Course Description

This course is designed to enhance students’ knowledge, understanding and appreciation of research techniques with emphasis on research oriented toward the strengths, capacities, beliefs, attitudes and values of human populations and social work practice. The course is structured to help students learn the methods and the processes of research in order to evolve as accountable professionals. Students will acquire the ability to develop and analyze outcome measures rooted in the knowledge of social work research process involving the concepts of measurement, design, analysis and decision making both quantitatively and qualitatively. For this purpose students are expected to identify and state a research question related to client/agency outcome in social work practice, substantiate the research problem through appropriate review of literature, and demonstrate sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, cultural diversity and ethical considerations in social work practice and research.

The content of the course and the reading materials from sources adhering to the Council for Social Work Education Curriculum policy standards and guidelines will help students develop the necessary competencies for evaluation of social work practice and for conducting social work research in general. Students will learn and demonstrate proficiency in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and appreciate the major considerations involved in the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the social work research. Throughout the semester, students will be motivated to be active participants in the process of mastering the problem formulation, acquiring skills in determining the right research design, designing ethically sound studies, developing appropriate data collection tools, collecting the right kind of data, developing concise data analysis plans inclusive of statistical procedures, drawing methodologically sound conclusions, writing scientific research reports, and above all, evolving as informed consumers of research knowledge available in the social work domain as well as published research materials in related disciplines.
Course Objectives and Outcomes

When students complete the expected requirements of this course, they will be able:

1. Develop a knowledge base related to identifying situations that are amendable to scientific inquiry and articulate research questions with proficiency in developing and stating abstract and operational hypotheses relevant to the research question and knowledge base. This objective will be demonstrated by the required research proposal using one of the following methods: grounded theory, ethnography, and case study methods, single subject designs, experimental group designs or survey research methods.

2. Formulate problems intro researchable questions, identify problems of research that has direct relevance to multilevel practice with people in vulnerable life conditions and select a research design appropriate for the context of the practice setting and examine the design in relation to the most common threats to internal validity. This objective will be demonstrated by performance in the comprehensive mid-term examination, group discussions, written summary of readings and the project proposal.

3. Understand the relevance of quantitative and qualitative research methods and the appropriate contextual use of these methods in evaluating significance of research questions for practice and policy advocacy purposes. Students will be able to appreciate the importance of research in social work practice at the micro, meso and macro levels by actively participating in class discussions and clarifications during lectures.

4. Utilize the knowledge of sampling required for empirical research in social work practice through developing a plan for sample selection in the research proposal with thorough knowledge of the importance of ethical and political considerations in social work research and use the process of obtaining informed consent. This will be demonstrated by the required 15-page project proposal.
5. Develop data collection instruments, taking into consideration the connection between the research question, sample/population to be studied and the nature of data to be collected and become proficient in selecting a means of measurements of variables needed for the examination of the research questions(s) and to be able to decide:
(a) whether the variables should be measured qualitatively or quantitatively
(b) what means should be employed for observation-data collection
(c) the reliability and validity of this means of measuring the variables

This objective will be demonstrated by the use of appropriate measurement instruments in the research proposal and presentations in class and participation in group discussions.

6. Collect, classify and analyze data using statistical methods and logically derived techniques, demonstrating proficiency in parametric and non-parametric statistics. This objective will be demonstrated by the project proposal that entails developing research questions, exploring relationships between variables, and drawing conclusions by careful study of a given data set and performing the above functions in the context of the given data set.

7. Interpret the data and communicate the results to relevant audience, and draw conclusions for the purposes of empirically documenting the effectiveness of new and existing methods of practice with varying client population. Students will demonstrate the achievement of this objective by in-class presentations of critique of published research studies after discussing and critiquing in such published research studies in small group discussions designed specifically for this purpose.

8. Know the process of evaluating practice and becoming accountable professionals by learning evaluation research methods and discussing studies focused on single subject, group designs and program evaluation and relating these studies to their experiences in their field placement. This objective will be achieved through a short paper on evaluating a component of their agency-field placement such as practice with client, family or secondary groups.

Method of Instructions
The methods of instruction in this seminar are two-fold and appeal to two distinctly different yet mutually essential learning styles. One dimension of this course is a lecture/seminar-discussion approach aimed at understanding and communicating advanced research methods and skills in conducting research studies. The other component of this seminar uses experiential, action-oriented methods in which learning through “doing” is emphasized. The second dimension of the class is exercises focusing on specific helping skills that are presented in a graduate fashion designed to build on the learner’s developing competencies. The exercises are problem focused with the learner being responsible for supplying and introducing the concern to be worked on in the laboratory setting. Thus, content is approached inductively, i.e., specific to general or concrete to abstract, and is learned primarily at the affective-behavioral level.

Plagiarism and cheating

Students are expected to abide by the University policies regarding plagiarism and cheating. Failure to follow the policies regarding plagiarism will result in an automatic “F” for the course, no further discussion will be made. Therefore, it is critical that while working on your Research Proposal and other written requirements, please follow closely with the format and guidelines as specified under the current APA edition. The University definitions of plagiarism and cheating are as follow:

Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving a grade or obtaining course credit. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. It is the intent of this definition that the term cheating not be limited to examinations situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means.

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating that consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material so used as one’s own work.
Accommodation

The university is committed to providing every reasonable academic accommodation to students with disabilities. The Office of Services to Students with Disabilities provides university academic support services and specialized assistance to students with disabilities. Individuals who need such accommodation must arrange it with the disabilities’ office. I want to let everyone knows that I am fully committed to accommodate any special need.

Assignments and Grading

Each student’s final grade will result from averaging the scores obtained from all the assignments required from the course. Class attendance and participation is a prerequisite in receiving a passing grade. Every time a student accumulates two tardiness (10 minutes after class is in session)/or leaving the classroom without the instructor’s permission will be counted as one absent. Each student is allowed one free absent without good cause. Additional absence(s) regardless of cause/ or reason will receive 25% deduction from the attendance portion. Five absences in the semester will result in the student not getting any point at all on the attendance portion toward the final grade. Class attendance will be accounted for 5% of the final grade.

Lab attendance is mandatory for all regardless of one’s background. There will be two computer labs for the entire semester. Each lab will be accounted for 50% of the SPSS Lab portion. No excuses and no-make ups will be offered for the computer lab. The SPSS Lab attendance will be accounted for 10% of the final grade.

Group discussions. Each time you participate in a group discussion, you will be credited 10 points for the group discussions grade. No excuses and no-make ups for group discussion either. This part of class activities will be accounted for 5% of the final grade.

The remaining grading criteria will be based on the Research Prospectus Paper will be accounted for 80% of the final grade.
As a result, your final grade is delineated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>% of your final grade</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Prospectus Paper</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Part 1: 09/26/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 2: 11/07/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 3: 12/05/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS Lab attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>First: TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Second: TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussions</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Whenever possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Every Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total = 100%

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-85%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-81%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-78%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-75%</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Below 70% not passing
**Required texts:**


**Optional but must have:**

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2002). (5th ed.) Washington, D.C (Author). **This is a required text for students who do not have the 4th edition.**

Note. It is highly expected that students read the assigned chapters first before coming to class. Also in order to avoid being spotlight in class, please read the weekly course Outlines as you will be better prepared for class discussions.

**Course Outlines**

**Week 1**  
September 5, 2006

Introductions. Course syllabus, assignments and requirements, expectations, grading scale and classroom environment
1. The research cycles
2. Research in the Human Services
3. The Logic of Social Research
4. The ethics and politics of social work research

**Readings:**

Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, Chapters 1, 2 and 3
Preparation for Week 2 discussions: Individual student identify area of research interest to be discussed for Thesis/Project preparation

**Week 2**  
September 12, 2006

Introduction continue plus CSUS Institutional Review Board Policies (IRB)

1. Ethical issues in social work research
2. NASW Code of Ethics
3. Bias and insensitivity regarding diversity issues
4. Library search (Instructor illustrate library search in class)
Readings:

Re-read Monette, Sullivan and DeJong, Chapter 3

E-mail guidelines for the Research Prospectus Paper. If you don’t receive an email from me by Friday, make sure to email me inquiring the guidelines.

Class discussion. Identify a researchable social problem and based either on personal or professional experience(s), set research priorities, identify the problem that is measurable, explain the process of obtaining a literature review for the research problem and make a preliminary statement of pertinent research questions. This discussion will prepares you to better understand Chapters 4 & 5.

Week 3 September 19, 2006

Problem Formulation and the Measurement Process

1. Diagramming the research process (see class handouts)
2. Selecting topics and research questions
3. Shaping and Refining the Problem
4. Feasibility of a Research Project
5. Ways of Measuring/Scaling
6. Levels of Measurement
7. Evaluating Measures and Errors in Measurement

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 4, 5 & 13

Group discussions. Group members will use the assigned topic to construct and strategize a usable measurement tool for that particular topic. Group will then provide critique to other group’s works. This will set the stage for you to better understand about measurement issues which will be covered on Week #4.
Week 4  September 26, 2006

Sampling Distributions and Hypotheses Testing

1. The Purpose of Sampling
2. Probability and Nonprobability
3. Hypothesis Testing

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 6
Class handouts

Class discussions. Examine your group’s works last week and find errors/issues that your group did not incorporate into constructing your questionnaire.

Research Prospective Paper Part 1 due. Late papers will receive 25% deduction per day regardless of cause or reason. If you will not be coming to class, make sure to give your paper to someone turn it in for you.

Week 5  February 21, 2006

Sampling and Survey Research

1. Designing Questions
2. Questionnaire
3. Types of Survey Research

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 7

Week 6  October 3, 2006


Readings:

No reading is needed
Week 7  October 10, 2006

SPSS session 2.

Week 8  October 17, 2006

Analysis of Available Data

1. Sources of Statistical Data
2. Sources of Content Analysis
3. Issues in Content Analysis
4. Assessment of Available Data Analysis

Reading assignments: Monette et al., Chapter 8

Week 9  October 31, 2006

Field Research and Qualitative Methods

1. Characteristics of qualitative methods
2. Field Research
3. Steps in Field Research
4. Recording Observations in Field Research
5. Advantages/Disadvantages in Qualitative Methods
6. Strengths and weaknesses of survey research
7. Cultural appropriateness

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 9

Week 10  November 7, 2006

Experimental Research

1. The Logic of Experimentation
2. Quasi-experimental and true-experimental research designs
3. Threats to validity (internal and external threats)
4. Data contamination
Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 10

Second Draft of Term Paper Due

Group discussions. Your group has been assigned to conduct an experimental research to examine issues facing California Youth Authority (CYA), especially the wards’ safety and their psychological well being. Choose one of the designs as discussed in Chapter 10. Assigned to have a member of your group to put your design into one or two transparencies paper. Sketch the design as clear as possible. Your group will present your design to the whole class in our next session.

Week 11  November 14, 2006

Single-case evaluation designs

1. Logic of single-case designs
2. Measurement issues
3. Types of Single-System Designs
4. Data gathering
5. Data analysis

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 11

Class presentation. Instructor illustrates how to run statistical analyses for single-case designs.

Week 12  November 21, 2006

Research Evaluation

1. What is Evaluation Research?
2. Formative Evaluation
3. Summative Evaluation
4. Barriers to the Use of Evaluation Research
Group discussions. Your group is being assigned to study a group of newly arrival refugees from the Thailand who are having adjustment difficulty. Please discuss the method in which you feel most appropriate to be used for this study, the data collection procedures, techniques you will be used to approach the subject and other ethical and cultural issues that you must take into consideration. Your group will have about 3-5 minutes to present your hypothetical study to the whole class at the end of class.

Reading Assignments: Monette et al., Chapter 12

Week 13 November 28, 2006

Review of Statistics. Briefly review descriptive statistics for social sciences research

1. Preparation for Data Analysis
2. Data Entry
3. Descriptive Statistics

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapters 13 & 14

Week 14 December 5, 2006

Review of Statistics continues. Understanding descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including:

1. Normal distribution
2. Cross-tabulation and chi-square
3. Correlation
4. Regression analysis
5. t-tests and analysis of variance

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapter 15

Final Term Paper Due
Week 15  May 2, 2006

Analysis of Qualitative Data
Writing research proposals and reports
DOS and DON’T on SWRK 500

Readings:

Monette et al., Chapters 16 & 17