APPLIED METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH
SWK6402
FALL 2015

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course builds upon content presented in Practice Research (SWK6401) and contains the focus on: problem formulation, conceptualization and operationalization of variables, use of measurement instruments, logic of research design (including sampling and design selection), ethical and legal Issues, quantitative and qualitative modes of observation, analysis of data, use of computers and computer programs, and research report writing.

Applied Methods in Social Work Research, a second course in research methodology, surveys the major designs used in social work. Abstract concepts are integrated into a hands-on research project. The student participates in a team or individual research project and learns the basics of conducting social work research, the ability to locate and integrate literature, and skills in writing about research. The research project is usually a secondary analysis of a sample of a large well-designed survey. In addition to the cognitive aspects, the course will also concentrate on two practical areas; the application of research principles through students' participation in group or individual research projects, and the development of library and research communication skills.

Research is presented as a logical extension of service delivery, rooted in the ethical imperative not to harm clients and to ensure that the methods employed in service delivery are effective. The course demonstrates the connection between foundation practice and research in that students will learn how to evaluate the utility of social research as it informs social work practice in the context of service delivery to clients.

COURSE COMPETENCY OUTCOMES
At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments (CSWE Competency 2.1.3)
2. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research (CSWE Competency 2.1.6)
3. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (CSWE Competency 2.1.10 a, b, d)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
At the conclusion of the course students will demonstrate:

1. An understanding of scientific methods for building knowledge for social work practice.
2. Skills in initiating research, with emphasis on problem formulation.
3. The ability to apply strategies to carry out social work research in a culturally competent manner.
4. An understanding of the application and consequences of various research methodologies.
5. Knowledge of the basic research concepts of variables, sampling, hypothesis generation and testing.

6. An awareness of the advantages, dangers, ethical and legal implications of using research findings.

7. An understanding of basic statistical tests and their application.

8. The application of computer techniques of research and an understanding of computer utility in practice settings. We will be using R, a shareware statistical package, to accomplish this.

9. The ability to critically assess, interpret, evaluate and use research reports to inform practice.

10. The ability to communicate about their own and others qualitative and quantitative research.

11. The ability to use a current statistical program for social sciences and social work on the computer and successfully do data entry, data manipulation, and data analysis.

**PLAGIARISM**

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

**HIPAA ALERT**

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Given the nature of classroom discussion and the presentation of case materials and at times personal revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients extends to classmates. What is shared in class stays in class.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rko1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.
E-RES (Electronic Reserve)
Most of the articles mentioned in the curriculum are available on electronic reserve [E-RES]. You can access the full text articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

How do I Use E-RES?
1. Go to the library’s online resources page: [http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp](http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp)
2. Click on E-RES. If you are off-campus, at this point you will be prompted for your Off Campus Access Service login and password.
3. Click on “Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor's name, department, course name, course number, document title, or document author. [all reserarch courses will be listed under Auerbach, the sequence chair]
4. Click on the link to your course.
5. Enter the password given to you by your instructor.
6. Locate and click on the item you wish to view. Titles beginning with "A", "An", or "The" are alphabetized under "A" and "T" respectively.
7. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it to disk.

To view documents that are in pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html)

Basic Texts
All required and recommended texts are on reserve in the library, and required articles as well as suggested readings can be found on E-RESERVE. The E-RES password will be given to students at the beginning of the course.

The following two texts are required for this course:


Recommended Text:

In addition to text readings, students will receive handouts and resource materials periodically throughout the course. Additional optional readings will be suggested as they pertain to the topic area under discussion. Students are also expected to read extensively in the substantive area of their selected project, which will be reflected (in summary form) in their written review and synthesis of the literature.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Students are expected to attend and participate in class sessions (see expectations in Wurzweiler’s Student Manual); to submit on time the written assignments at end of outline; and to present and discuss their written work with the class. The final grade will be based on each student’s performance in each of these three areas. There are 4 required assignments. The assignments follow the content areas and are designed to reinforce the topic areas covered.

Papers must conform to APA academic style when including citations and bibliography. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please refer to your student handbook on school policies regarding this matter.

B. Assignments

Assignment #1 - Due 4th session
Critique of a Research Article

Using the outline below critique the article provided to you by the instructor.

1. What was the purpose of the study? Is the phenomenon to be studied clearly articulated and delimited?
2. What was the need or rationale for this particular study?
3. Which purposeful sampling technique was used? What was the sample size? How were people selected to be interviewed or observed?
4. What was the research role assumed by the researcher? What was the person’s training and background?
5. How long was the researcher in the field?
6. What was the design selected?
7. What data collection strategies were used? Were multiple strategies employed?
8. What strategies did the researcher use to minimize potential bias (internal and external validity)?
9. What are the recognized limitations of the study?
10. What ethical consideration was addressed?
11. Did the researcher specify how informed consent, confidentiality, etc. were handled in the field?

(Learning Objectives 1,2,4,5,10) (CSWE Competencies 2.1.6, 2.1.10 a, b, d)

Assignment #2 - Due 7th session

As a preliminary step to developing your research proposal in greater detail (see assignment #4), submit the following:

1. Statement of the general problem you are studying and why it is important.
2. Briefly discuss the theoretical/conceptual framework for your study.

3. List the major hypothesis and/or research question.

4. Prepare a table on your major variables as identified in item 2 above with information entered under the following column headings:
   a) name of variable
   b) classification (dependent, dependent, etc.)
   c) conceptual definition
   d) operational indicators
   e) level of measurement

5. Briefly identify and justify the type of research design you are considering.

(Learning Objectives 1,2,3) (CSWE Competencies 2.1.6, 2.1.10 a, b, d)

Assignment #3 - Due 10th session

Prepare a literature review for your study. (Which will be integrated into assignment # 4)
The literature review should be scholarly and inclusive.

(Learning Objectives 9,10) (CSWE Competencies 2.1.3, 2.1.6)

Assignment #4 - Due 14th Session

Outline of Thesis or Research Report

A. Title page
   B. Acknowledgments
   C. Table of Contents
   D. List of Tables

I. INTRODUCTION

Review purpose of the project

a. What situation is to be analyzed?
b. What are the major questions to which answers are sought?
c. What hypotheses, if any, are to be tested?

Relevance of Project

a. Why is it important?
b. In what way will it advance social work knowledge or practice?

Frame of Reference

a. Develop the frame of reference within which you are exploring the problem.
b. What is the state of existing theory? Who has done what with what results?
c. How has current theory affected your specific topic and areas you plan to consider?
e. What are the principal variables/terms you will be using?
f. What are the limitations of the study?

II. METHODOLOGY

a. What is the study design - exploratory, descriptive or experimental (approach to studying the problem)?
b. What will be your sources of data?
c. What is the "population" you will sample?
   1. Define the universe.
   2. How will the sample be drawn?
   3. How representative of the universe is it and what level of generalization will be permitted by the study?
d. How will you collect your data? - Questionnaire, interview, observation, non-obtrusive measures, available records, etc.
   1. What are the advantages of this method?
   2. What topics are covered by the instrument?
   3. How are topics operationalized and why?
e. What is the reliability of your data and will it be tested?
f. What is the validity of your data and how will it be determined?
g. Limitations of data collected.

III. FINDINGS

a. What are the characteristics of your sample?
b. What statistical methods did you use and why?
c. Present and analyze your findings

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS / IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

(Learning Objectives 5,6,7,8,9,10,11) (CSWE 2.1.6 PB1 - Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry)

C. Grading

Class participation 20%
Paper 1 15%
Paper 2 15%
Paper 3 15%
Paper 4 35%

COURSE OUTLINE

Sessions 1 & 2 Learning Objectives 1, 9 & 6
Introduction and orientation to the course. Review of nature and purpose of research, including ethical considerations.
Required Readings:

Outline of Research Report (See Assignment #4)


Sessions 3 & 4 Learning Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5 & 9
Problem Formulation and Measurement

Required Readings:


Sessions 5 & 6 Learning Objectives 3, 4 & 7
The Logic of Research Design and Reviewing the Literature

Required Readings:

Session 7 Learning Objective 4
Required Readings:


Recommended:

Session 8 Learning Objectives 3 & 9
Program Evaluation

Required Reading:


Session 9 - 13 Learning Objectives 7, 8, 9 & 11
Analysis of Data: Hypothesis Testing, Inferential Data Analysis and Statistical Significance.

Required Reading:

Session 14 Learning Objective 10
Discussion of Research Findings of Final Project
Bibliography of Other Resources For Applied Research Methods


