

**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
PHD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WELFARE**

SWK 8422 - STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

Spring, 2019

Instructor: Dr. Susan Mason

Social work research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the first semester the focus of the Strategies of Inquiry course is on the qualitative methods. In the second semester the emphasis is placed on quantitative methods. Students should, however, understand that researchers often combine the two to produce research that is both “in-depth” and highly generalizable. It is therefore crucial that students think about research strategies in the larger frameworks of design, method, implementation, outcome, and relevance.

In the second semester of the Strategies of Inquiry course quantitative methods is the subject of study. To this end topics to be studied include, survey research, sampling theory, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, validity and reliability, and an introduction to statistical analysis. Additionally, students will review the ways to read and understand quantitative studies in their own areas of interest.

In the study of social work research, application to matters that are meaningful to social work practice are crucial. There can be no social work research outside the boundaries of legitimate social work context. Therefore, the work for this semester will continue to be grounded in concerns of the profession.

OBJECTIVES:

To develop a critical understanding of the scientific method and its application in social sciences and social work;

To become familiar with the relationship between research design and research implementation and outcome.

To understand the relationship between theory and research; the role of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement;

To gain a comprehensive knowledge of research-related concepts: sampling, reliability, validity, levels of measurement, and bias.

To gain a beginning mastery of survey research design, mixed method design, secondary analysis, and program evaluation.

To become familiar the use of statistical analysis.

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 and by analyzing data.

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 quantitative methods of data collection and analysis;

To understand how sampling choices and project implementation impact on study outcome;

To be knowledgeable about when to choose quantitative research methods to achieve project study goals;

To understand the value and limitations of statistical analysis.

To present findings in spoken and written form.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Acock, A. (2016). *A gentle introduction to Stata*. (5th ed.). College Station TX: Stata Press.
ISBN-13: 978-1597181853. ISBN-10: 1597181854 Cost New: \$65.93. (Also used for the second year course in research.).

Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2017). (3rd ed.). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
SBN-13: 978-1483344379 **ISBN-10:** 1483344371. Cost New: \$42.49

Rosenthal, J.A. (2012). *Statistics and data interpretation for social work*. New York: Springer.
ISBN: 978-0-8261-0720-6; Cost New: \$52.00

You may use earlier editions of these required texts usually at a lower cost.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Elliott, A.C., & Woodward, W.A. (2007). *Statistical analysis quick reference guidebook with SPSS examples*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
ISBN: 1-4129-2560-6. Cost New: 86.00

Girden, E.R. (2010) *Evaluating research articles, from start to finish*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
ISBN: 0-7619-0446-8; \$ 43.75

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2010). *Research methods for social work* (7th. ed). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
ISBN: 0495811718; \$ 116.28

Earlier editions are fine.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Evaluating Research Articles

Choose two research articles that utilize a quantitative methodological approach. Evaluate these articles by responding to the following questions: 1) What is the stated purpose of the study? 2) What is the rationale for the study? 3) How would you describe the design and implementation method? 4) What statistic(s) were used? 5) What were the findings? 6) What were the conclusions? You may use Girden's *Evaluating research articles* as a guide. The articles should be from social work journals. Please include the copies of the

articles with your analyses. This assignment should be approximately 3 pages excluding the title and reference page for each article précis, or a total of 6 pages for both. Please include the complete APA 6th edition reference of the article at the very beginning of each evaluation, at the top of the page. Please hand this in on the **5th. class session**. Grades will be reduced for late assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

B. Data Analysis:

The final assignment is one that will involve students in creating a mixed methods design.

1. Mixed Methods Analysis: Students will design a mixed methods study using the guidelines suggested by Creswell and Plano Clarke. Specific directions will be handed out in class.

Late papers for parts 1 and 2 will be subject to a reduction in grade. This assignment should not exceed 6 pages.

C. Research Design

Evaluation Research Design: Students should write a proposal for a program evaluation to be addressed to an agency director. It should include a short description of the program to be evaluated, the need for the evaluation, the evaluation plan, and the design including how data will be sampled, collected, validated, and analyzed. There should be a short, 150 word or less, abstract in single space attached to the front of the plan, and a reference page in APA style, 6th edition. The plan should be between 4-6 pages, not including the summary, title, and reference pages. It should include a shortened version of an Questionnaire used in the evaluation in an appendix. This will be handed on the **12th class session**. Late papers will be subject to a reduction in the grade.

COURSE GRADES

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

First assignment	30%
Second assignment	30%

Third assignment	30%
Class participation and attendance	10%

The grade of “incomplete” will only be given at the discretion of the instructor.

COURSE WORK AND READINGS

I. Problem Formulation and Conceptualization (Sessions 1-2)

The identification of researchable problems and units of measurement are focused upon as the semester begins. What is feasible to research? What is measurable? How does one operationalize variables? These are questions that are answered through the readings and class discussions. The need to read quantitative research articles with a high level of understanding is addressed.

I Introduction (Sessions 1-2) (Chapter numbers may vary depending on the book editions.)

Readings

Rosenthal:	Chapt. 1-2	<u>Introduction</u>
<u>Suggested</u>		
Rubin, & Babbie:	Chapt. 6.	<u>Problem Formulation and Measurement.</u>
	Chapt. 7.	<u>Conceptualization and Operationalization.</u>
Girden:	Chapt. 1-4	<u>Introduction, Case Studies, Narrative Analysis, Surveys.</u>

II. Measurement: Levels, Validity, Reliability, Errors, and Sensitivity (Sessions 3-4)

The concepts applicable to measurement are reviewed. Special attention is given to questionnaire construction. Reliability and validity are important topics as well as the avoidance of measurement error.

Readings

Rosenthal	Chapt 3-4	<u>Central Tendency, and Measures of Variability</u>
<u>Suggested</u>		

Rubin, & Babbie: Chapt. 8. Measurement
Chapt. 9. Constructing Measurement Instruments.

III. Distribution and Relationships of Variables (Sessions 5-6).

How data is distributed and relationships between variables are discussed with emphasis on the Odds Ratio statistic.

Readings

Rosenthal Chapt. 5- 7 Distribution and Relationships of Variables

Creswell, Plano Clark: Chapt. 1-3 Mixed Methods

Suggested

Rubin, & Babbie: Chapt. 7 Conceptualization and Operationalization

IV. Research Design and Program Evaluation (Sessions 7)

The connection between research design and program evaluation are the focus of this section.

Readings

Rosenthal: Chapt. 10-11

Suggested

Rubin & Babbie: Chapt. 10-13 Program Evaluation

V Mixed Methods (Session 8).

Creswell & Plano Clark Chapt. 4-7 Taking the Mixed Methods Approach .

VII. Data Analysis. (Sessions. 9-10)

Inferential statistics and hypothesis testing is studied using study questions outlined in text. Students will conceptualize the use of statistics as one part of the research design and implementation process.

Readings

Acock: Chapt. (to be announced) Using Stata
Rosenthal: Chapt. 12, 14-20 Inferential Statistics

Suggested

Weinbach, & Grinnell Chapt. 3-6 Central Tendency and Variability, Normal Distributions, Hypothesis Testing, and Sampling.

VI Statistics for Data Analysis (Sessions 11-12)

Acock Chapt. (to be announced) Using Stata
Rosenthal Chapt. 7-12 Correlation, Regression, T-Tests

VII. Review of Data Analysis and Research Design (Sessions. 13).

This section continues with data analysis and the topics of selecting statistical tests, correlation, and regression are studied.

Readings (to be announced)

IX Research for What? (Session 14)

Ethics and cultural competence are discussed.

Readings: _____ (to be announced).

Rubin, & Babbie Chapt. 4-5 Ethics, Culture and Politics of Research .