

COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 8311 (20104) 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 (25 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 (25 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. Three Written Assignments (15 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 15-point maximum for this assignment.

Assignment 2: On October 24 bring to class a hardcopy typewritten critique of the following article:

Greene, R. R. (2015). Resilience and healing among Cambodian survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime, *Journal of Evidence-Based Practice*, Available online at DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2014.921588

The critique should be based on standards for appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative research as discussed on pages 449-452 of the assigned text chapter for this class session. The critique should be 1 or 2 pages long.

Assignment 3: Based on the guidelines for constructing measurement instruments in Chapter 10 of Rubin & Babbie, 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 chapter. The critique should

be 1 or 2 pages and be worth up to 5 of the 15-point maximum for this assignment.

E. Class Participation (5 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.

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

Please click the link below for the full explanation of the Academic Honesty policy and procedure

Policy: <http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf>

Definitions:

“Academic dishonesty” means employing a method or technique or engaging in conduct in an academic endeavor that contravenes the standards of ethical integrity expected at the University of Houston or by a course instructor to fulfill any and all academic requirements. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, the following:

Plagiarism

- i. Representing as one’s own work the work of another without acknowledging the source (plagiarism). Plagiarism includes copying verbatim text from the literature, whether printed or electronic, in all assignments including field.

Cheating and Unauthorized Group Work

- ii. Openly cheating in an examination, as copying from another’s paper; c. Being able to view during an examination, quiz or any in-class assignment an electronic device that allows communication with another person, access to unauthorized material, access to the internet, or the ability to capture an image, unless expressly permitted by the instructor;
- d. Using and/or possessing “crib notes,” as unauthorized use of notes or the like to aid in answering questions during an examination;
- e. Giving or receiving unauthorized aid during an examination, such as trading examinations, whispering answers, and passing notes, and using electronic devices to transmit or receive information;
- f. Securing another to take a test in the student’s place. Both the student taking the test for another and the student registered in the course are at fault;

Fabrication, Falsification, and Misrepresentation

- g. Changing answers or grades on a test that has been returned to a student in an attempt to claim instructor error;
- h. Using another’s laboratory results as one’s own, whether with or without the permission of the owner;
- i. Falsifying results in laboratory experiments;
- j. Misrepresenting academic records or achievements as they pertain to course prerequisites or corequisites for the purpose of enrolling or remaining in a course for which one is not eligible;
- k. Representing oneself as a person who has earned a degree without having earned that particular degree

Stealing and Abuse of Academic Materials

- l. Stealing, as theft of tests or grade books, from faculty offices or elsewhere, or knowingly using stolen tests or materials in satisfaction of exams, papers, or other assignments; this includes the removal of items posted for use by the students;
- m. Mutilating or stealing library materials; misshelving materials with the intent to reduce accessibility to other students;

Complicity in Academic Dishonesty

- n. Failing to report to the instructor or departmental hearing officer an incident which the student believes to be a violation of the academic honesty policy;
Academic Misconduct
- o. Any other conduct which a reasonable person in the same or similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest or improper in an academic setting.

Process:

Students shall have the responsibility of reporting incidents of alleged academic dishonesty to the instructor of record involved or to the appropriate authority if the alleged act is not associated with a specific class within 5 class days of the incident. Faculty or instructor of record shall have the responsibility of reporting incidents of alleged academic dishonesty through their college hearing officer within 5 class days of the incident. The faculty should include the recommended sanction in the report. The college hearing officer will notify the student of the report and recommended sanction. The student can accept the sanction and waive a hearing or request a college hearing. A hearing shall be set within 10 days and would be consist of two faculty and three students chosen by the hearing officer.

X. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Date	TOPIC AND READINGS
August 22	<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 29	<p>Problem formulation</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 7 & 8</p>
September 5	<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. The assignment (worth so points) is as follows:</p>

	<p>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.</p>
September 12	<p>Feedback on Assignment #1</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 19	<p>Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 11 & 12</p>
September 26	<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 3	<p>Single-Case Designs</p> <p>Readings Due For These Classes: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 13</p>
October 10	<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 17	<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 24	<p>Qualitative and Mixed 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>
October 31	<p>Instrument Construction</p> <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> <p>Readings Due For this Assignment: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10</p>
November 7	<p>Feedback on Assignment #2</p> <p>Readings Due For this Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10</p>
November 14	<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>
November 21	<p>Continuation of previous week's content.</p> <p>Review of course content for exam</p>
November 28	<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. Weather and Other Class Cancellations

Students are encouraged to visit uh.edu/emergency for updates on campus closures. If a class needs to be cancelled because of instructor inability to appear in class, the instructor will email all students through the Blackboard email system. He also will notify the Dean's office and ask them to take the needed action to notify students.

XIII. Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. Also, there is no appointment necessary for the "Let's Talk" program, which is a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html.

XIII. 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.

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. Hoboken, 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.