I. COURSE TITLE: Social Work Research Design and Application

II. CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course introduces students to the scientific method and how it is used by social workers to effect social change, improve the delivery of social services and to evaluate practice.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S)

Other readings may be assigned or distributed by the instructor throughout the course.

IV. PREREQUISITE(S)
SOCW 2375 or equivalent.

V. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)
The Student Learning Outcomes for this program are based on the following practice competencies required by our accreditation agency, the Council on Social Work Education.

Educational Policy 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

Educational Policy 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Educational Policy 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
Educational Policy 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Educational Policy 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Educational Policy 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Educational Policy 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d)—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

VI. ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCY-RELATED PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

The practice behaviors assessed in SOCW 4311 are shown below with their corresponding competencies. The method of assessment of these practice behaviors is described in a document titled Assessment of Practice Behaviors posted in our course Blackboard space.

2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

PB #21: use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry;
PB #22: use research evidence to inform practice.

2.1.10 (d) Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

PB (d) #41: Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

VII. CRITERIA FOR STUDENT EVALUATION

Primary methods of instruction may include, but may not be limited to, reading assignments, class discussions, and lectures, group work on conceptual and analysis papers, videotapes, oral reports from students, written exercises, and research on course content. Guest speakers may be invited. If necessary, other instructions and materials including guides for written reports, topics for analysis, and references pertaining to the course and assignments will be provided with ample time for a student to utilize during the semester. In the event that circumstances associated with schedules or unforeseen events affect the progress and timely delivery of this course, the instructor may modify the contents of this syllabus to achieve the most important learning objectives and assignments associated with this course.

20% Exam #1
20% Exam #2
20% Exam #3
5% Assignment 1: Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for Institutional Review Board (IRB) Certificate. (on Blackboard)
5% Assignment #2: Problem Statement for Evidence-Based Self-Change Report
10% Assignment #3: Annotated Bibliography
20% Assignment #4: Evidence-Based Self-Change Team Report

The grading structure follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Score</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D (NO Ds can be awarded to graduate students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE
Note: The course calendar is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week 1 – Jan 20

Topics: Course introduction
Conducting research in social sciences:
1. Developing a critical eye
2. Quantitative vs. Qualitative and Mixed Methods

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 1. Why Study Research?
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 3. Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods.

Week 2 – Jan 27

Topics: Taking a scientific approach to practice
Empirical research
The structure of research reports. “What are the key components of research?”

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 2. Evidence-Based Practice.


Week 3 – Feb 3

Topics:
Research ethics
The research process
Role of theory
Research questions and hypotheses
Selecting a research topic; formulating a research question

**Learning Opportunities:**
In-class exercise on formulating a research question

**Due: IRB Human Subjects Training (Assignment 1)**

**Week 4 – Feb 10**

**Topics:**
Conceptualization in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry

Defining variables for testing hypotheses
Conceptualization and operationalization
Measurement error, reliability and validity

**Learning Opportunities:**
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 6. Conceptualization in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry.

In-class exercise on Conceptualization and operationalization.


**Due: Problem Statement for Evidence-Based Self-Change Team Report/Using Practice Experience to Guide Research**

**Week 5 – Feb 17**

**Topics:**
Process of constructing measurement instruments

**Learning Opportunities:**
In-class exercise on constructing measurement instruments

**Due: Exam I**

**Week 6 – Feb 24**

**Topics:**
Threats to internal and external validity
Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 7. Measurement in Quantitative and Qualitative Inquiry.

Week 7 – Mar 3

Topics:
Experimental designs; Quasi-experimental designs

Learning Opportunities:

Week 8 – Mar 10
Topics:
Single-case designs

Learning Opportunities:

Week 9 – Mar 17
Spring Break
Have fun and be Safe.

Week 10 – Mar 24
Topics:
Purposes and types of program evaluation

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 12. Program evaluation

Due: Exam II

Week 11 – Mar 31
Topics:
Survey research

Learning Opportunities:
Week 12 – Apr 7
Topics:
Taking a good representative sample

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 10. Sampling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.

In-class exercise on sampling

Due: Annotated Bibliography

Week 13 – Apr 14
Topics:
Qualitative research
Qualitative research: General principles

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 19. Qualitative Data Analysis.

Week 14 – Apr 21
Topics:
Quantitative Data Analysis

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 18. Quantitative Data Analysis.

Week 15 – Apr 28
Topics:
Ethnic and cultural sensitivity; Gender sensitivity

Learning Opportunities:
Rubin & Babbie Chapter 17. Culturally Competent Research.
In-class activity regarding culture and cultural competency

Week 16 – May 5
Topics:
Last Day
DUE: Assignment: Self-Change Project Paper

Exam III

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY OR REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS


**X. DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Note:** The competency-related practice behaviors assessed in this course are listed in Roman numeral six (VI) in this syllabus (page 2). The method of assessment of competency-related practice behaviors is described in a document titled *Assessment of Practice Behaviors* posted in our course Blackboard space.

**Exam I (20%)**
The exam contains questions based on brief vignettes and brief descriptions related to social work research to apply, critically analyze and demonstrate knowledge such as taking a scientific approach to practice, understand the evidence-based practice process and understand the ethics and politics of social work research the research process, selecting a research topic, research questions and hypotheses, philosophy and theory in science and research, demonstrated problem formulation, conceptualization and operationalization, recognize measurement error, recognize reliability and validity, and understand the process of constructing measurement instruments.

**Exam II (20%)**
The second exam contains questions based on brief vignettes and brief descriptions related to social work research to inform scientific inquiry by understanding causal inference and experimental design, quasi-experimental designs, and single-case designs, recognizing threats to internal and external validity, and limitations.

Exam III (20%)
The third exam contains questions based on brief vignettes and brief descriptions related to social work research to apply, critically analyze and demonstrate knowledge to include distinguishing between the purposes and types of program evaluation, understanding survey research, taking a representative sample, distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative critique research articles and reports, and designing culturally competent research.

Assignment 1: (10% of grade) Completion of Human Subjects Protection Modules for Institutional Review Board (IRB) Certificate. For this assignment students are required to complete an online course on protection of human subjects, acquire the certificate of completion, and submit it for credit. Please access the following website for completion of the modules and attainment of the certificate: http://www.citiprogram.org. Purpose: This assignment facilitates the students’ learning about the Protection of Human Subjects, including the history of research with human subjects and mandates and policies that evolved to ensure the protection of human subjects. For this assignment students are to cross-reference the text chapter on Research Ethics to enhance their understanding of content covered in the modules.

Assignment 2 (10%) Problem Statement Annotated Bibliography
The problem statement is a clear and concise statement that describes the problem to be addressed in the self-change project.

Assignment #3 (20%) Annotated Bibliography for Evidence-Based Self-Change Team Report/Using Research to Inform Practice
Each team is expected to identify a current social problem relevant to social work practice. The topic must be approved by the instructor prior to beginning the assignment. Each team will then develop a comprehensive annotated bibliography on a chosen topic.

The annotated bibliography should contain at least 10 references including:
1. At least one article from a professional peer reviewed journal that informs the problem definition/description and etiology (cause).
2. At least one article from a professional peer reviewed journal that informs the implications for generalist social work practice.
3. At least five articles from a professional peer reviewed journal that examines social work interventions to address the social issue/problem identified.

Assignment #4 Evidence-Based Self-Change Report
PB (d) 41 - Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions
Assignment title: Evidence-Based Self-Change Team Report/Evaluation of an Intervention

Approximately 10-15 pages, double-spaced, stapled; due in class on May 5, 2015.
The focus of the paper should be on conducting a single-case design evaluation for a self-change project for one of the students on your team. The intervention should apply to something that the student would like to improve, such as smoking less, eating better, exercising more, sleeping better, and so on. This paper requires that you implement such a design, collect data for it and report and interpret its results. Although only one team member will be the focus of the intervention, the division of labor can be made equitable by having other team members carry prime responsibility for other tasks in the evaluation process, such as helping choose and helping implement the intervention (for example, by serving as a support group, accompanying the focused team member in exercising, and so on), preparing graphs, and writing the report.

The paper should reflect appropriate implementation of all Steps of the Evidence-Based Practice process (as described in class and in the required text on evidence-based practice). The intervention plans (Plan A and Plan B) that you select should emerge from a review of recently published outcome studies and systematic reviews (if any) on the effectiveness of interventions that have been tested in the past for your selected problem.

The Plan A intervention you select should have the best scientific evidence supporting its effectiveness for the practice problem in question. The Plan B intervention you select should have good (not the best) evidence supporting its effectiveness for the practice problem in question and should be selected as a backup in case client attributes or feasibility constraints were to make Plan A inadvisable or undoable.

Be sure to address the major methodological strengths and/or weaknesses of the key studies you review. Show that you can distinguish those studies that are sufficiently sound methodologically to guide practice from those whose methodological weaknesses imply the need for more rigorous research before evidence-based practice implications are warranted.

Explain/justify your intervention plan based on the evidence you have found in your review. In addition to describing the evidence for the chosen intervention, the paper should identify other interventions that have been proposed or tested for the selected problem and why they had less or worse evidence than the interventions in Plan A and Plan B. There is no specific minimum number of studies that you need to review; however, because this is a team project, your literature search should be thorough.

Important – Do Not just select an intervention plan in advance and then restrict your literature review exclusively to that intervention. Instead, review recent outcome studies on whatever interventions have been tested for your selected problem, and then select and describe Plan A and Plan B based on that review.

**Due: May 5, 2015**

**XI. Grading Rubric**

**Assignment 2 (10%) Problem Statement Annotated Bibliography**

I. Define the problem - define the problem in specific terms. (25pts)

II. Identify where the problem is appearing - Identifying where the problem is appearing, or manifesting, as specifically as possible. (25pts)
III. Describe the size of the problem - The size of the problem is described in measurable terms. (25pts)
IV. Describe the impact the problem is having. (25pts)

Assignment #3 (20%) Annotated Bibliography for Evidence-Based Self-Change Team Report/ Using Research to Inform Practice
Once the articles are identified, the team is expected to critique each article. For each article, the team will provide:
I. A description of the purpose or goal of the study. (20 pts)
II. The study research questions. (20 pts)
III. Evaluate the research methods of each article including design of the study, sampling, and identifying the variables. (40 pts)
IV. Identify findings particular notable findings that support an intervention, along with any limitations of the study. (20 pts)
The professional peer reviewed journals should either be from social work or closely related disciplines. The remainder of the resources can be drawn from professional peer reviewed journals, books, and reliable internet sources. Each entry is to be in APA format and followed by one or two paragraphs that briefly describe the source’s contents and importance to the chosen topic. The assignment is due April 7, 2015

Assignment #4 Evidence-Based Self-Change Report
I. Briefly describe the practice problem and evidence-based practice question. (5 pts)
II. Describe the way you searched for the best evidence (internet search engines, websites, abstracts, etc.) (5 pts)
III. Briefly describe each chosen intervention (Plan A and Plan B). (10 pts)
IV. Critically appraise the main studies that led you to choose these plans. (20 pts)
V. Compare the study(s) above to the studies on other interventions that you did not select, specify those other interventions, and explain why the selected interventions had the best evidence. (15 pts)
VI. Formulate a single-case design to evaluate your own effectiveness in implementing Plan A. (10 pts)
VII. Describe and justify what you will measure, source of data (Self-report? Behavioral observation? etc.), any measurement instruments used (i.e., reliability? validity?), who will measure, and when each measurement will be taken. (15 pts)
VIII. Identify and justify how many data points were in each phase. (10 pts)
IX. Report and interpret the visual significance (or lack thereof) of your results, discuss alternative plausible interpretations, and draw conclusions. (10 pts)
Due: May 5, 2015

XII. UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Online Course Evaluations
Mandatory Course Evaluations period (April 9 – April 30): Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTPA account (https://my.utpa.edu/);
you will be contacted through email with further instructions. The evaluation window closes at 11:59 pm on April 30th, the last day of spring classes. Students who complete their evaluations by April 30th will have priority access to their grades.

Statement for Disability Accommodations
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Disability Services office for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Texas-Pan American to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), University Center #108, 665-7005 or disabilityservices@utpa.edu.

University Email Policy
The new university policy requires all electronic communication between the University and students be conducted through the official University supplied systems; namely, BroncMail for email or Blackboard for course specific correspondence. Therefore, please use your UTPA assigned BroncMail or Blackboard account for all future correspondence with UTPA faculty and staff.

Bronc Honor Code
As members of a community dedicated to honesty, integrity and mutual respect in all interactions and relationships, the students, faculty members and administration of our university pledge to abide by the principles of the Bronc Honor Code. See www.utpa.edu/dos.

Rescheduling of Exams and Late Submission of Assignments and Projects
If you experience illness or an emergency that prevents you from taking an exam or turning in an assignment on time, please let me know as soon as possible. Please provide evidence of the illness or emergency. If the late submission was not based on illness or emergency circumstance, five points will be deducted for each day the assignment or project is late.

Student Support Services
The university sponsors a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the university and achieve academic success. They include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the office of student success programs for more information and referrals.

Academic Honesty
It is the philosophy of the University of Texas – Pan American that academic dishonesty is completely unacceptable and that it will not be tolerated in any form. Persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with university regulations and
procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the university. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, or submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student, or the attempt to commit such acts. (Regents Rules and Regulations, Part One, chapter VI, section 3, subsection 3.2, subdivision 3.22)

The UTPA Handbook for Operating Procedures (HOP) Section 5.5.2 “Student Conduct Code” prohibits the commission of academic or scholastic dishonesty.

Quoting the UTPA HOP:

“Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.”

Student engaging in any form of scholastic dishonesty may face significant penalties to their grade, to their continuation in the course, and/or to their continuation at UTPA.

If you have any doubts or concerns about how to properly quote materials, how to paraphrase materials, how to collaborate with other students, or how to prepare for exams, please see the instructor for help!

UTPA Writing Center:  
http://www.utpa.edu/writingcenter/

The UWC offers faculty and students assistance with academic writing in all disciplines. Peer tutors, certified by the College Reading and Learning Association, assist students meeting class writing assignment requirements. The UWC is located on the first floor, east side of the University Library. Telephone: 956-381-2538

UTPA Learning Assistance Center:  
http://www.utpa.edu/dept/lac/

The LAC offers individual and group tutoring in almost all subjects at no cost, and no appointment is required. Learning Assistance Center Building, Room 100. Telephone: 956-665-2574

UTPA Library:  
http://www.lib.panam.edu/

TELEPHONE NUMBERS
(956) 665-2755 (Administration Office)  
(956) 665-3306 (Library Information)
(956) 665-2005 (Circulation Desk)
(956) 665-2752 (Reference Desk)
(956) 665-5396 (FAX)
(956) 665-2763 (V/TDD)

UTPA Center for Online Learning Teaching and Technology HELP DESK:
http://colt.utpa.edu/helpdesk/
colthelp@utpa.edu
College of Education Complex Office 2.202
(956) 665-5327

UTPA Blackboard (Bb Learn) Log-in Page:
https://my.utpa.edu/