University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare
Prerequisites: SW 540, 530, 555, 220, MAT 101 (College Algebra)

Social Work 541 Social Work Research Seminar

Master Syllabus

Instructor
Class Location
Class Time
Office Hours
Instructor’s Email Address

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the second in a sequence of two courses that present the basic concepts of the social work research process as well as the methods that are employed. This course builds on the foundation developed in the first course related to systematic methods of assessment and evaluation which are key to a generalist practice. The emphasis of this course is two-fold. The first is the continued application of basic research knowledge developed in the first course. The second emphasis is the development of skills related to recognizing and interpreting basic statistical concepts for use in practice.

Students get to apply knowledge developed around research concepts, including, but not limited to: problem definition and operationalization; ethical research practice; cultural sensitive research practice; and a variety of different research methods. Each student has an applied experience based on the design and/or implementation of an agency based research project within the context of the course. Attention will be focused on a more advanced understanding of the research process through an application in an agency setting. Course time is devoted to understanding the research question, creating a research plan and developing a comprehensive research design document.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

After taking this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop an understanding and an awareness of the importance of research in the social work profession (BSW Program Objective 1 and 9).

2. Identify and describe the various steps in the research process (BSW Program Objective 1).

3. Assess the quality of research in current professional journal articles, especially as it relates to quality, relevance, and utility for social work practice (BSW Program Objective 1 and 9).
4. Critique specific pieces of research for its ability to attend to the needs presented by culturally diverse client populations (BSW Program Objective 9).

5. Work with agency personnel to develop a suitable research question (BSW Program Objectives 6 and 9).

6. Design a research study based on the research questions presented by agency staff (BSW Program Objective 6 and 9).

7. Protect research respondents and be familiar with ethical issues that warrant attention in conducting research and know appropriate ways to avoid or resolve potential dilemmas (BSW Program Objective 2).

8. Develop a plan to promote the use of systemically collected information in agency-based decision-making (BSW Program Objectives 1 and 12).

9. Assess the cultural sensitivity of research instruments and data collection tools (BSW Program Objective 3, 4, & 9).

10. Recognize, interpret, and critique the use of basic statistical procedures and their application in journal articles and in other applied settings (BSW Program Objective 9).

11. Interpret tables, graphs, and descriptive statistics found in journal articles (BSW Program Objective 9).

III. CURRICULUM THEMES

1. Practice Centeredness
   The over-arching themes that guide the curriculum of the School of Social Welfare are incorporated throughout the practice oriented BSW program. This research course is oriented towards the application of research skills in a practice setting.

2. Strengths
   The strengths orientation is a humanistic empowerment approach to social work that focuses on highlighting the natural, and often untapped, mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources of all persons. Unlike research courses in many disciplines focused on measuring and documenting pathology, this course supplements that perspective by highlighting the use of systematic research tools as methods to identify, articulate, and highlights the natural resources present in individuals, families, and communities.

3. Social Justice
   Social Justice is emphasized in this course by evaluating research strategies for the presence of systematic biases that would perpetuate the struggles of vulnerable populations. Additionally,
credible alternatives are offered which can be utilized to intentionally reflect the life challenges of oppressed, stigmatized, and marginalized persons.

4. Diversity
Diversity is emphasized in this class by critiquing research methods for the existence of prejudice and partiality that would preclude the recording of specialized circumstances of diverse populations. Attention is devoted to understanding the limitations of techniques that suppress the richness of unique individuals and promoting examples that cultivate an appreciation for individuals distinguished by race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, class, sexual orientation, age, gender, and ability.

5. Critical Perspective
The tools, techniques, and skills developed in this class are an addition to critical thinking skills developed in a liberal arts curriculum which allows students to question the simplistic presentations of the actions of individuals, families, communities, and systems.

Student Course Content

Although this course is typically taught in medium-sized classroom setting a variety of methods of instruction are utilized to engage students. Students are expected to participate in class by reading the course material, engaging in class discussion, actively participating in exercises, and autonomously completing their own written assignments that employ research methods and techniques to a unique practice setting. Additionally, large and small group activities are employed to complete the large scale design and the details of individual aspects of the design respectively.

IV. LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE

The research sequence assumes a rich background in liberal arts education. Skills such as critical thinking, presenting and evaluating an argument, and others will be built upon in this course. Such skills are fostered in philosophy, humanities, and other social science courses. The research sequence will embellish this repertoire of critical thinking skills by adding techniques related to using information to present, refine, assess, and evaluate an argument.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSE AND VALUES

This course presents social work research material in the context of a set of professional ethics and values that emphasize the dignity and self-determination of the individual. Attention focuses on research as a viable method for accurately representing the life issues of service consumers and the effectiveness of the services they receive.

VI. SOCIAL WORK GENERALIST AND HUMAN DIVERSITY

The skills and techniques presented in this class will greatly assist the generalist social worker in assessing the ongoing needs of service consumers and assessing the effectiveness of service
systems at addressing those needs. Efforts will be extended towards understanding the bias inherent in many methods of assessing needs and evaluating services while exploring alternatives which may be more likely to fully represent the issues and struggles of consumers along with the abilities of service delivery to aid in those challenges.

**Linkages to Other Courses in the Curriculum**

This course offers a foundation for later social work practice courses. Students are able to utilize the skills and abilities acquired in this course to assess consumer needs, define interventions, and evaluate social work practice interventions. The research design experience provided in this course will help prepare students for tasks and assignments in their senior year related to evaluating practice. The familiarity with basic statistics allows students to read, interpret, and critique research articles for their applicability to practice issues.

**VII. TOPICS**

**Required**  
Problem Formulation/Conceptualization  
Ethical Research Practice (protection of human subjects)  
Promoting Utilization of Research in an Agency Setting  
Cultural Sensitivity  
Validity & Reliability  
Research Methods  
Experimental & quasi-experimental design  
Qualitative methods  
Survey research  
Sampling Design  
Single Subject Design  
Recognizing and Interpreting Basic Statistics  
Reading Tables  
Measure of Central Tendency & Variability  
t-tests, ANOVA, Correlation, Linear Regression

**VIII. RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**General Research Methods Texts and Articles**


**Problem Formulation / Conceptualization**


**Ethical Research Practice**


**Promoting Utilization of Research in an Agency Setting**


**Cultural Sensitivity**


**Validity and Reliability of Measures**


**Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design**


**Qualitative Methods**


**Survey Research**


**Sampling Design**


**Single Subject Design**


Recognizing and Interpreting Basic Statistics


**IX. SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Structured Learning Opportunities (Educational Outcomes 9 & 10)

   Three Structured Learning Opportunities (SLO) are offered throughout the semester to give students a chance to exhibit their proficiency in recognizing and interpreting statistical information. Students are able to use their notes and their books. In the prior week, a Practice SLO is provided which acquaints students with the types of questions, answers, format etc. The purpose of these exercises is to provide a low stress situation for students to illustrate their knowledge of the statistical material.

2. Design An Agency-Based Program Evaluation (Educational Outcomes 1 through 9)

   Working collaboratively with a community-based agency, the class designs a program evaluation for a specific service. The agency personnel come to class and exchange ideas about the program’s purposes and specific information needs. The class proceeds to design a study.
The overall design is crafted by the entire class, then distinct components in the research process are completed by small groups. The specific tasks include the development of: an introduction to the report, a literature review, the program model, a plan to protect human subjects, measurement, data collection strategies, and a sampling plan. The students need to continue to work together as a whole group to ensure that the pieces are complementary. The end product is a complete program evaluation design that is presented to the agency.

or

3. Design a Research Proposal (Educational Outcomes 1 through 9)

Individually students pick a service setting and design a research proposal suited to address a specific question from their personal or professional interests. The student designs the study including all the steps noted in the previous project.

X. GRADING

BSW GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Incomplete grades. A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student’s responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.

The Master syllabi should specify:

B. Attendance policies for BSW courses. For example: Class attendance is very important. More than two absences could result in the loss of all your attendance points. More than four absences will result in failure in this class. If you have missed two classes, please arrange an appointment with me to discuss the reasons for the absence and to arrange for make-up work that will count toward your class participation points. Points are deducted for missing class and coming to class late (3 pts. for each absence/lateness).

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:

C. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are
D. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.

E. If class participation is part of the grade, indicate what this means. For example, if 10 points are awarded for class participation, one point will be deducted for every class missed.

F. Indicate the policy on late assignments, e.g., they are not accepted and treated as an “F” grade or the grade is reduced by ___ for each day, week, etc.

G. Indicate how final grades will be determined.

XI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Students who have special educational needs of any kind, including those related to learning disabilities, other disabilities, English as a second language should discuss necessary accommodations with the instructor within the first two sessions of the course. The university and School of Social Welfare are committed to provide supportive programs and accommodations to assist students who have special learning needs to successfully meet course expectations. In particular, students who feel that they have a disability that may require accommodation should advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as one obtains written documentation of the disability. The instructor will work with the student and the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations.

Please notify the instructor if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XII. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

XIII. HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.

- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
• Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.**

**XIV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY**

Provide students with information on how to see and/or reach you.

**XV. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

In the event of inclement weather students should call

- Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
- Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
- KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100

to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.