

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**  
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**Social Work Research Methods**  
**(Required Course – BSW Program)**

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Course Number:</b> SW313<br>SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS  | <b>Instructor:</b> Arlette Vila  |
| <b>Unique Number:</b> 61780  | <b>Semester:</b> Spring 2017     |
| <b>Class Time:</b> Monday & Wednesday, 4:00-5:15   | <b>Class Location:</b> SSW 1.212 |
| <b>Office Hours:</b> By appointment on Mondays & Wednesdays before class. Please contact the Instructor to arrange a time. | <b>Office Location:</b> UT SSW   |
| <b>Instructor Email:</b> <a href="mailto:arlettevila@utexas.edu">arlettevila@utexas.edu</a>                                |                                  |

### **I. Standardized Course Description**

This course is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. The course introduces students to the following topics: social work values, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research design and inference, single subject design and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW313 is a prerequisite for entry into the social work major.

The goal of the course is to help students develop a basic understanding of the research process in order to engage with research for evidence-based practice.

### **II. Standardized Course Objectives**

The goal of the course is to help students develop a basic understanding of the research process. Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the fundamental steps of scientific inquiry and how they parallel the basic steps of social work practice; **(PB 21 and 22)**
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the following basic social work research skills pertinent to the profession: a) formulation of research problems, b) formulation of research questions and hypotheses, c) use of various research methods (e.g., survey research, single subject design, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, field research, and use of secondary data), d) collection and analysis of research data, and e) interpretation of research results; **(PB 21, 22, 41)**
3. Critically analyze research findings and be effective consumers of, and contributors to, social work research; **(PB 22 and 41)**
4. Illustrate how gender bias or insensitivity to diverse populations can impede effective research and inference; **(PB 41)**
5. Identify research methods, sampling designs, and measurement techniques which are sensitive to diverse groups, including women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBT community; **(PB 41)**
6. Discuss the usefulness of social science theory and research methods in social work practice; **(PB 22)**
7. Explain ethical issues in conducting and using research, as well as the role of the social work values in research and evaluation; **(PB 41)**
8. Determine feasibility, practicability, and generalizability of research findings. **(PB 41)**

The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, we engage in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Several required courses in our curriculum are part of this ongoing assessment, including this course. Below is a list of the specific Educational Policies (EP) and Practice Behaviors (PB) that are addressed in this course. The complete EPAS can be found in your Student Handbook.

**EP 2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.**

**PB 21** Use practice experiences to inform scientific inquiry.

Objectives 1, 2. Assignment: Article Critique, Research Presentation, In Class Assignments.

**PB 22** Use research evidence to inform practice.

Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6. Assignment: Research Paper, Article Critique, In Class Assignments.

**EP 2.1.10d Evaluation**

**PB41** Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.

Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8. Assignment: Research Paper, Exams, Article Critique, Data Analysis Assignments

**III. Teaching Methods**

- The primary methods of instruction are interactive lectures (students are encouraged to ask questions and share their thoughts), class discussions, class/homework exercises, and reading assignments.
- Students are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor to review their progress in the course and to ask questions regarding the course content and the social work profession.
- The instructor is available to meet by appointment and is responsive to emails.
- Please note that the instructor will communicate frequently about the course via Canvas announcements and/or Canvas mail.

**IV. Required Text and Additional Required Readings**

Marlow, C. (2010). *Research methods for generalist social work*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Cengage Learning.

Additional required readings will be posted on Canvas, and/or can be accessed directly through the UT Library website. Please note that reading requirements may change throughout the course of the semester. These changes will be announced in class and via Canvas.

## V. Grading

### Course Grades

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Article critique                              | 4 points          |
| Quantitative data analysis exercise           | 3 points          |
| Qualitative data analysis exercise            | 3 points          |
| Exam #1                                       | 20 points         |
| Exam #2                                       | 20 points         |
| Problem statement paper                       | 10 points         |
| Presentation                                  | 5 points          |
| Research proposal paper                       | 20 points         |
| Attendance, Participation & Daily Assignments | 15 points         |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>100 points</b> |

### Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

|                |    |                |    |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| 94.0 and Above | A  | 74.0 to 76.999 | C  |
| 90.0 to 93.999 | A- | 70.0 to 73.999 | C- |
| 87.0 to 89.999 | B+ | 67.0 to 69.999 | D+ |
| 84.0 to 86.999 | B  | 64.0 to 66.999 | D  |
| 80.0 to 83.999 | B- | 60.0 to 63.999 | D- |
| 77.0 to 79.999 | C+ | Below 60.0     | F  |

## VI. Assignments

### 1. Attendance, Participation & Daily Assignments (15 points)

There will be a low-stakes assignment each class day that may include in-class group projects, reading responses and quizzes. There is no make-up for missed in-class assignments nor will in-class assignments be accepted by email; you must be present in class to receive credit. Students are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.

### 2. Article Critique (4 points)

There will be an article critique. It will be conducted as a homework assignments. A written summary of the article including a critique and other requirements are due at the beginning of class on the dates specified. Assignment must follow APA format and be 2 pages double-spaced.

**Article Critique: Monday, February 6**

### 3. Data Analysis Exercises (6 points total; 3 points each)

There will be two data collection and analysis exercise. They will be conducted as homework assignments.

**Quantitative Data Analysis Exercise: Wednesday, March 29**

**Qualitative Data Analysis Exercise: Wednesday, April 5**

#### **4. Exams (40 points total; 20 points each)**

There will be two in-class exams. A full class session is allotted for each exam. The exams will include multiple choice, true/false, and short-answer questions. The tests will cover materials from assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. Exam #1 will cover approximately the first half of the semester and Exam #2 will cover approximately the second half of the semester as well as will draw on material from the first half of the semester.

**Exam #1: Monday, March 6**

**Exam #2: Monday, May 1**

#### **5. Problem Statement (10 points)**

Submit a 3 to 5 page summary of plan for Problem Statement. Briefly state the purpose of the paper and then provide an overview of the target problem/issue related to social work practice. Include some statistics regarding the prevalence of the problem. A brief review of relevant literature related to the problem focusing on its etiology and effects is also necessary. State the specific research question(s) that you will be examining. Then, describe the significance of the chosen question(s) to evidence-based social work practice.

**Problem Statement: Wednesday, March 1**

#### **6. Research Proposal (20 points), and Research Proposal Class Presentation (5 points)**

##### Research Proposal:

Submit a 15 to 18-page paper (excluding title page, references, and appendices) of your Research Proposal. The research Proposal is designed to help you deepen your understanding of the key research concepts covered in the course through practice and application.

- Formulate an answerable research question that will contribute to an evidence based social work practice;
- Literature review (in peer-reviewed journals) of the chosen problem and critical appraisal of the efficacy and effectiveness of the evidence-based practice/service/intervention;
- Research design (quasi-experimental or experimental design; description of the procedures of implementing evidence-based practice/service/intervention; sample inclusion/exclusion criteria, planned methods of subject identification, screening, recruitment, and retention; fidelity monitoring method;
- Design and methods of data collection;
- Anticipated findings and their implication for social work practice, programs, and/or policies;
- Anticipated limitations of the study with respect to its research; and
- Identify gaps in the literature and suggest areas for additional research.

**Research Proposal: Monday, May 8**

##### Research Proposal Presentation:

Give a five-minute presentation (5-10 slides) of the highlights and key findings (as listed above) of the Research Proposal.

**Presentations: Monday, April 17, Wednesday, April 19, and Monday, April 24**

The Problem Statement and the Research Proposal papers must be written in an academic style and tone in accordance with American Psychological Association (APA) 6<sup>th</sup> ed. guidelines. You can find information about APA style here: [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org) and at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL at Purdue) <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>. You can get help in person at the Undergraduate Writing Center on campus: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>.

## VII. Class Policies and Expectations

1. **Electronic devices:** The use of laptops/tablets is only allowed to take notes or to conduct assignments when directed by the instructor. The use of cell phones is not allowed in class. Unless you are currently a care-giver (i.e. parent), please turn your cell phone off and keep it stored.
2. **Class attendance:** Class attendance is required every class period for the entire class period.
3. **Class preparation:** Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. **Students must expect to be called upon during each class to discuss their understanding of the reading material.** Failure to demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended the readings will be considered in assigning the class participation grade.
4. **General assignment requirements:** All assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced and have one-inch margins. Assignments that fail to do so will receive a grade reduction. References/sources used in papers must be in APA format and from evidence-based journals. If questions about the credibility of a reference arise, consult with the instructor. The instructor is available by email to answer questions about assignments. Students should submit questions or requests for clarifications at least 24 hours before an assignment is due. If an assignment is due in less than 24 hours, the instructor cannot guarantee a timely response. Assignments are expected to be completed at the beginning of class on the stated due dates.
5. **Assignment due dates:** Students will be penalized if an assignment is late. **Late assignments will receive a 20% grade deduction each day for two days. After more than two days, late assignments will not be accepted.** All assignments must be submitted in Canvas; therefore, it is your responsibility to ensure that there is an attachment. If you have any doubt, you can **ALSO** send the assignment to the instructor via email.
6. **Change of syllabus:** The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus if circumstances require an adjustment of course content.

## VIII. University Policies

**The University of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Professional Conduct and Civility in the Classroom.** The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

**Policy on Social Media and Professional Communication.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community

agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty.** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>)

**Use of Course Materials.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**Documented Disability Statement.** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

**Religious Holidays.** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Title IX Reporting.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Faculty, instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents

will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator and/or the Title IX Deputy for the SSW, Professor Tanya Voss. Students, faculty and staff may contact Professor Voss to report incidents or to obtain information. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf>.

**Campus Carry Policy.** The University's policy on concealed fire arms may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.

**Classroom Confidentiality.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students.** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

**Safety.** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL).** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy.** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## IX. Course Schedule

Please note that the instructor may make modifications to the syllabus during the semester. Any revised versions of the syllabus will be uploaded to Canvas.

|    | <b>Date</b>          | <b>Topic and Assignments</b>  | <b>Assignments &amp; Readings Due By Class Date</b>                                     |
|----|----------------------|---|---|
| 1  | Wednesday,<br>Jan 18 | Introduction to the course<br>and review syllabus                         | Review syllabus   |
| 2  | Monday,<br>Jan 23    | Ways of understanding &<br>approaches to science in<br>social work        | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 1 "Science and Social<br>Work"                             |
| 3  | Wednesday,<br>Jan 25 | Evidence Based Practice<br>Research process<br>Values & ethics            | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 2 "Research and<br>Generalist Social Work Practice"        |
| 4  | Monday,<br>Jan 30    | Research strategies and<br>types of questions                             | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 3 "Deciding on the<br>Question"                            |
| 5  | Wednesday,<br>Feb 3  | Reviewing the literature<br>Variables and values<br>Levels of measurement | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 4 "The Literature<br>Review and Identifying the Variables" |
| 6  | Monday,<br>Feb 6     | Review of articles<br>Systematic Reviews                                  | <u>Due:</u> Article critique  |
| 7  | Wednesday,<br>Feb 8  | APA style and writing   | ---   |
| 8  | Monday,<br>Feb 13    | Needs assessment  | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 5 "Designing Needs<br>Assessments"                         |
| 9  | Wednesday,<br>Feb 15 | Types of evaluation<br>designs  | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 6 "Designing Program<br>Evaluations"                       |
| 10 | Monday,<br>Feb 20    | Research writing<br>Problem statement                                     | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 13 "Research Writing"                                      |
| 11 | Wednesday,<br>Feb 22 | No Formal Class   | ---   |
| 12 | Monday,<br>Feb 27    | Sampling  | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 8 "Selecting the<br>Participants in the Research"          |
| 13 | Wednesday,<br>Mar 1  | Review for Exam #1<br>Chapters: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,<br>8, & 13              | <u>Due:</u> Problem statement   |

|                                    |                         |   |   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| 14                                 | Monday,<br>Mar 6        | <b>Exam #1</b>  | <b>Good luck!</b>   |
| 15                                 | Wednesday,<br>Mar 8     | Review exam   | ---   |
| Monday, March 13 – Friday March 17 |                         | SPRING BREAK  |   |
| 16                                 | Monday,<br>Mar 20       | Data collection methods<br>Reliability & Validity       | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 9 – “Collecting the Data”  |
| 17                                 | Wednesday,<br>Mar 22    | Organizing the Data                                     | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 10 – “Organizing the Data”   |
| 18                                 | Monday,<br>Mar 27       | Quantitative data analysis                              | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 12 – “Analysis of Quantitative Data”                                     |
| 19                                 | Wednesday,<br>Mar 29    | Quantitative Review                                     | <u>Due:</u> Quantitative data analysis exercise   |
| 20                                 | Monday,<br>Apr 3        | Qualitative data analysis                               | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 11 – “Analysis of Qualitative Data”                                      |
| 21                                 | Wednesday,<br>Apr 5     | Qualitative Review                                      | <u>Due:</u> Qualitative data analysis exercise  |
| 22                                 | Monday,<br>Apr 10       | Research paper and presentations                        | ---   |
| 23                                 | Wednesday,<br>Apr 12    | Practice evaluation<br>Single case design               | <u>Read:</u> Marlow, Chapter 7 – “Designing the Evaluation of Practice”                               |
| 24                                 | Monday,<br>Apr 17       | Student presentations                                   | Group A: Individual presentations   |
| 25                                 | Wednesday,<br>Apr 19    | Student presentations                                   | Group B: Individual presentations   |
| 26                                 | Monday,<br>Apr 24       | Student presentations                                   | Group C: Individual presentations   |
| 27                                 | Wednesday,<br>Apr 26    | Review for exam #2<br>Chapters: 7, 9, 10, 11, & 12      | ---   |
| 28                                 | Monday,<br>May 1        | <b>Exam #2</b>  | <b>Good luck!</b>   |
| 29                                 | Wednesday,<br>May 3     | Review exam, feedback<br>for research proposal<br>paper | ---   |
|                                    | <b>Monday<br/>May 8</b> |   | <b><u>DUE:</u> Research Proposal Paper. Email to the Instructor AND upload to Canvas by 4:00 P.M.</b> |