2	Act. 1, 2, 3
9-8-09	Ethical Issues in Research		
9-10-09	Ethical Issues in Research		
9-15-09	Literature Review	Chap 3	Hand in Chap 1 Act. 1, 2, 3
9-17-09	Literature Review		
9-22-09	Variables & Measures	Chap 4	Chap 3 Act. 1, 2
9-24-09	Variables & Measures		
9-29-09	Variables & Measures		
10-1-09	Variables & Measures		
10-1-09	Sampling	Chap 5	Hand in Chap 3 Act. 1, 2
10-8-09	Sampling		
10-13-09	Qualitative Research	Chap 6	
10-15-09	Qualitative Research		
10-15-09	NO CLASS – Fall Break		
10-20-09	Qualitative Research	Chap 7	Act. 3, 4
10-22-09	Quantitative Research		
10-27-09	Quantitative Research		
10-29-09	Quantitative Research		
11-3-09	Quantitative Research		
11-5-09	Single Organism Designs	Chap 9	Hand in Chap 7 Act. 3, 4
11-10-09	Single Organism Designs		Final Exam Handed Out
11-12-09	Assessing Outcome data	Chap 11	
11-17-09	Statistics		
11-19-09	Preparing for Next Semester		
11-24-09	TBA		
11-26-09	NO CLASS--Thanksgiving Break		
12-1-09	Class Review and Assessment		Final Handed In