I. DESCRIPTION OF COURSE
This course will introduce students to the concepts and principles of social work research methodology. The ethics and politics of social work research, as well as social work ethical principles to guide professional practice (competency #2), will be addressed. Topics include problem formulation, conceptualization and operationalization, measurement, methods of data collection, sampling, causal inference, and research designs. Emphasis will be placed on developing skill in evaluating one's own practice, particularly through single-system design, and development of a professional identity (competency #1). In addition to basic research, program evaluation will be discussed as a method of making social institutions more responsive to human needs. The course will also develop the student's ability to critically evaluate published research in order to inform their own practice and to formulate and carry out practice informed research (competencies #3 and 6). Respect for the unique characteristics of diverse populations will be stressed as the course covers social work research in light of diversity, multicultural biases, and social and economic injustices. The knowledge and skills taught in this course will allow students to assess and evaluate practice issues in their work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (competency #10).

II. OBJECTIVES OF COURSE
1. Students will demonstrate in their homework assignments, the research proposal and in exams that they are able to discuss values, ethics and policies inherent in social work research and the profession’s ethical conduct as it pertains to research. Students will also exhibit the ability to make ethical decisions by applying the NASW Code of Ethics (practice behavior 2.1 for competency #2), as well as the ability to apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions (practice behavior 2.3 for competency #2).

2. Students will demonstrate on exams and on the research proposal that they understand and can apply the concepts taught in social work research, to include problem identification and formulation, use of theory and deriving hypotheses, operationalization of concepts, determining the validity and reliability of measures, sampling, design, procedures, data collection and introductory analyses. Students will also demonstrate the ability to collect, organize, and interpret client data (practice behavior 10.3 for competency #10), and to use this information to critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions (practice behavior 10.11 for competency #10).

3. Students will demonstrate on homework assignments, exams and in their research proposals that they can apply research to social work practice while displaying regard for individual worth and dignity, and incorporating self-determination. Students will also demonstrate the ability to
use practice experience to inform their research (practice behavior 6.1 for competency #6), as well as to use research evidence to inform practice (practice behavior 6.2 for competency #6) as they plan and write their research proposals.

4. Students will demonstrate in their homework assignments and in their research proposals that they are aware of multicultural issues and biases such as age, race, gender, economic, and disability discrimination, and will exhibit respect for the unique characteristics of diverse populations (content for competency #4, practice behavior 4.2).

5. Students will demonstrate in their homework assignments and in their research proposals that they can address the issues of populations at risk and social and economic justice (content for competency #5, practice behavior 5.1).

6. Students will demonstrate in their homework assignments, exams, and their literature review of the research proposal that they are critical consumers of research. This will include the ability to distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3), along with the utilization of this knowledge to select appropriate intervention strategies (practice behavior 10.6 for competency #10).

7. Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize evidence based practice skills through development of a research proposal using most of the elements of grant or contract proposals, with the purpose of enhancing the profession’s ability to make social institutions more responsive to human needs and providing a foundation as social workers to engage in career-long learning (practice behavior 1.4 for competency #1).

III. UNITS, CONTENT, and REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS

Session 1: The Importance of Social Work Research
Introduction to social work research, evaluation, and accountability; Review of course syllabus and requirements; Reading empirical research.

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 1

Session 2: The Utility of Research in Social Work Practice
Scientific method; theory in research studies; methods of social inquiry; research paradigms. Evidence-based practice & ways of knowing. Engagement in research-informed practice and practice-informed research (practice behaviors 6.1 & 6.2).

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapters 1 & 2


Session 3: **Theory and Research**
Deductive and inductive theory; Social work practice models; Problem formulation; The research proposal; Making social institutions more responsive to human needs. Preparing for career long learning (*practice behavior 1.4*).

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 3 and Appendix A

Session 4: **Conceptualization and Operationalization**
Developing a research question; Operational definitions. *Assignment #1 due.*

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapters 6 & 7

Session 5: **The Ethics and Politics of Social Work Research.**
Gender and race bias in social research; NASW Code of Ethics and the application of these ethical principles to guide ethical practice (*practice behaviors 2.1 and 2.3*); Populations-at-risk; Respect for unique characteristics of diverse populations. Human subjects training (on-line). *Assignment #2: Due by 5PM.*

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapters 4 & 5

Session 6: **Measurement**
Levels of measurement; Sources of measurement error; Reliability and validity.

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 8

Session 7: **Survey Design**
Instrumentation & method selection; Questionnaires; Types of surveys. Diversity; Respect for unique characteristics of diverse populations. *Assignment #3 due.*

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapters 9 & 10

Session 8: **Sampling Theory**
Non-probability/Probability sampling; Generalization; Sampling error.

**Readings:** Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 11

Session 9: **Being a Critical Consumer of Social Work Research**
Application of critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments regarding the use of evidence-based practice knowledge and published research.
Peer feedback on literature reviews and suggestions for planning research projects.

Assignment #4: Peer Reviews in class.


Session 10: Single Case Evaluation Designs

Evaluation of practice with individuals and families. Self-determination.
Understanding how to collect, organize and interpret client data as well as to critically analyze, monitor and evaluate interventions (practice behaviors 10.3, 10.6, & 10.11).

Assignment # 5 in class.

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 14

Session 11: Qualitative & Unobtrusive Research Methods

Field Research; Qualitative research methods and data analysis; Content analysis;
Respect for unique characteristics of diverse populations. Populations-at-risk.

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapters 15, 16 & 18
Lomand (2007), Articles 8 (pp. 55-58) & 35 (pp.200-211)

Phase I: Literature Review for research proposal due this session.

Session 12: Program Evaluation

Making social institutions more responsive to human needs;
Quality practice; Commitment to assisting client systems obtain needed resources.

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 13

Session 13: Research Designs and Causal Inference

Internal and external validity; Experimental design; Quasi-experimental design

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) - Chapter 12
Lomand (2007). Articles 16 & 17 (pp. 88-99)

Session 14: Secondary data analysis; Student presentations of research proposals.

Analyzing existing statistics; Historical and comparative analysis. Course evaluation.

Readings: Rubin & Babbie (2007) – review Chapter 16

Phase II - Final papers DUE by 5PM on April 26.

Session 15: Course wrap-up. Final assessment
IV. TECHNIQUES OF INSTRUCTION
The weekly lecture/discussion period will be organized with strong emphases on lecture presentation, class discussion, structured group activities and student participation. Student participation is critical for a successful and productive learning experience. Students are expected to be ON TIME for class and to participate fully in class discussion and activities, drawing from the lecture, assigned weekly readings, and assignments in order to contribute.

V. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


Recommended Textbooks:

VI. ASSIGNMENTS
Homework Assignments (140 points total):

Assignment #1: Identify a topic of interest to you. Locate at least 5 empirical research articles that relate to that topic. Create a short annotated bibliography of these articles (using the correct APA citation format). Due at the beginning of class in Session 4 (30 points).

Assignment #2 Complete Human Subjects on-line training (course #1) offered through the National Institutes of Health. The training program can be accessed at: http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protectations.asp
Choose the link for a new registration. On the registration page,

- Choose a username and password.
- Once you have registered, you may move through the training at your own pace and may choose to complete it all at once or may save your work and return to it at a later time.
- Once you have successfully completed the training, print out the certificate and turn it in as your homework assignment #2. Due Session 5 (30 points).

Assignment #3 Identify a research question related to your topic of interest. In no more than 1 page (single spaced), clearly state your research question, then answer the following:

a) Why is this question important to social work practice?

b) What type of research (quantitative or qualitative) methods would be most appropriate to use in answering this question? Why?

c) What are some potential ethical issues in this proposed work? Due at the beginning of class in Session 7 (30 points)
Assignment #4: Peer review: Each student will present an overview of their research topic (as detailed in the literature review) to a small group of peers in class on Session 9. This overview will be presented orally and in written form (no more than 3 pages), and should include the following: A clear statement of the research question; significance of the problem; theory/underlying assumptions; any hypotheses; the type of research (quantitative or qualitative) that would best address this issue (and why); potential ethical issues in this proposed work; and any other concerns. Students will meet in groups of 3 to provide feedback (both written and verbal) to group members. Students should bring 3 copies of the written overview to class. Grading is based upon the student’s written overview and the feedback provided to peers. (20 pts)

Assignment #5: Single System Design (SSD): Working in small groups, students will review an article that describes a single-subject (single-case) design. Within the small groups, students should select someone to take notes, someone to graph the research design on the board, and someone to present (each group member must have a role). Once the members of the group have read the article, students should address the following (be sure to keep good notes):

(a) Identify the client(s) outcome variable(s);
(b) Identify the study hypothesis;
(c) Identify the design used (AB, ABAB, etc);
(d) Provide an operational definition of at least one measure of the variable;
(e) Describe and give the operational definition of the intervention;
(f) Create a SSD graph for the method used and include both the baseline and the intervention phases on the graph;
(g) Determine if the intervention was effective and present evidence to support this.

Once the group has completed the information required above, one group member should draw the SSD graph on the board while the student presenter(s) briefly describe the study and the group’s answers to the questions provided. Group members should be able to address questions about the study as well. Each group will turn in their notes and answers at the end of the class period. In-class Exercise –Session 10. (30 Points)

Research proposal (Assignment #6). Guidelines for this paper, to be completed in two phases, are attached.

Phase I: Introduction and background -due March 29 by 5PM (50 points).
Phase II: Full research proposal –includes 50 points for revised Phase I and 100 points for Methodology sections. Due April 26 by 5PM (150 points).
Value: 200 points; 40% of final grade.

Quizzes (100 points; 10 pts. each): Ten short timed quizzes will include objective and short answer questions covering content from the Rubin & Babbie (2007) text and class lectures. These quizzes will be available on BlackBoard on the dates shown below. Quizzes will open at noon on the first day and close at 11PM on the end date. Value: 20% of final grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUIZ</th>
<th>CHAPTER/SESSION COVERED</th>
<th>DATES AVAILABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>Ch.1; Session 1</td>
<td>1/11 – 1/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>Ch.2; Session 2</td>
<td>1/25 - 1/31</td>
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</tbody>
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Final Assessment (Assignment #7; 60 pts) – Students will be able to apply the knowledge gained throughout the course in a critical assessment of an empirical research article (provided on the day of the assessment).

VII. METHODS OF EVALUATION

Homework and In-class Assignments: 140 points; 28% of final grade.  
Research Proposal: 200 points; 40% of final grade  
Quizzes/Exams: 100 points; 20% of final grade  
Final Assessment: 60 points; 12% of final grade

Expectations for written work: Text citations and reference lists must be in correct APA (5th ed.) format. All sentences should be carefully comprised of a student’s own words. Ideas, information, and concepts that originated with any other source, as well as quotations (which should be used sparingly) must be correctly cited in APA style. Material that is not correctly cited is considered to be plagiarized and provides grounds for academic discipline.  
Assignments should be carefully proofed for spelling and grammar. NOTE: Failure to turn in any part of an assignment by the due date will result in an automatic deduction of 5% for each day late, unless prior approval is obtained from the instructor.

Assignments may be submitted electronically, but the research proposal must be submitted through the SafeAssign drop-box on BlackBoard.

VIII. Grading Scale

A = 92 - 100  The high passing grade of A is earned by superior work.  
B = 82 - 91  The passing grade of B is earned by work that clearly is satisfactory at the graduate level.  
C = 72 - 81  The low passing grade of C is earned by work that is minimally acceptable at the graduate level.  
F = 71 or below  The failing grade of F is earned by work that is unsatisfactory at the graduate level.

IX: CLASSROOM POLICY

Learning in a professional program is based in large part on the interaction that occurs between the instructor and students in the classroom. Regular attendance at class on time is an expected professional responsibility of the student. Absences of greater than 20 percent of the total class time may constitute grounds for course failure. Tardiness by 15 minutes or more will count as an absence for the class.
UALR views classroom disruptions as academic and behavioral violations. Students should refer to the UALR Student Handbook for a description of classroom disruption and the possible disciplinary sanctions for such behavior.

Cell Phone Policy: All cell phones are to be turned off or set to silent or vibrate modes. Cell phones are not to be used during class time.

While laptops or other electronic devices may be used to take notes during class, conducting business unrelated to the class (checking email, typing other assignments, surfing, IM) is unprofessional and disruptive to other class members and to the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to request students to discontinue use if these disruptions occur.

X. HONOR CODE

All students registered for courses in the School of Social Work are expected to adhere to the rights, responsibilities, and behavior as articulated in both the UALR Student Handbook and the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics. An essential feature of these codes is a commitment to maintaining intellectual integrity and academic honesty. This commitment insures that a student of the School of Social Work will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thereby affirming personal honor and integrity.

XII. DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Students with Disabilities: Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.

Revised September 2011
Research Proposal (200 points)

The purpose of this assignment is to challenge you to integrate and apply a majority of the information that you will learn through this class over the course of the semester. A well-written proposal includes many of the same components as a scholarly research paper. You will complete this assignment in two phases. Several of your homework assignments and in-class exercises should help you through the process of formulating ideas for this research proposal. The text and bibliography for both phases must be written in APA style (APA Publication Manual, 5th Ed.). Use headings for each section of your paper. You may use the headings suggested below, or you may use your own headings, making sure to follow the outlines below for each phase of the proposal and to include all of the information requested.

PHASE I (50 points): Introduction and Background
Papers should be written in formal tense (no first person). Students who receive a grade of “C” or lower on Phase I will be allowed to re-write and resubmit it to the instructor. The average of the two grades will then be used for the final grade on this portion of the paper.

Introduction: In the introduction, you should present your topic, state why this topic is important to SW research and tell about the objectives of your research.

1) Formulate and state a clear, concise research question about a practice issue of interest to you and important to social work practice.
2) State the significance of the problem you will address. (Address how your research will build upon prior work, and how your research will differ from prior research).

Background: This is your literature review. You should use a minimum of 10 sources, mostly empirical journal articles, of which at least 80% have been published within the past 5 years.

3) Conduct a selective and critical review of the literature that is applicable to your research question. This is not a simple summary of literature. Your literature review should show that you know what research has already been done in your area of interest. How will you build upon this knowledge base? Indicate the current themes in this area and where your question fits in to this work. Tell what is missing (where are the gaps in research?) and how your study will help to fill these gaps.
4) Drawing upon the literature review, discuss the theory/underlying assumptions that guide your research. State your hypotheses here as well. If there is no developed theory in your chosen area, restate your research question here.
5) Discuss potential funders for this research. If you have an actual grant application, include it as an Appendix.

Phase I of the proposal should be approximately 7-10 pages.

PHASE II: Description of Proposed Research (150 points).
You will have the opportunity to refine Phase I of your proposal and resubmit it as part of your completed proposal. Even if you do not choose to make changes to the introduction and background sections, include these in your final paper.

Phase II of your proposal will focus on the research design; it is meant to provide a more detailed explanation of the proposed research.
Methodology
1) State the research objectives or aims (what you plan to do).
2) State how you plan to conduct your research:
   a) Sampling design: Include your population; sampling frame; how will you recruit participants; how many persons are you going to sample; how will you sample them; and why you chose this design.
   b) Research design: Type of design (SSD, cross-sectional, longitudinal); describe your design and how you will implement it in your study.
   c) Measurement: Method of data collection, instrument(s) or data collection tools. Include examples of specific questions or attach your instrument(s) as an Appendix.

   Qualitative data collection: How will you gather information from your subjects?
   - Interviews: Who will conduct the interviews? What kinds of questions will be asked? Will interviews be recorded or will you take notes? How will you handle transcription?
   - Participant observation: What will you observe? In what settings? How will you record your observations?
   - Existing documents: What documents will you use? How will you obtain access to these documents? What kinds of information do you intend to access?

   Quantitative data collection: What variables are you measuring? Include nominal and operational definitions of each of your concepts (IV(s) & DV(s)). If you are using standardized measures, you must also discuss the reliability and validity of these measures. If you are using a treatment intervention, describe the intervention.

Data Analysis
3) How will you code the data (especially qualitative data)?
   For qualitative data: Do you have a preliminary framework for analysis or will this be determined by the data? Will you convert any of your data into quantitative form? If yes, how will you do this and why?
   For quantitative data: What statistical analyses do you plan to use? How are you going to use your data to confirm or disconfirm your hypotheses?

Limitations of the Proposed Research
4) What are the weaknesses of this research design?
5) What are the threats to internal and external validity? Other limitations?

Ethical Issues- Human subjects considerations.
6) What are the potential risks to participants, and how will you minimize these risks? How will you deal with informed consent and confidentiality?
7) Are you addressing vulnerable populations, women and minorities in this study? How? Other ethical concerns?

Implications (Social Work Practice or Policy Implications)
8) Tell how this study is going to impact the study population, practitioners or other researchers. Are there political implications that may result from this study? Why should someone fund this study?
**Dissemination of Findings**

9) How will you disseminate your findings? Would you present in your community, present at conferences, show political advocacy in some way, publish your findings, etc.?

Phase II of your research proposal should be approximately 15-17 pages (including literature review).

Remember to include a **Reference** section with both Phases using correct APA style citations.