

COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 8311 (22494) Research Methods I: Introduction to Research on Evidence-Based Social Work

TIME: Tuesdays 8:30 – 11:30 AM Rm: SW 221

FACULTY: Allen Rubin, Ph.D.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday 4-5 PM, Tuesday 11:30-1 PM, or by appointment. SW342

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I. Course

A. Catalog Description

Credit (3.0). Pre-requisite: Doctoral standing or permission from the instructor. This course examines the range of designs and methods involved in formulating and conducting social research, with an emphasis on the development of knowledge essential for utilizing and building the empirical knowledge base for evidence-based social work.

B. Purpose

The purpose of this course is to examine the fundamentals of formulating and conducting independent research related to building empirical knowledge for social work, and review the historical background, process, and epistemological controversies regarding evidence-based social work. The course will help prepare students to identify an area of evidence-based social work that might serve as a focus for assignments in other courses and for the dissertation.

A large portion of this course requires students to conduct an independent appraisal of a social work research problem of interest and review and critically appraise the current empirical knowledge base pertaining to that problem. This appraisal will ideally serve as a research topic students would focus on for their remaining studies and dissertation.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following:

1. describe the historical background, process, and epistemological controversies regarding evidence-based social work;
2. explain the problem formulation phase in social work research, including selecting a topic pertinent to evidence-based social work, developing a research question, and explicating and operationally defining the conceptual elements of the research question;

3. identify how to assess and minimize measurement error in quantitative and qualitative inquiry
4. evaluate the strengths and limitations of a variety of types of quantitative and qualitative research designs;
5. describe the strengths and limitations of alternative sampling and survey methods;
6. explain the meaning of statistical significance, type 1 and type 2 errors, and effect size in evidence-based social work research;
7. critically appraise research studies pertaining to a social work research problem of interest.

III. Course Content

This course will include the following topical (content) areas:

1. The scientific method.
2. Evidence-based social work.
3. Epistemological paradigms.
4. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research designs.
5. Formulating and conceptualizing research questions and designs.
6. Measurement concepts and constructing measurement instruments.
7. Designs for evaluating program and practice effectiveness.
8. Sampling issues and techniques in survey research.
9. Analyzing existing data and secondary analysis.
10. Key concepts in interpreting inferential statistical results of outcome studies.

IV. Course Structure

This course will include lectures, applied assignments, multimedia demonstrations, and in-class activities. All students are expected to participate and contribute to all course activities to gain the full impact of the material presented.

V. Textbooks

Required:

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2017). *Research Methods for Social Work (9th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: CENGAGE Learning.

Recommended:

Rubin, A. (2013). *Statistics for evidence-based practice and evaluation, 3rd Edition*. Belmont, CA: Cengage.

VI. Course Requirements

A. Reading Assignments:

Reading assignments will be primarily from the Rubin & Babbie (2017) text. Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

B. Exam (35 points): There will be one exam covering the reading material and course content. The exam is worth 35 points and will test students' ability to recall, understand, apply, analyze and synthesize course content.

C. Term Paper (15 points): Find one methodologically strong and one methodologically weak published empirical research studies on an evidence-based social work question that interests you. Summarize each study and identify its most important methodological strengths and/or weaknesses (if any). Explain why each strength or weakness that you identify is an important strength or weakness. Explain why, in light of each study's strengths and/or weaknesses, that study does or does not deserve to guide social work practice or social welfare policy. Attach a copy of each study. (*Approximately 6 pages double-spaced. Due by December 6.*)

D. Two Written Assignments (20 points each):

Assignment 1: Formulate a hypothesis relevant to evidence-based social work. Identify its independent and dependent variables. Operationally define each variable. Explain why testing the hypothesis would have value in informing social work practice or policy. Critique the other students' assignments. Grading will be based on how well the work reflects the emphases of the assigned chapters. The critique should be 1 or 2 pages and be worth up to 5 of the 20-point maximum for this assignment.

Assignment 2: Construct a questionnaire that contains a variety of different types of items, such as a person's demographic characteristics, their needs, satisfactions/dissatisfactions, views on issues, etc. The questionnaire should contain *at least 15-20 items*. Critique the other students' assignments. Grading will be based on how well the work reflects the emphases of the assigned chapters. The critique should be 1 or 2 pages and be worth up to 5 of the 20-point maximum for this assignment.

E. Class Participation (10 points): Students will be expected to participate actively in each class session. Class participation includes not working on other course work or personal matters during class (including using cell phones or computers), and consistently attending and being on time to class. Attendance is not only expected, but is necessary for you to be successful in this class. A mutually respectful and professional environment is expected at all times. This includes turning off cell phones before class and not using laptops for personal use during class. Cell phone rings, text messaging, and the use of laptops can be very distracting to others who are trying to learn, and for this reason, I do not tolerate it.

VII. Evaluation and Grading

The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses taught in the college. Please use this scale to assign final course letter grades.

A =	96-100% of the points	C+ =	76-79.9%
A- =	92-95.9%	C =	72-75.9%
B+ =	88-91.9%	C- =	68-71.9%
B =	84-87.9%	D =	64-67.9%
B- =	80-83.9%	F =	Below 64%

VIII. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete):

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either **(a)** passing a course or **(b)** still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements.

Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work completed in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of **W**.

IX. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty. Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All presentations, papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author (or authors), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person's work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. It also includes securing another person to complete any required activities, assignments, quizzes, papers, or exams in an online course, or in any on-line environment. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see the instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

X. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Date	TOPIC AND READINGS
August 23	<p>Introductions; Overview of course; the scientific method, evidence-based social work.</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 1 & 2</p> <p>Supplemental: Sommers-Flanagan, J. (2015) Evidence-Based Relationship Practice: Enhancing Counselor Competence. <i>Journal of Mental Health Counseling</i>: April 2015, 37, 95-108.</p> <p>Rubin, A. & Parrish, D. (2007). "Challenges to the Future of Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work Education." <i>Journal of Social Work Education</i>, 43, 3, 405-428.</p>
August 30	<p>Problem Formulation and Conceptualization</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 7 & 8</p>
September 6	<p>In lieu of class, students will complete Assignment #1 and submit it as an email attachment to the instructor and their classmates by noon on September 6. Each classmate will submit a brief (1-2 pages) critique of each of the other students' submissions by midnight on September 11. The instructor will grade each assignment and each critique and discuss them at the start of class next week.</p>

September 13	<p>Feedback on Assignment #1 and critiques</p> <p>Epistemological paradigms (philosophy of science), factors influencing the research process, comparison of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research designs.</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 3 & 4</p>
September 20	<p>Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 11 & 12</p>
September 27	<p>The ethical, political, and cultural context of social work research and program evaluation</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 5, 6 & 14</p> <p>Supplemental: Rubin, A. (1997). The Family Preservation Evaluation from Hell: Implications for Program Evaluation and Fidelity. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 19. 77-99.</p>
October 4	<p>Single-Case Designs</p> <p>Readings Due For These Classes: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 13</p>
October 11	<p>Measurement</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9 and pages 126 – 135</p> <p>Supplemental: Young, D. et al. Validity and Reliability of Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness (Cantonese). <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>. Published online before print. doi:10.1177/1049731515576209</p>
October 18	<p>Sampling, Surveys and Secondary Analysis</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 15, 16 & pages 405 – 416</p> <p>Supplemental: Rubin, A. & Parrish, D. (2007). "Views of Evidence-Based Practice Among Faculty in MSW Programs: A National Survey." <i>Research On Social Work Practice</i>, 17, 1, 110-122.</p>

October 25	<p>Qualitative Methods</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 18 & 19 Greene, R. R. (2015). Resilience and healing among Cambodian survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime, <i>Journal of Evidence-Based Practice</i>, Available online at DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2014.921588</p>
November 1	<p>Instrument Construction</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10</p>
November 8	<p>In lieu of class, students will complete Assignment #2 and submit it as an email attachment to the instructor and their classmates by noon on November 1. Each classmate will submit a brief (1-2 pages) critique of each of the other students' submissions by midnight on November 6. The instructor will grade each assignment and each critique and discuss them at the start of class next week.</p>
November 15	<p>Feedback on Assignment #2</p> <p>Key inferential statistics in outcome studies -- from a conceptual standpoint: the meaning and limitations of statistical significance; relationship magnitude and effect size, and clinical/substantive significance.</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 22</p> <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rubin (2014), An alternative paradigm for social workers seeking to do intervention research. <i>Social Work Research & Abstracts</i> 2) Rubin (2014), Bridging the gap between research-supported interventions and everyday social work practice. <i>Social Work</i> 3) Rubin, A., Washburn, M., & C. Schieszler. Within-Group Effect-size Benchmarks for Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Children and Adolescents. Published online before print January 7, 2016, doi:10.1177/1049731515620016. <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>
November 22	<p>Continuation of previous week's content.</p> <p>Review of course content for exam</p>
November 29	<p>EXAM</p>

XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the UH Center for Disabilities at 713-743-5400.

XII. Bibliography

Lists current references for students who are interested in pursuing additional information on course content.

- Bloom, M., Fischer, J., & Orme, J.G. (2001). *Evaluating practice: Guidelines for the accountable professional* (6th ed.). Boston: Allen & Bacon.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2007). *Basics of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Galvan, J. (1999). *Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. Los Angeles, CA : Pyczak.
- Girden, E. R. (2001). *Evaluating research articles* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Padgett, D. K. (Ed.). (2004). *The qualitative research experience*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth//Thomson Learning.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, A. (2013). *Statistics for evidence-based practice and evaluation*, 3rd Edition. Belmont, CA: Cengage.
- Rubin, A. & Bellamy, J. (2012). *Practitioner's guide to using research for evidence-based practice*, 2nd Ed. Hobokin, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Shadish, W.R., Cook, T.D., & Campbell, D.T. (2001). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Wadsworth, CENGAGE Learning.