

COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 8311 (25300) Research Methods I: Introduction to Research on Evidence-Based Social Work

TIME: Mondays 1:00pm – 4:00pm Rm: SW TBA

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. (2014). *Research Methods for Social Work (8th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole CENGAGE Learning.

Thyer, B. A., & Pignotti, M. G. (2105). *Science and Pseudoscience in Social Work Practice*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, LLC.

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 (2014) text. Additional required readings will be from the Thyer & Pignotti text. Others listed on the course schedule will be posted on Blackboard.

B. Exams (40 points): There will be two exams covering the reading material and course content. Each exam is worth 20 points for a total of 40 points. Exams will test students' ability to recall, understand, apply, analyze and synthesize course content.

C. Term Paper (40 points): Review, critically appraise, and synthesize the research literature bearing on your chosen evidence-based social work questions, and develop implications for policy, practice, and future research. It is hoped that this paper can be useful in your eventual dissertation planning and development. (*Approximately 20-25 pages double-spaced. Due by December 7.*)

D. Class Participation (20 points): Students will be expected to participate actively in each class session, including bringing to class assignments indicated in the Course Schedule and Assignment section of this syllabus. Although these assignments will not receive grades, your overall class participation grade will depend largely on meeting these assignment expectations punctually and in a manner reflecting a reasonable amount of effort.

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.

Extra Credit: Students may earn up to 10 points of extra credit by writing a paper that: 1) critically appraises whether and why they think that the Thyer & Pignotti text (especially Chapters 3-6) is accurate or excessive in its portrayal of pseudoscience in social work practice or education; and 2) discusses any experiences they have had or witnessed that illustrate pseudoscience in their social work practice or education. (*Approximately 5-8 pages double-spaced. Submission can be at any point during the semester and no later than December 7.*)

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 24	<p>Introductions; Overview of course; the scientific method, discussion of each student's research interests</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 1 Thyer & Pignotti, Foreword, Preface, & Ch. 1</p> <p>Supplemental: Gelher, S. "Social work and science" <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i> Published online before print February 8, 2015, doi:10.1177/1049731515570138</p>
August 31	<p>Overview of evidence-based social work (EBSW), student discussion of their views of EBSW, its challenges and controversies, and some preliminary EBSW questions that they are considering for their research (including one or more on effectiveness, one or more on predictors of outcome/risk, and one or more on assessment).</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 2 Thyer & Pignotti, Chs. 7-8</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). "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> <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>

September 14	<p>Discussion of epistemological paradigms (philosophy of science) and comparison of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research designs. Students will discuss how these issues bear upon their EBSW questions.</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 3 & 4</p>
September 21	<p>Problem Formulation and Literature Review</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 7</p> <p>After reading the assigned text chapter, come to class prepared to discuss how your initial EBSW questions might be narrowed or otherwise improved. Also discuss your experience in attempting to identify some literature bearing on your EBSW questions.</p>
September 28	<p>Conceptualization</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 8</p> <p>After reading the assigned text chapter, come to class prepared to discuss some possible hypotheses and variables (independent, dependent, control) you are considering for your research questions and preliminary notions regarding how those variables might be operationally defined.</p>
October 5	<p>Measurement</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 9 and pages 137 to 147 of Chapter 6 Thyer & Pignotti, Ch. 2</p> <p>Supplemental:</p> <p>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</p> <p>After completing the assigned readings, bring to class an existing measurement instrument (perhaps one that has been widely used or an idea for a new one) pertaining to one of your EBSW questions and discuss how its psychometrics were or might be assessed as well as ideas for assessing its measurement equivalence in another culture.</p>
October 12	<p>Instrument Construction</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 10</p> <p>After reading the assigned text chapter, bring to class a rough draft of a brief instrument that you construct bearing on one of your EBSW questions. Class discussion of each and suggestions for improvement.</p>

October 19	<u>EXAM 1</u>
October 26	<p>Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs</p> <p>Readings Due for This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 11 & 12</p> <p>Having read the assigned text chapters, be prepared to discuss the applicability of that content to your EBSW question re effectiveness. Bring to class an article reporting an experimental or quasi-experimental study that assessed the effectiveness of a program, policy or intervention related to your EBSW question and be prepared to discuss its main strengths and weaknesses.</p>
November 2	<p>Single-Case Designs</p> <p>Readings Due For These Classes: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 13</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss whether, why or how a single-case design might (or might not) be applicable to your chosen EBSW question on effectiveness.</p>
November 9	<p>Sampling and Surveys</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapters 15 & 16</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss how sampling and survey methods can be applicable to your chosen EBSW question regarding outcome predictors.</p>
November 16	<p>Existing Data and Secondary Analysis</p> <p>Readings Due For This Class: Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 17</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss a data set that you located with potential utility for one of your EBSW questions and, if possible, some of its apparent advantages and disadvantages.</p>
November 23	<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, Chapters 22 & 23</p> <p>Recommended Readings:</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 (in press). TFCBT benchmarks study
November 30	<u>EXAM 2</u>

XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement

Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance. Instructors may not provide accommodations without supporting documentation from the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

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.
- Cresswell, 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 : Pyrczak.
- 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.