

**SOWK 6500 RESEARCH AND EVALUATION METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK**  
**(IB) DISTANCE LEARNING**

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**Semester:** Fall, 2006

**Credits:** Three

#### CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Principles, methodologies, technologies and statistical approaches of human service research are introduced. Beginning capabilities in evaluation of social work practice and skill development regarding use of published research are emphasized.

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first course in research and evaluation methods. It focuses on principles, methodologies, and technologies of research as related to theory and practice, as well as stages of problem formulation, framing the study, methods and techniques, rather than mastery of research: students will be encouraged to be consumers of relevant research and to engage in basic forms of research that are applicable to generalist practice. The implications and impacts of research on disadvantaged populations, persons of color, and persons with disabilities, sexual orientation minorities, and others are examined. Course content examines the unique nature of social work practice settings and their potential and limitations for knowledge building through research. In addition, the course analyzes the contributions and applications of research in the advancement of social work theory and practice.

#### RELATION TO OTHER COURSES

This is the foundation course and will relate to other courses in the following manner:

Horizontal linkages: (The 1st Semester of the Foundation Year & Preparatory Courses)

SOWK 6300: Social Work Practice with Groups I — Methods for evaluating how well clients are reaching their goals will be discussed.

SOWK 6100: Information Technology Lab The information from SOWK 6100 will be essential to work in this course, especially on computers

SOWK 6201: Human Behavior in the Social Environment I - Theory based practice is increasing legitimated through evidence based practice and this course discussed methods of designing evidence based practice.

SOWK 6301: Generalist Practice I — In this course we will be reviewing work on initial assessment and measurement of client progress

SOWK 6600: Practicum I - Because this course begins later in the semester, a direct link will not be established, but students will be working on methods of inquiry and basic measurements to assist in designing care plans and evaluating other activities

SOWK 6610: Practicum Seminar — By the time student enter their first seminar class they should have knowledge of basic methodological terminology and very basic ideas about evaluation.

Horizontal Vertical Linkages: (The 2nd semester of the Foundation Year)

SOWK 6004: Social Work Practice with Groups II By the second Groups course students will have learned evaluative techniques for measuring individual progress in treatment and other groups.

SOWK 6202: Human Behavior in the Social Environment II — Students will have reviewed basic research on the mezzo and macro level and have experience in critically evaluating data on this level.

SOWK 6302: Generalist Practice II — By the second practice course, students will have experience in single subject design as a method of measuring client progress.

SOWK 6400: Social Welfare Policy. Problems and Services - Students will have worked with basic systematic means of critically analyzing the social milieu.

SOWK 6700: Practicum II — Much, if not all, of the linkage between this course and the second practicum will depend on the quadratic relationship among the Field Instructor, Field Liaison, Student and Practicum Seminar Instructor. The student will have worked with basic methods of critical thinking and evaluation that should prepare them well for evaluative work in their second semester practicum.

SOWK 6710: Practicum Seminar II — By this semester, the student will have reviewed methods of evaluation and critical analysis that should increase their ability to analyze and synthesize cases and other material in this course.

Vertical Linkages: (The Concentration Year)

SOWK 7300: Advanced Practice in Rural Areas I (Individuals) - Students will have reviewed methods of gathering and evaluating data on clients and basic methods of measuring client progress

SOWK 7310: Advanced Practice in Rural Areas II (Families) — Students will have reviewed methods of gathering and evaluating data on families and basic methods of measuring progress in treatment

SOWK 7400: Policy in Rural Areas — Students will have practiced some systematic forms of critical analysis of policy to begin to assess need.

SOWK 7611: Advanced Practicum I — (See SOWK 6700).

(Concentration Electives — Because of the unique nature of each elective, issues reviewed in this course will relate in variety of means according to the course and instructor. Students will have practice critical anal literature reviews, and basic measurements that will prepare them for these courses as they are presented.

SOWK 7320: Advanced Practice in Organization and Communities — This course will have given experience in using critical analysis of literature and other data on communities. The work in this course prepares a foundation for understanding the needs of mezzo and macro level entities.

SOWK 7500: Advanced Research and Program Evaluation — Research I provides a basis and introduction for this course.

SOWK 7612: Advanced Practicum II — (see SOWK 6700)

SOWK 7630 Professional Seminar — Student review items that are found on the licensing exam. Furthermore, students will be better prepared to discuss their own evaluations of literature and client progress as well as those of others on treatment and other teams.

(Concentration Electives — (see Setting Concentration Electives)

#### RELATION TO TILE ADVANCED GENERALIST CONTINUUM

This course focuses on roles ranging from zero to three on the right side of the advanced generalist continuum. Such roles include, but are not limited to, data analysis, educator, and multi-disciplinary team member.

#### REQUIRED MATERIALS:

National Association of Social Workers. (1999, rev.). The code of ethics of the national Association of Social Workers). Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers.

Anyone practicing social work should have a copy of this and they are free on the NASW web site: <http://www.naswdc.org/>

Rubin, Allen and Babbie, Earl It. (2005). Research methods for social work (Ed.). Belmont: Brooks/Cole. (ISBN 0-534-62109-0)

It is a good idea for any practitioner to have a good research book as part of his/her library. Rubin and Babbie have an excellent reputation and were chosen for these reasons.

Vogt, W. Paul. (2003). Dictionary of statistics and methodolgy: A non-technical guide for the social sciences (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

At least for me and for a lot of people with whom I have spoken, the intimidating aspect of statistics is that it is difficult to understand what they are suppose to do. We then have a hard time selecting the correct ones for our research and we have a hard time understanding what other researchers are doing. This book tells us, directly and briefly, so we can decide on statistics tests we wish to run and we can understand what others are doing Keep this book

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Corcoran, Kevin and Fischer, Joel. (Eds.). (2000). Measures for clinical practice

(Volumes I & II). New York: The Free Press. (ISBN 0-684-84831-7 & 0-68484830-9)

Suzuki, Lisa A., Ponterrotto, Joseph O., and Meoer, Paul J. (Eds.). (2001). Handbook of multicultural assessment San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (ISBN 0-7879-5177-3)

These books provide rapid assessment instruments and should be included in any social workers library. They are expensive and the student may wish to acquire his/his own after graduation.

## COMPETENCIES

We cannot guarantee that you will become competent in the issues we will work with you in this class. However, our goal is to help you find a way to become as competent as you can using your own time, talents, and assets. Here is a list of what we want you to work on to become competent in this class: (They are abbreviated under the class schedule, but you should be able to find them in the list below).

1. Be able to access ethical standards of research in social work and in science, including (and especially):
  - a. an ability to evaluate the ethical consequences of research on human subjects
  - b. an ability to adequately ensure the protection of human subjects in general and populations at risk in particular.
2. Understand the difference between scientific investigation and other forms of knowing
3. Know the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods and give examples of when one may be more appropriate to use over the other
4. Be able to conduct a systematic literature review using various sources including prominent social work journals, the library, reference librarians, the Internet, Galileo and other sources
5. Learn to critically analyze a research article including:
  - a. using a systematic form of critical analysis
  - b. defending or critiquing its reliability and validity
  - c. expressing possible cultural concerns
  - d. expressing possible ethical concerns
6. Be able to describe and tell the difference among pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs
7. Be able to use a single subject design to develop a measurable care program for a client
8. Be able to conceptualize issues so that they may be operationalized into measurable variables
9. Know why credibility is crucial to acceptable qualitative research

10. Be able to define the following and discuss the importance to research:
  - a. validity,
  - b. reliability,
  - c. •the Null hypothesis and the alternative (treatment) hypothesis
  - d. Type I and Type II errors
11. Design a survey that measures a random sample of a population
12. Be able to define and determine from raw data measures of (and explain their use in advocating for or working with clients or in measuring for a study):
  - a. central tendency
  - b. standard deviation
  - c. z scores
13. Be able to read a research article using statistics and discuss how they support or do not support the conclusions
14. Be able to discuss the difference between statistical and clinical significance

#### COMPETENCY ABBREVIATIONS AND SCHEDULE

Before every week is the preparation for the week. Generally there are two lines. One, beginning with the word “Prepare”, gives a reading or review assignment. Generally then is a second line beginning with the phrase “Learning Module” and the learning module and number or title where the student-should find those items for that week. A few weeks do not have both of these lines.

Prepare for week one by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 1-69.

#### **WEEK 1 - Meet at Valdosta (Friday, August 18 at 5:00 PM in Education Building, Room 200)**

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method(s) of Evaluation</i>
Scientific Inquiry vs. other knowledge	Midterm Examination
Ethics and Social Work Research	Midterm Exam Research Proposal, Articles
Systematic Critical Thinking	Article Critique

#### A brief statement on Single Subject designs Research Proposal

During this week we will be introducing the course. Students will be working on reaching a competent understanding of basic scientific inquiry, reviewing ethical considerations directly from our Code of Ethics, and obtaining basic knowledge of some systematic forms of critical thinking. These issues will appear many times during the course, but evaluation of competency level will not occur until mid-term.

Prepare for Week two by reading Rub and Babbie, pgs. 342-364.

Learning Module — All sites under Single Study Designs

## WEEK 2 - Distance Learning Study

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
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Single Case Evaluation Designs	Research Proposal
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Any work on a competency is important, but for clinicians we need to learn how to design and use a single case evaluation design. We will spend most of the class in learning about this design and it will be the basis of your research proposal. This is the design most frequently used to measure client progress. These designs form a basis for empirically based practice.

Prepare for week three by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 107-167.

Learning Module — “Assignments” 3

## WEEK 3— Distance Learning Study — See “Assignments” 3.

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
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Formulating a research problem	Research Proposal
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Conceptualizing issues	Research Proposal
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Operationalization	Midterm Examination, Research Proposal
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During this week we will be working towards competency on issues that should be considered in the beginning of any research.

Prepare for Week four by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 673-681

Learning Module — Study Guide for Tests “Midterm”

## WEEK 4 – Meet in Valdosta on Saturday at 8:30 AM in Education Building, Room 200.

WE WILL BEGIN BY PREPARING FOR THE MIDTERM GIVEN IN OCTOBER!

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
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Use of the Library	Research Proposal
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Use of sources	Research Proposal, Article Critique
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Analyzing available records	Midterm Exam, Research Proposal
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We will use this meeting to help you become more competent in the use of the library and in deciding what computer or internet sources are worthy of use. Other records are available as well. Some of these are rather obvious (e.g. public records), while others may become sources through creativity (sometimes called “unobtrusive measures”).

Prepare for Week five by Reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 427-496

Learning Module - “Assignments” 5

## WEEK 5— Distance Learning Study

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Qualitative Methods	Research Proposal, Article Critique
Quantitative Methods	Research Proposal, Article Critique
Cultural Considerations in Research	Research Proposal, Article Critique

During this week we will be developing competencies in d types of methods of research We will be working on how to select one as opposed to the other and how to begin using them. We will begin towards working on cultural considerations in research but please remember that nobody is “competent,” even in their own culture. Learning is on-going and cultural change may be rapid.

Prepare for Week six by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 167-205.

Learning Module — “Assignments” 6

## WEEK 6— Distance Learning

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Credibility	Midterm
Determining validity	Midterm
Determining reliability	Midterm
The Null Hypothesis	Midterm
Type I Error	Midterm
Type II Error	Midterm

This week we work on competency in assuring that your research is measuring what you want to measure, whether it can be duplicated and various mistakes made about the null hypothesis.

In order to understand some studies and research, we must have a basic understanding and competency in the various experimental designs. We will be studying what these designs are.

Prepare for week seven by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 239-311; 311-342

Learning Module — “Assignments” 7, 8

## WEEK 7- Distance Learning

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Pre-experimental Designs	Midterm
Experimental Designs	Midterm
Quasi-experimental Designs	Midterm

Sampling	Final, Research Proposal (possibly)
Surveys	Practice Questions, Research Proposal

We will work on two general items this week. In order to understand some studies and research, we must have a basic understanding and competency in the various experimental designs. We first will review these designs. One of the most frequently used methods of gathering data is the survey, but this involves sampling a population and writing a survey that allows for non-directed, clear answers. It is a difficult competency on which to work.

Prepare for the Week eight by studying for the midterm. Study the guide and contact me if you need any assistance. Be ready for a 5 minute presentation of your proposal.

**WEEK 8— Meet in Valdosta on Saturday, October 7 in Education Building, Room 200**

### **MIDTERM**

<i>Competency</i> (developing one)	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Proposal presenting	Research Proposal

We will begin the class with the midterm, scheduled for one hour. After a break we will present our research proposals. There are skills we should try to develop. We need to learn how to present findings, of course, but I will be watching how we critique (not criticize) each others work. A critique should make a work better, while a criticism frequently is ego-centric and not helpful. The purpose of the last part of the class is to assure you are on the right track with your research proposal.

Prepare for Week nine by reading Rubin and Babble, pgs. 206-237.

Learning Module - “Assignments” 9

WEEK 9- Distance Learning

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Establishing a base line	Research Proposal
Using Rapid Assessment Instruments	Research Proposal
Constructing Measurement Instruments	Final, Research Proposal (possibly)

This week we will focus on various important parts of your research designs. Perhaps the most important part is establishing the base line. We will look at sources that can help you establish a baseline and discuss basic ways you may establish one. For the final hour we will review the study guide for the final test.

Prepare for Week ten by reading Rubin and Babble, pgs. 561-573.

Learning Module — “Assignments” 10

## WEEK 10— Distance Learning

*Competency**Method of Evaluation*

Measures of Central Tendency

Final, Research Proposal (possibly)

Variance

Final, Research Proposal (possibly)

Standard Deviation

Final. Research Proposal (possibly)

Working on competency in measures of central tendency is at the basis of many statistical processes. By themselves, such measures frequently tell us much that we need to know about a population, sample, or score.

Prepare for Week eleven by reading Rabin and Babble, pgs. 609-611 & 695-696.

Learning Module “Assignments” 11

## WEEK 11 — Distance Learning

*Competency**Method of Evaluation*

Z scores

Final, Research Proposal (possibly)

This week we will learn about z scores. Because they take a little practice to learn and because students TEND to fear them (needlessly), we will work on them exclusively this week. These help very much in interpreting some of the measures of central tendency.

Prepare for Week twelve by reviewing previous sections on Ethics, Validity, Reliability, and Critical thinking.

**WEEK 12 — Meet in Valdosta on Friday, November 4 at 5:30 PM in Education Building, Room 200**

WE WILL BEGIN BY PREPARING FOR THE FINAL GIVEN IN DECEMBER

*Competency**Method of Evaluation*

Critical Thinking

Article Critique

The students will receive three or four (in)famous articles and will critique one of them. Write about:

1. Ethics — support your statements using the NASW Code
2. Validity and reliability problems
3. Were there problems with the hypothesis, Type I or Type II errors. Students will have the entire class and will write a two Daze summary of the article for a grade (see assignments below)

Prepare for Week thirteen by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 594-616.

Learning Module — “Assignments” 13

WEEK 13 – Distance Learning

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Descriptive Statistics	Final
Correlative Statistics	Final
Inferential Statistics	Final

Do not panic! Remain calm! Remain seated! This is not a statistics course. However, you need to develop some competency in what these statistics are in order to understand many important research articles. We will be looking at what they are used for. We will not be learning how to do them.

Prepare for Week fourteen by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs 617-640.

Learning Module — “Assignments” 14

WEEK 14 – Distance Learning

<i>Competency</i>	<i>Method of Evaluation</i>
Understanding Statistics	Final

Prepare for week 15 by reading Rubin and Babbie, pgs. 395-426.

WEEK 15-Distance Learning

Summary

Introduction to Program Evaluation

Using Research 1 in other courses

RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE

This week is devoted to demonstrating the importance of this class in relation to other ones and to give a VERY basic introduction to the next course in the research series.

**WEEK 16— Meet in Valdosta at 5:30 PM on Friday, December 1 in Education Building, Room 200**

Evaluations . . . and then the . . .

**FINAL**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Midterm — 100 points consisting of 25 multiple choice and 8 short answer (less than 1/2 page) essays of which the student chooses 5. Each multiple choice question is worth 2 points and each essay is worth 10 points;
2. Final (see explanation for midterm)
3. Article Critique — During one week (Week 11), students will critique an article given by the professor based on its (1) ethics, (2) validity, (3) reliability, (4) conclusions. Students will choose from several well known articles. There will be 25 points for each section. The critique will be no long than two pages. (100 points).
4. Research Proposal – 200 points. Students will develop a research “proposal”. It will consist of selecting an hypothesis, operationalizing terms, deciding on a research design, and selecting statistics to measure the research effectiveness. We will be discussing this throughout the course. In essence, this assignment is doing everything on something you would like to research, EXCEPT the research itself. We will specifically work with single subject designs.

**GRADES:**

A = > 450

B = 449 – 400

C = 399 – 300 (A “C” involves one deficiency point – See Student Handbook)

D = 299 – 250 (A “D” involves two deficiency points – See Student Handbook)

F = < 250 (An “F” involves three deficiency points and you must retake the course – See Student Handbook)

Students will fail the course for cheating as described in the Student Handbook. No exceptions. I will inform your Advisor and a staff person responsible for recording any grade less than a “B”.

Students should contact me as soon as possible about any special needs or developing problems. The sooner we work on those, the better the prognosis. PLEASE STAY IN CLOSE CONTACT DURING THIS CLASS! I CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING THIS MATERIAL! I WILL HELP YOU ALL THAT I CAN.

Let’s make class enjoyable. Please be kind and polite.

Best wishes,

Mike Meacham

