YESHIVA UNIVERSITY WURZWEILER
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK DOCTORAL
PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WELFARE

STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY (SWK 8421)

Fall 2018 Instructor: Dr. Susan Mason

Social work research draws substantially from the research methodologies developed in the social and behavioral sciences. Students who have mastered conceptual and analytic research skills are likely to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and engage in systematic analyses of social problems, social interventions, and social policies. A key part of becoming a scholar is learning to select and ask those questions that hold the greatest practical and theoretical importance for social work practice and public policy.

Beyond the selection of research questions, per se, this course provides a thorough grounding for students in the design of inquiries, systematic data collection, and analysis of information related to a research issue. There are a diverse set of knowledge building methodologies; this first semester is focused on qualitative methods, beginning with the underlying philosophical connections between theory and method and the principles that govern ethical research. Such methods include analysis of historical documents, field observations, survey research, ethnography, and participant observation. The major focus is on the application of modern theories and research methods to understanding and interpreting the social world and the role of social work in improving the lives of people.

The second semester will follow a similar format, but focus on quantitative research.

OBJECTIVES:

- To develop a critical understanding of the scientific method and its application in social sciences and social work;
- To become familiar with debates in the field of social work regarding epistemology and methodology;
- To understand the relationship between theory and research; the role of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement;
- To gain a comprehensive knowledge of various study designs, methods of data collection, and types of data;
- To gain a beginning mastery of theoretical and conceptual foundations of research methodologies;
- To under the strengths and limitations of various research designs;
- To analyze the approaches to and merits of social work research studies;
- To obtain practical experience in the different steps of research by designing research projects.

At the end of this course, students will be able:

- To systematically review, critique, and synthesis a given body of literature;
- To formulate professionally relevant and theoretically productive research questions and hypotheses;
- To demonstrate ability to test hypotheses and answer specific research questions;
- To design a research study, using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis;
- To understand how sampling choices and project implementation impacts on study outcome;
- To be knowledgeable about when to choose qualitative research methods to achieve project study goals;
- To understand the value and limitations of the several qualitative methods;
- To present findings in spoken and written form.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.4th.ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-5063-3020-4; $72.58 (paper-new)

Padgett, D.K. (2017). Qualitative methods in social work research, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4522-5670-2; $ 77.00 (paper-new).

You may use older editions of these books but the page assignments on this syllabus will follow the versions listed above.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (These are optional and you may read any edition).

Girden, E.R. & Kabocoff, R. (2010). Evaluating research articles from start to finish. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. $40.29

Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. (2010). *Reading and understanding research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4129-7574-2, $49.85

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2016). Designing qualitative research. 6th ed.Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4522-7100-2; $73.00.

Royse, D.,Thyer, B.A., & Padgett, D.K. (2009). *Program evaluation, an introduction* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks Cole. ISBN-10: 0495601667, $89.61 (You may use any program evaluation text).

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2010). *Research methods for social work* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN 978-0495811718 , $110.95 (older editions are fine or any research methods text).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All course assignments must rigorously adhere to the instructions for page lengths. Papers longer or much shorter than the noted requirements will not be read. All assignments must be double-spaced unless otherwise noted and be typed in 12- point font. The style of the American Psychological Association 6th edition must be used for all citations and references. The manual for the APA 6th edition style is available on-line at the American Psychological Association web site or at other popular on-line and in-store sellers. Instructions on 6th edition can also be found on a number of web sites and are widely available. Papers not handed in on the date due will be subject to grade reductions, the extent to which will be determined at the discretion of the instructor.

A. Assignment # 1: Evaluating Research Articles

Choose two research articles that utilize a qualitative methodological approach. Evaluate these articles using questions to be posted on Canvas. For each of the two articles, answer each question. This assignment should not be more than 6 pages in length in total, excluding the title page and reference page. Please include copies of the articles when submitting. You may submit using Canvas or E-Mail. This assignment is due on the **5th class session**. Late submissions will be subject to grade deductions.

B. Research Designs

There are two research design projects. The first involves the critique and substitution of a research design of a published qualitative study. The second assignment is the creation of a qualitative research design to assess clients' needs for additional social services.

Published Study Research Design: Chose 1 qualitative study from a journal article and 1) briefly describe the study design; 2) critique the design based on your readings and class discussions; and 3) propose an alternative qualitative design for the study. You should include a title page, and a reference page in APA 6th. edition style. The assignment should be between 3-4 pages in length excluding the title and reference pages. Please include a copy of the article when submitting the assignment. You may submit using Canvas or E-Mail. This will be handed on the **8th class session**. Late submissions will be subject to grade deductions.

Needs Assessment for Additional Client Services: You have been hired as a consultant for an agency that is struggling to maintain a large enough census (client registration). Your primary task is to ascertain if additional services are needed and/or the services provided are useful to clients. You must first identify the agency for which you have been hired, the services they provide, and then write a plan for conducting your needs assessment research. Your research plan should utilize a qualitative research design. You should be careful to take into account the diversity of your client population, their willingness to utilize new and possibly additional services, and the priorities that should be placed on these proposed services. This written needs assessment plan should be 4-6 pages plus a summary and a reference page. Keep in mind that if this plan is ill conceived, the agency as well as your consulting company will suffer major financial losses. This assignment will be handed in on the **14th class session.** You may submit using Canvas or E-Mail. Late submissions will be subject to grade deductions.

COURSE GRADES

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

First assignment	30%
Second assignment	30%
Third Assignment	35%
Class participation and attendance	05%

The grade of "Incomplete" will be given at the discretion of the instructor. Incomplete grades are to be removed and changed to an acceptable letter grade according the rules of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work and Yeshiva University.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, akelsen@yu.edu or 646-592-4280 during the first week of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, contact me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

COURSE WORK AND READINGS

I. Research Design (Sessions 1-2)

Research design is discussed with emphasis on constructing research questions, setting up a logical plan and implementing the plan. Special attention is given to process of identifying and operationalizing the independent and dependent variables. Qualitative methods of data analysis will be reviewed as an integral aspect of the research design.

RequiredReadings
Creswell & Poth, Ch.1- 2
Padgett, Ch. 1-2

Suggested Readings
Locke, et al., Ch.,1-2
Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 1-2.
Rubin, & Babbie, Ch., 13

II Ethical Issues (Session 3)

Ethical research practice must be adhered to at all times. Social workers engaged in

research must always be certain that the profession's ethics are seriously considered when research designs are planned.

Required Readings:
NASW Code of Ethics (to be handed out in class if not included in orientation packets).
Padgett, Ch. 4.
Creswell & Poth, pp. 54-57

Suggested Readings
Locke, et al., Ch. 3
Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 3.
Rubin & Babbie, ch. 3 or the chapter on Ethics.

III Traditions of Qualitative Research (Sessions 4,5,6,7,8,9,10)

Traditions of qualitative research include the biography, the phenomenological study, the grounded theory study, the ethnography and the case study. Within these traditions, methods of collecting data include face-to-face interviews, focus groups, participation-observation, naturalistic research, secondary source utilization, historiography, and content analysis. These traditions and methods are explored with emphasis on operationalization, implementation, sampling techniques, and generalization.

(Session 4)

A. Designing the Qualitative Study: Characteristics of a qualitative study design are discussed with a focus on the purpose of the research.
Required Readings
Creswell & Poth, Ch. 3
Padgett, Ch. 3
Suggested Readings
Locke, et al., Ch. 4- 7.
Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 4-5

(Session 5)

B. Qualitative Approaches: Qualitative approaches are discussed and compared from both a practical and theoretical perspective. How theory is integrated with method is a subject receiving special emphasis.

Required Readings
Creswell & Poth, Ch. 4-6
Padgett, Ch. 2 (Review)
Suggested Readings
Locke, et al., Ch. 4- 7. (Review)

Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 4-5 (Review)

(Session 6)

C. Methods and Access to Data: The methods of data collection are discussed along with issues related to getting data. Sampling, operationalizing, implementing and generalizing are also topics for discussion. Validity and reliability are reviewed as well.

Required Readings

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 7

Padgett, Ch. 5

Suggested Reading

Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 6-7.
Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 12

(Sessions 7-8)

C. Analyzing and Presenting Data: Qualitative methods are reviewed for their unique research inquiry and presentation formats. Computer assisted content analysis is discussed and illustrated.

Required Readings

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 8-9
Padgett, 6-7

Suggested Readings

Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 8.
Rubin, & Babbie, Ch. 13

(Session 9-10)

D. **Evaluating Qualitative Research:** Here the all- important questions of how do we know that our data is measuring what we say it is, and can it be trusted? These are issues of validity and reliability that are applied to the various traditions of qualitative research.

Required Readings

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 10
Padgett, Ch. 8

Suggested Readings

Marshall & Rossman, Ch.8.

IV Telling the Story: (Session 11)

Writing up the research findings in both a scientific and interesting style is the skill and art of qualitative research. The different approaches to qualitative studies dictate how they are presented. Students are encouraged to read the appendices in the Creswell and Poth book for examples of studies.

Required Readings
Creswell & Poth, Ch. 11
Padgett, Ch. 9.

Suggested Readings
Creswell & Poth, Appendices
Marshall & Rossman, Ch. 8 (Review)

V Applying Qualitative Methods to Project and Case Evaluations (Session 12)

Project evaluation methods are explored using the micro, meso, and macro constructs in the evaluation process. Case evaluation issues scrutinized include sample, generalizability, ethics, service alternatives, implementation, costs and benefits, as well as other pertinent research concerns.

(Session 12)

A. Project Evaluation: Project evaluation design, policy, and implementation issues are emphasized.

Required Readings
Royce et al., chapters 1, 3-5.
Rubin, & Babbie, chapter 18
You may read these chapters or any books on project evaluation.

(Session 13)

B**. Focus Groups and Action Research:** The use of focus groups and action research as methods are discussed with examples from the readings.

Required Readings

To be assigned.

Bibliography

An extensive bibliography can be found in the assigned texts, Creswell & Poth, and Padgett.