

**SW 210: Methods of Social Research**

**Lecture:** Tuesdays ; Sec. 3 / 12 pm–2:50 pm, 1016 MRP; Sec. 5 / 6:30pm – 9:20 pm 1014 MRP

**Office:** 4017 Mariposa Hall

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10:30 am – 12:00 pm; Thursdays 8:30 – 9:00 am; 10:30 – 11:30 am

**Telephone:** (916) 278-7177

**E-mail:** bankhead@csus.edu

**I. Course Description**

Students will critically evaluate and engage in current social welfare research methods while examining the implications for social work practice. Students will become familiar with essential components of research development including: problem formulation, conceptual framework development, research design, measurement, sampling, data collection, data analysis and computer technology. Students will learn and demonstrate proficiency in qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Students are expected to produce a research project where they will develop a research question related to an outcome in social work practice. Students will substantiate the research problem through appropriate review of the literature while demonstrating sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, cultural diversity and ethical considerations in social work practice. Finally, students will describe the research methods appropriate for their research question, collect and analyze data and write a research report. Through this process students will be equipped with the tools to evolve as evidence-based practitioners.

**II. Objectives**

Through attendance, reading, assignments, and active participation, students will:

- a. Identify situations amenable to scientific inquiry and determine methods of inquiry appropriate for their research questions using: grounded theory, ethnography, case study, experimental or survey research;
- b. Develop research questions from research problems with attention given to reliability, validity and conceptual appropriateness for multi-level practice with vulnerable populations;
- c. Understand the relevance and appropriateness of qualitative and quantitative research methods in micro, meso and macro levels;
- d. Utilize knowledge of sampling and instrumentation that are congruent with the stated research question.

**III. Learning Outcomes**

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

- a. Collect, classify and analyze data using statistical methods;
- b. Interpret findings and communicate results to a relevant audience;
- c. Critically evaluate aspects of social work practice for an evidence basis and use findings to become a more accountable professional.

**IV. Requirements**

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|------------------------------|---|
| a. In-class participation    | 10%   |
| b. Midterm Exam              | 20% <b>March 11</b>   |
| c. SPSS Lab                  | 20% <b>April 8, 15 &amp; 22</b>                                     |
| d. Research Project Proposal | 40% <b>Due April 29</b><br>(Drafts due Feb. 19, March 18, April 22) |
| e. In-class presentations    | 10% <b>May 6 &amp; 13</b>   |

## V. **Teaching/Learning Modalities**

This class will be taught as a seminar with an emphasis on discussion. Students will be asked to share their own experiences, knowledge and opinions within the frameworks and concepts presented in class. The instructor will be a guide to, and participant in, the learning process. There will be a mid-term evaluation of the instructor so that feedback can be incorporated into the last half of the class.

## VI. **Required Text & Readings**

1. Royce, D. (2008). Research methods in social work (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) . Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.

### Recommended Text

1. Kirkpatrick, L.A., & Freeney, B.C. (2006). A simple guide to SPSS for Windows for version 14. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

## VII. **Topical Outline**

### **SECTION I: Introduction to Scientific Inquiry**

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#### **Week 1:**     Introductions, Overview & Expectations 1/29

Review course objectives & syllabus; complete introductions

Lecture – What is scientific inquiry? Why is research important for social work?

1. Social scientific process & its environment
2. Descriptive knowledge
3. Predictive knowledge

Chpt. 1

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#### **Week 2:**     Research Theory & Ethics 2/5

1. Theory vs. belief
2. Deductive & inductive theory
3. Ethical & political considerations
4. Personal & social values

Chpts. 2 & 3

- **Handout guidelines for Research Project**
  - **Students bring Human Subjects Application to class**
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#### **Week 3:**     Problem Formulation & Conceptualization 2/12

1. Selecting a research topic
2. Constructing a comprehensive literature review
3. Determining the unit of analysis
4. Operationalizing research concepts

Chpts. 4 & 5

**\* Students identify a research interest to be discussed in class**

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**Week 4:** Measurement

2/19

1. Levels of measurement
2. Reliability & validity
3. Open-ended and closed-ended questions

Chpt. 6

**\* Bring Part I of Research Project to class (3 to 5 pages)**

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**Week 5:** Questionnaire Design

2/26

1. Questionnaire construction and organization

Chpt. 7

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**Week 6:** Quantitative & Qualitative Sampling

03/04

1. Sampling
2. Experimental & quasi-experimental designs
3. Single-subject design

Chpts. 8

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**Week 7:** Secondary Data Collection

03/11

1. Unobtrusive approaches
2. Strengths & weaknesses

Chpts. 9 & 10

**MIDTERM EXAM 20%**

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**SECTION II Determining an Analysis Method**

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**Week 8:** Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methods

03/18

1. Qualitative/quantitative terminology
2. Understanding theory & practice of qualitative methods
3. Understanding theory & practice of quantitative methods

Chpt. 11

**\* Bring draft questionnaire to class**

**\* Bring Part II of Research Project to class (3 to 5 pages)**

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**Week 9:** Program Evaluation

03/25

1. Purposes of program evaluation
2. Multivariate analysis of managed care costs

Chpt. 12



## **VIII. Evaluation**

There are several methods of evaluation for this course. Your attendance and participation maximize your experience in the class and together constitute 10% of your grade. It is expected that all assignments will be completed on time. Late assignments will lose 1 grade per day, unless arrangements are made **PRIOR** to the due date. Written materials are expected to be of graduate student quality, which means concise, coherent, well-organized writing with citations for all referenced ideas. Paper must follow APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines.

The methods of instruction in this seminar are two-fold. One dimension of this course is a lecture/seminar-discussion approach aimed at understanding and communicating beginning to intermediate research methods and skills in conducting research studies. The other dimension of this seminar uses experiential, action-oriented methods in which learning through “doing” is emphasized.

## **IX. 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 notify the instructor to arrange said accommodation. This instructor is committed in every effort to accommodate **all** special needs.

## **X. Assignments and Grading**

Each student’s final grade will result from adding the scores obtained from all the assignments required by the course and determining a curve. The course includes a possibility of 200 points when all evaluated work is included. Class attendance and participation are prerequisites to receiving a passing grade. Students are expected to attend all classes. Situations such as ill health must be reported to the instructor before class. Four absences during the semester will automatically result in the student receiving a “B-” or lower grade for the semester regardless of his/her performance in all required assignments.

### **1. Midterm Exam 20% (40 points)**

**March 11**

Multiple choice and short answer exam covering first 7 weeks of course content.

### **2. SPSS Lab 20% (40 points)**

**April 8, 15 & 22**

Four short assignments will be completed using the computer lab. Three of these assignments will require data analysis and 1 assignment will be a 1 page narrative. Absences from the SPSS lab sessions are very difficult and often impossible to makeup.

### **3. Research Project Proposal 40% (80 points)**

**April 29**

The project proposal will be no more than 12 pages in length. Complete a literature review of a social problem. Propose a research project that addresses this problem. Justify your use of specific research methods and analyze and collect data. The paper will be graded on the logic of your discussion, use of evidence to support your position, clarity of your writing and appropriateness of the research method selected. You will have an opportunity to collect points toward your total grade on this project throughout the semester when you turn in Parts 1, 2 and 3. With each successive draft, turn in a folder that includes all previous drafts.

### **4. In-class presentations 10% (20 points)**

**May 6 & 13**

Prepare a **3 minute** summary presentation of your research proposal. Students should be prepared to respond to questions raised by their classmates and the professor. You may use PowerPoint, the overhead projector or any visual aids.

### **5. In-class participation 10% (20 points)**

This grade is assigned based upon class attendance and participation in assignments given throughout the semester. One point is awarded for each week of class participation. Additionally, the instructor assigns up to 5 points for participation in classroom discussions and assignments.