School of Social Work
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1350 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706
SW650 Methods of Social Work Research
Summer 2015

Instructor: Andrea Larson, MSW
Class Time: Saturdays, 9:00am-1:10pm
Location: SW 110
Office hours: By appointment
Phone: 312-804-7007
E-mail: andrealarson@wisc.edu

I. Catalogue Description
Social research and problems of project design and programming. Distinctive characteristics of investigations, directed to planning, administrative and scientific objectives.

II. Course Overview
The purpose of this course is to develop students’ understanding and skills in the approaches, techniques and challenges of conducting social work research and to enable students to be competent and discerning consumers of social science literature.

III. Course Competencies, Practice Behaviors, and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies addressed in course</th>
<th>Practice behaviors addressed in course</th>
<th>Assignment(s) measuring behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6: Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research</td>
<td>* Use practice experience to inform areas of worthwhile scientific inquire  * Use research concepts to judge what qualifies as effective practice</td>
<td>Homework assignments, concepts exams, and lab exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10d: Understand evaluation</td>
<td>* Critically monitor and evaluate interventions</td>
<td>Homework assignments, concepts exams, and lab exercises</td>
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IV. Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/30</td>
<td>Overview and introductions  Introduction to social science research  Basic research process</td>
<td>Text Ch. 1 - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>Social work research ethics  IRB training  Homework 1 Due</td>
<td>Text 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/13</td>
<td>Focusing the research project  Defining the “problem”</td>
<td>Text 6 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6/13 (contd) | Sampling  
  **Homework 2 Due** | Text 14           |
| 6/20      | Measurement  
  Defining variables  
  Reliability and validity  
  Selecting and constructing measures  
  **Homework 3 Due** | Text 8 & 9        |
| 6/27      | **Concepts Exam 1**  
  Quantitative research design  
  Overview  
  Internal/external validity  
  Experimental designs | Text 10           |
| 7/4       | **NO CLASS** |                  |
| 7/11      | Quantitative research design cont.  
  Quasi experimental  
  Single subject  
  **Homework 4 Due** | Text 11 p. 272-283  
  Text 12 p. 302-309 |
| 7/18      | Qualitative research designs  
  Fieldwork  
  Interviewing  
  Data analysis  
  **Homework 5 Due** | Text 16 p. 419-427  
  Text 17  
  Text 18 p. 458-470 |
| 7/25      | Large data sets  
  Analysis of quantitative data | Text 16 p. 408-409  
  Text 20 p. 501-504, 509-519  
  Text 21 p. 532, 536-537, 545-546 |
|           | **Homework 6 Due** | Text 22 p. 562-563 |
| 8/1       | **Concepts Exam 2** |                  |

V. Text and Reading Materials

Required Text:

Available for purchase online and on reserve in the Social Work Library. Link:

You are expected to read the assigned textbook material **BEFORE** each class.

Required Articles:
On the first day of class, students will be asked about research topics, populations, and/or methods that they find particularly interesting. The instructor will then choose readings for the class that align with students’ interests. These research articles will be posted on Learn@UW and
you will be expected to download them and use them to complete homework assignments. Please bring the assigned articles with you to class (electronic or paper copy fine).

VI. Evaluation
Grading

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts Exam 1</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts Exam 2</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Assignments</td>
<td>42 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Assignments</td>
<td>8 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/lab</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94 – 100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding, surpasses expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 – 93</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Surpasses expectations in many areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 – 87</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Meets expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 – 81</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Meets expectations in some areas, below in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 75</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Below expectations in most areas, not acceptable graduate-level work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 – 69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below expectations in all areas, not acceptable graduate-level work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;=63</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fails to meet minimal expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requesting grade changes on your assignments or exams is not encouraged. If you feel you have been graded unfairly, please complete the following steps:
1. Define, in writing, your assessment of why the grade should be changed.
2. Turn in your written assessment to the instructor.
3. The instructor reserves the right to adjust your grade accordingly. This includes raising your grade, leaving your grade as is, or lowering your grade.

Exams
There will be two exams focusing on concepts discussed in lecture and in your readings. Both exams will be multiple-choice. The final exam will **not** be cumulative. A week prior to each exam, we will have an in-class review session.

Homework Assignments
You will complete six homework assignments throughout the course of the semester, each worth 7 points. These will be posted on Learn@UW on a weekly basis. Homework assignments will ask you to apply concepts from lecture and the textbook to the research articles that correspond to each assignment. All homework assignments must be typed and are due at the beginning of lecture (uploaded to Learn@UW).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>All questions completed; <strong>and</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your writing is clear and cogent; <strong>and</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each response demonstrates thoughtfulness; <strong>and</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses are accurate, demonstrating understanding; <strong>and</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No more than minor mistakes.</td>
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</table>
5-6/7
All questions completed; and
Your writing is clear and cogent; and
Effort is evidenced in your responses but are incomplete; or
25% or fewer of your responses are inaccurate in part or total, demonstrating some lack of understanding.

4/5 or below
One or more questions are left unanswered or incomplete; or
Responses are difficult to understand; or
Lack of effort shown in several responses; or
>25% of your responses are inaccurate in part or total, demonstrating lack of understanding.

Lab Assignments
You will complete in-class lab assignments during the course of the semester. If you miss lab, you will not be able to make up the assignment.

VII. Course Policies
Attendance
Due to the accelerated nature of courses in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Part-Time MSW Program, students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to arrive on time.

Promptness
• Prompt arrival to all courses is required.

Absence
• Attendance will be taken at each class and students’ level of participation will be noted.
• Excused and unexcused absences:
  o Two unexcused absences will place the student at risk for failing the course.
  o On a case by case basis, it is left to the instructor’s discretion as to what is defined as an excused absence as well as to determine appropriate follow up plans.
  o Students are responsible for completing any class requirements for the day missed, and for obtaining from a fellow classmate any assignments, materials, and communications missed due to absence, late arrival, or early departure.
  o Students who must be absent due to inclement weather or other emergencies should contact the instructor prior to the start of class to be considered for an excused absence.

Inclement Weather Policy
• If a class is canceled due to weather, the instructor will email all students prior to class. Students are responsible for checking their email.
• If classes are not cancelled but an individual student concludes he/she cannot safely travel to reach his/her class site, the student must contact his/her instructor regarding his/her plan not to travel.

Student Behavior Policy
In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values, and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates, and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other.
**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism involves the use of others’ words, ideas, or evidence without clearly acknowledging the source. **Plagiarism is unacceptable and will be treated as serious ethical breach with possible penalties including: a failing grade on the assignment, failing the class, and/or referral to the Dean of Students Office.**

Plagiarism occurs when you do any of the following in an assignment:

- Use someone else’s words either verbatim or almost verbatim without citation
- Use someone else’s evidence, line of thinking or idea without citation
- Turn in someone else’s work as your own
- Turn in previously submitted work as if new, without the instructor’s approval

**If you have ANY questions about whether something you wrote might not be your original idea, please talk to the instructor prior to turning in your work.**

**Note on Accommodation of Student Disability**

If you require accommodations to obtain equal access to any part of the class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

**Use of Technology in the Classroom**

Please turn off your cell phones at the start of class, do not send or receive text messages and do not use laptops for anything other than taking lecture notes. If you use your cell phone or send and/or receive text messages during class, you will be asked to leave the classroom. If you use your laptop for anything other than lecture notes, you will not be allowed to use your laptop in the class for the remainder of the semester.