

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Social Work Program: SWK 310 - Research Practicum I
14802-SWK 310-L18
Fall, 2009
El Centro Campus
134
6:10-8:50 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR:

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PREREQUISITES & CO-REQUISITES:

SWK 309, 305, and concurrent enrollment in SWK 355

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ngwe, J. E. (2007). Social Work Research Practicum: A Step-by-Step Planning Handbook Ed. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Research Practicum sequence of courses is designed to enable the student's plan and execute a focused practice-based research project, which results in a research report and a symposium presentation at the completion of the courses. The basic aim of the research practicum courses is to contribute to research-based practice knowledge. Within this context, the goals of the courses are the achievement of basic skills in project planning, research design, proposal writing, project execution, data analysis, and reporting of research findings. The Research Practicum sequence roughly corresponds to the phases of the research process, i.e. problem formulation, research design, data collection, data analysis and presentation of results.

SWK-310 is a practicum course designed to enable students to complete a research proposal that will be carried out in a subsequent term. While some conceptual information will be provided, the primary emphasis will be placed on classroom exercises that help student complete the tasks. These tasks are structured in such a way as to facilitate the application of research principles and stimulate questions and feedback from peers and the instructor. Critique of social research reports by students will reinforce their understanding of the process of inquiry and provides them with models of quantitative and qualitative research they can use in their proposal writing and in their social work practice.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- (1) analyze the relationship between research and practice as it applies to their research project;
- (2) analyze biases in the conduct of research studies

- (3) analyze issues relevant to multifaceted contexts in the development of evidence-based practice
- (4) demonstrate sensitivity to the ethical concerns regarding the conduct of their research with human subjects as evidenced by preparation for the Institutional Review Board
- (5) formulate a researchable topic and specify research questions and research hypotheses;
- (6) critically assess empirical research studies reported in social work literature and use literature to inform and define the research problem;
- (7) select a qualitative or quantitative research design that is most appropriate to the research question;
- (8) select appropriate measurement instruments for evaluation; and
- (9) demonstrate Level 4 performance in CORE Social Work Professional Identity

COURSE CONTENT AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Each Research Practicum course requires a major written product. In SWK-310, students will complete a research proposal, which will include: (1) selecting a research area of interest, (2) reviewing the literature in the selected topic of interest, (3) formulating research problems and research hypotheses, (4) preparing an annotated bibliography, (5) selecting a research design for the proposed study, (6) drafting the data collection instrument, and (7) selecting a plan of data analysis and result interpretation.

The research proposal will be developed through a process of successive refinement involving faculty feedback on a number of drafts. Grades will be based on the written product and the student's progress in developing research competence as demonstrated through reading of assigned materials, active participation in class discussion, and pro-active planning with timely consultation with the instructor.

TEACHING METHOD/CLASS FORMAT

The Teaching method is built around the actual conduct of a piece of research. A didactic approach is used only to convey principles and techniques central to the research process. Group discussion and feedback in seminar format is a central feature of the sequence. Much of the learning is expected to occur in tutorials concerning the students' projects and through study and discussion of relevant literature. Projects will be conducted individually, but students may collaborate in sharing information and literature. Consultation with the instructor will be by appointment, and it is the student's responsibility to plan and come prepared for consultation.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All work must be typed and prepared in APA format. Students must allow sufficient preparation time for proofreading and correction of typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors. Students' performance this course will be judged by quality of your written work. Carelessness in spelling and editing suggests that there will also be mistakes in the substance of the work. Written work, which has misspellings and other editing problems, is likely to be graded down on this basis alone.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

When you write papers or take exams, your written word must be yours. You must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statement of another person without appropriate acknowledgement. It is legitimate, and sometimes necessary, to “borrow” ideas, phrases, statements, concepts, and other information from other people, but we **MUST** give credit to the sources of these ideas, phrases, information or concepts. Failure to give adequate credit to your sources constitutes **PLAGIARISM** – a serious ethical and/or legal offense. If you are not sure whether what you are doing constitutes plagiarism, please **ASK**.

LATE PAPER POLICY

All assignments are due during the class session indicated on the syllabus. Assignments turned in late without prior permission from the instructor will be graded down. No assignments will be accepted and graded after the last class session of the term.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: (9/3/2009): INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH ETHICS

(1) Introduce students and staff; (2) Review the course syllabus and course assignments; (3) Discuss the need for research in social work practice; (4) Discuss the relationship between research and social work practice; (5) Discuss examples of some unethical research behaviors; (6) Discuss some of the safeguards and protections for participants in a research project; and (7) Discuss some areas of ethical dilemma

Reading: Text: Chapters 1 & 2 (pp1-26)

Week 2: (9/10/2009): DEFINING SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND RESEARCH PROPOSAL & PROCESS OF CHOOSING A RESEARCH TOPIC

(1) Define social work research and research proposal; (2) Describe steps of the research process; (3) Review the process of scientific inquiry; (4) Discuss orientation to agency-based research; (5) Brainstorm possible research topics; and (6) Identify, develop, and refine ideas for research topics

Reading: Text: Chapter 3 (p33-37) & handout on research hypothesis, purposes, and questions

Assignment #1: Exercise 2.1 Guidelines for meeting with your agency (pp 27-29), & draft of informed consent form (pgs. 14-16)
Due Date: 9/17/2009

Week 3: (9/17/2009): FORMULATING RESEARCH PURPOSES & QUESTIONS

(1) Review the various approaches to research projects, including but not limited to, qualitative research, quantitative research, longitudinal research designs, cross-sectional designs, etc; (2) Discuss research purposes, research questions, and research hypotheses; (3) Summarize the subsections to the “INTRODUCTION SECTION”.

Reading: Text: Chapter 4 (p46-54) & Handout on ethical considerations in research

Assignment #2: Meeting with internship supervisor

Formulating research purpose, research questions, and research hypothesis

Due Date: 9/24/2009

Week 4: (9/24/2009): REVIEWING THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

(1) Discuss some of the reasons for reviewing the literature; (2) Discuss common pitfalls in

literature review; (3) Discuss the several ways of organizing the literature review section of a research proposal; and (4) Visit the library to begin to identify sources that may relate to our proposal.

Reading: Text: Chapter 5 (p59-66) & handout related to research methods

Week 5: (10/1/2009): REVIEWING THE RESEARCH METHODS

Discuss categorization of research methods by: (a) goals and objectives; (b) use of research findings; (c) time available for the research; and (d) nature of data collected

Reading: Text: Chapter 6 (p74-85) & handout related to research designs

Assignment #4: An annotated bibliography (5 empirical articles on your topic).

Due Date: 10/8/2009

Week 6: (10/8/2009): REVIEWING THE SINGLE-SYSTEM DESIGNS

(1) Provide a general overview of the methodology section; (2) Discuss selection of a research design for experimental and non-experimental studies; and (3) Describe the single-system research designs

Reading: Text Chapter 7 (p87-93) & handout related to research designs

Week 7: (10/15/2009): REVIEWING THE GROUP-LEVEL DESIGNS

(1) Describe the group-level design notation; (2) Describe group-level designs for experimental studies; and (3) Describe group-level designs for non-experimental studies

Reading: Text Chapter 8 (p98-102) & handout related to sample selection

Assignment #5: A Literature Review Section.

Due Date: 10/15/2009

Week 8: (10/22/2009): SELECTING THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

(1) Define and differentiate between research participants, populations, sampling frame, and sample; (2) Discuss the random sampling methods; and (3) Discuss the non-random sampling methods

Reading: Text Chapter 9 (p103-111) & handout related to measurement instrument

Week 9: (10/29/2009): CONSTRUCTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

(1) Discuss the characteristics of a good measurement instrument; (2) Discuss types of measurement instruments and their advantages and drawbacks; (3) Discuss how to construct research measures and pitfalls to avoid.

Reading: Text Chapter 10 (p112-120) & handout related to collecting quantitative data

Assignment #6: A Methodology Section (design, instrument, data collection, etc,

Due Date: 10/27/2009

Week 10: (11/5/2009): COLLECTING QUANTITATIVE DATA

(1) Differentiate between quantitative and qualitative data; (2) Discuss characteristics of quantitative data collectors; and (3) Describe some quantitative data collection methods and their advantages and drawbacks

Reading: Text Chapter 11 (p121-126) & handout related to collecting qualitative data

Week 11: (11/12/2009): COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA

(1) Discuss characteristics of qualitative data collectors; (2) Describe some qualitative data collection methods and their advantages and drawbacks

Reading: Text Chapter 12 (p127-126) & handout related to program evaluation

Week 12: (11/19/2009): CONDUCTING PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

(1) Discuss the need for program evaluations; (2) Discuss different types of program evaluations; and (3) Discuss how to put the pieces of our proposal together

Week 13: (11/26/2009): THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY ---NO CLASS

Week 14: (12/3/2009): SUMMARY AND REVIEW

Review of course materials and the draft of the proposal and fill in any missing pieces.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

-Final Complete Proposal,

Due today 12/10/2009

Week 15: (12/17/2009): STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AND COURSE EVALUATIONS

-Final Complete Proposal.

Week 16: (12/17/2009): FINAL EXAMINATIONS & MAKE-UPS

ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, & VALUES

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due date</u>	<u>Value</u>
#1 Meeting with internship supervisor	9-10-09	5%
#2 Informed consent Letter	9-17-09	5%
#3 Introduction Section	10-08-09	20%
#4 Annotated Bibliography	10-15-09	5%
#5 Literature Review Section	10-22-09	10%
#6 Methodology Section & Presentation	12-03-09	25%
Presentation of Research Proposal		10%
Overall appearance (cover page, table of contents, ref, etc)	on-going	5%
Attendance and participation	on-going	15%
	TOTAL	= 100%

GRADING SCALE

- A = 90-100 %
- B = 80-89 %
- C = 70-79 %
- D = 60-69 %
- F = below 60%

COURSE TIPS

- Do the reading required – Sessions will be more interesting if you read the material.
- Come to class – It will be difficult to do well in class if you do not show up. We will have guest speakers, case studies, and films that will help enhance the discussions.
- Feel free to discuss issues with your instructor, make time to discuss issues, concerns, or

problems. I will make the time for you.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, L. B. and Solomon, P. (eds). (2006). *The research process in the human services: Behind the scene*. U.S.A: Thompson Learning Academic Resource center.
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- Nardi, P. M. (2006). *Doing Survey Research: A guide to quantitative methods* (2nd ed). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
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