



*SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK*

**SWK 590: Research Literature and Techniques**  
Collin County Higher Education Center - CHEC  
Wednesdays 6-9 pm

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**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Brenda Moore, Ph.D., LMSW-AP  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Catalog Description: 590. *Research Literature and Techniques*. (3 semester hours).

This course provides students with information on advanced techniques of practice and program assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs are taught. Evaluation research design, instrument selection and development, and techniques of data analysis are addressed. Ethical and behavioral issues in evaluation research are presented. Development of an evaluation research design based on a practicum assignment is required. Prerequisite: SWK 531 or admission to the Advanced Standing Program.

**GOAL & COMPETENCIES:**

**1. Prepare MSW graduates for professional advanced generalist practice that reflects application and integration of critical thinking, theoretical frameworks, and differential interventions. Graduates will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:**

C 1.1 Apply critical and independent analysis of practice situations and effectively communicate their judgments, reasoning and decision-making processes (2.1.3)

C 1.2 Apply and contribute to evidence-based and best practice approaches to continuously assess and improve the efficacy and effectiveness of practice (2.1.6)

**2. Enable MSW graduates to apply ethical reasoning to advance equality, justice, and social change. Graduates will be able to reflect the following competencies:**

C. 2.2 Apply social work ethical principles to resolve dilemmas and create positive change among individuals, families, groups, organizations & communities (2.1.2)

**3. Promote leadership and service that is relevant to individual contexts of practice and enhances well-being and quality of life. Graduates will be able to reflect the following competencies:**

C. 3.1 Exemplify and model professional social work standards and strive to enhance their professional growth and development (2.1.1)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to equip students to evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions. The course prepares students to plan interventions with measurable goals and outcomes, select appropriate measures, and apply appropriate analytical and statistical methods in evaluation. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Design and plan a research project including a review of the literature, methodology, results and implications for social work practice.
2. Apply the skills of data collection and analysis, exhibiting the technical ability to use computers for data analysis.
3. Identify the connection between research and evidence-based practice which reflects social work ethics.
4. Be able to critique and evaluate evidence-based research, and apply that critical perspective to the design and evaluation of one's own practice interventions.

**STUDY LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

This course is designed to equip students to evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice and evaluate their own practice interventions. The course prepares students to plan interventions with measurable goals and outcomes, select appropriate measures and apply appropriate analytical and statistical methods in evaluation.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Design and plan a research project including a review of the literature, methodology, results and implications for social work practice.

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2. Apply the skills of data collection and analysis, exhibiting the technical ability to use computers for data analysis.
3. Demonstrate the ability to conduct research, program evaluation, and practice evaluation autonomously in an agency setting.
4. Identify the connection between research and evidenced-based practice.
5. Responsibly use social work values and ethics in research activities, including informed consent and confidentiality.
6. Be able to critique and evaluate evidenced-based research and apply that critical perspective to the design and evaluation of one's own practice and interventions.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES:

This course stresses the importance of evidence based theory and practice methods. Consequently, it supports the practice courses that emphasize the importance of demonstrating effectiveness in professional interventions. This course builds on research knowledge and skills learned in prior research methods courses taken in a student's BSW coursework or in the Foundation sequence. This course draws on materials from practice and HBSE to illustrate social work research principles, and it develops a professional model that utilizes practice evaluation to formulate a continuous improvement cycle in professional practice. The course prepares students to develop an advance generalist model that is ultimately autonomous and self-correcting.

### TEXTS:

Grinnell, R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. (2008). *Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidenced-based practice*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford publications.

### SUPPLEMENTAL SOURCES:

You will be expected to start to develop your own resource list in your research area. You should also include articles and resources that include ethical issues concerning research with your population/question under study. The reference list at the end of this syllabus may also provide some resources for your study.

American Psychological Association [APA](2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, D.C.: APA.

Bloom, M., Fischer, J., & Orme, J.G. (2006). *Evaluating practice: Guidelines for the accountable professional* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Brun, C. F. (2005). *A practical guide to social service evaluation*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, Inc.

Fisher, J. & Corcoran, K. (2006). *Measures for Clinical Practice and Research: A Sourcebook*, Volume 2: Adults, Fourth Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

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- Fisher, J. & Corcoran, K. (2006). *Measures for Clinical Practice and Research: A Sourcebook*, Volume 1: Couples, Families, and Children. Fourth Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cournoyer, B.R. (2004). *The evidence-based social work skills book*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Green, S.B. & Salkind, N.J. (2005). *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh* (4th ed.). Pearson
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Feeney, B. C. (2005). *A simple guide to SPSS for Windows for version 12.0*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Meehan, A.M. & Warner, C.B. (2000). *Elementary data analysis using Microsoft Excel*. McGraw Hill.
- Royse, D., Thyer, B., Padgett., & Logan, T. K. (2002). *Program evaluation: An introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Belmont CA: Brooks-Cole.
- Schutt, R. (2004). *Investigating the Social World, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Pine Forge Press.

**GRADING SCALE:** To be announced first class meeting

**OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS:** To be announced first class meeting

### COMPLETION OF ETHICS TRAINING:

Each student is required to complete an on-line ethics-training course before initiating the integrative paper project. This is completed by logging into <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>. Once completed, please print off a certificate and include with your proposal in an appendix.

Key Assignments INCLUDE:

### EVALUATION PROPOSAL:

Students will write a formal proposal for conducting a program/practice evaluation to be conducted within their field agency; this proposal will, ideally, serve as the basis for students' 595 integrative paper. Components of the proposal will include: (1) Literature review, (2) Research question(s) or Purpose, (3) Methodology; (4) Implications for SW practice; (5) Approved IRB document; (6) Certificate of Ethics Training.

#### Literature Review

In this section of the proposal (10-12 pages), you will provide a thorough, comprehensive examination of the empirically-based research question relevant to the program and/or intervention you would like to evaluate. At least **12 recent, scholarly articles are required**. If you are unable to find 12 articles on your topic, consult with the instructor. The literature review should be a focused on the topic that you plan for the integrative paper. Students will be expected to use correct APA referencing in the formatting, content and end referencing. Suggestions and tips for the literature review can be found in **APPENDIX B**.

#### Research Methodology

Lectures and readings will cover the elements required in the proposal. A grading rubric for the research proposal can be found in **Appendix C**.

## QUIZZES:

Depending on the readings and class participation, weekly quizzes may be administered. Quiz format may include multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. No make-up quizzes will be given. Quizzes will be ten (10) points each and will be added to the point total described in Course Requirements.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM:

A comprehensive final will be given which reflects content from the entire course. The format may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer and essay questions. Questions may also come from any weekly reading quizzes. The date of the comprehensive exam is **12/06/2010**.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

All written assignments must demonstrate acceptable writing style, American Psychological Association (APA), including the use of Standard English, acceptable grammar, and the use of the American Psychological Association (APA) style of reference citation. Chapters from P Pycszak, F., & Bruce, R. R., (2007). *Writing empirical research reports* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Glendale, CA: Pycszak Publishing can help guide your writing.

Part of the grading process will include an evaluation of presentation, including clarity, coherence, logic and organization of the assignment. All assignments must be typewritten, using double-spacing and standard margins. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the paper is in the possession of the instructor by the designated time. Any papers left in the mailbox or any other place are not the instructor's responsibility. **All assignments must be turned in on hard copy, no electronic papers; either e-mail or disks will be accepted.** At the discretion of the instructor, it may be required to submit written assignments via "turn-it in", a program utilized to determine instances of plagiarism. Please follow-up to ensure I have received your paper by the date assigned. Below is a partial list of factors that are addressed in the grading process:

- Any error in APA reference or citation format from the 5<sup>th</sup> edition
- Lack of quotation marks at the beginning and end of all direct quotes
- Extra or missing punctuation (i.e. commas, semi-colons, colons, periods)
- Incomplete sentences (i.e., sentences without a verb)
- Run-on sentences (i.e., sentences that run together without appropriate punctuation and capitalization delineating each sentence)
- Incorrect spelling
- Inappropriate and inconsistent verb tense
- Lack of noun-verb agreement
- Incorrect use of capitalization (e.g., social work is generally not capitalized)
- Incorrect use of possessives (examples of correct use are Shawn's book, the parents' child)
- Any contractions (e.g., I'm, can't, won't), except in direct quotes from another source)
- Lack of neatness (e.g., hand written corrections, uneven indentions)
- Papers that are not typewritten
- Use of a size other than #12 font

- Lines not double spaced
- Margins that are less than or wider than 1 inch
- Failure to indent the first line of a paragraph
- Incoherent sentences

**CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

Students are expected to attend class, reflecting responsibility which is inherent in the development as a social work professional. Roll will be taken regularly. Students are expected to be on time and prepared to participate when class begins as well as be present throughout the entire class meeting. Classroom exercises, discussions, role plays, guest speakers and other in-class experiential exercises are essential for a student’s professional learning and continued development of self-awareness. Tardiness (or early departure) of more than 15 minutes will count as .5 absence (2 tardies/early departures = 1 absence). A student is considered absent if he/she arrives more than 30 minutes late to class, leaves 30 or more minutes early or does not come to class.

The following penalties for absences (unexcused, or excused, according to university policy) will be administered:

Weekly	Up to 2 absences No penalty	3 absences 1 letter grade drop	4 absences Class grade of “F”	
Bi-weekly	Up to 3 absences No penalty	4 absences 1 letter grade drop	5 absences 1 letter grade drop	6 absences Class grade of “F”
Summer 10-week	Up to 1 absence No penalty	2 absences 1 letter grade drop	3 absences Class grade of “F”	

**ONLINE OR WEB-ENHANCED CLASSES:** Just as students are required to attend face-to-face classes, students are required to log in and participate in online components. To receive credit for attendance online via eCollege, students must log in and complete assignments in a timely manner. Not logging in to eCollege (which can be monitored by the instructor) and completing assignments online during the appropriate time is the equivalent of an absence for each week this occurs.

Final evaluation and grades depend on both presence and participation. Students’ grades will be significantly impacted by inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment each week. Students are expected to spend a comparable amount of time in the online learning environment as they would in class (3 hours a week in the classroom). In addition, just as in traditional F2F classrooms, students are expected to spend time reading and studying class materials.

**NOTE: PROBLEMS WITH YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION AND/OR COMPUTER ARE NOT CONSIDERED AS REASONS FOR LACK OF PARTICIPATION.** You have access to the university’s computer labs (in the social work department AND other campus facilities, including the library) as well as local libraries and other access to computers and ISPs.

If you believe that you are unable to fulfill the requirements for the course you should talk with your instructor about the possibility of dropping or withdrawing.

Class participation has three components: (1) Appropriate interactions with classmates,

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(2) Attentiveness, and (3) Active involvement in class activities. Evaluation of class participation is based on instructor observation. Students will be given feedback if problems are evident.

### **POLICY ON DUE DATES:**

### **POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:**

Every student is expected to do his/her own work. Law, ethical standards, university policy, and departmental policy demand that students refrain from plagiarism and any form of cheating. Plagiarism is the "Act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts of passages from of his [or her] writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the products of one's own mind." (Black's Law Dictionary, Abridged Fifth Edition, 1983). When using others' words, phrases, or ideas in writing, the original author should be given proper credit.

Cheating may take different forms. These include, but are not limited to, copying others' answers during an exam, using notes or other forms of help during an examination or quiz, except when explicitly permitted by the instructor, giving or receiving help on exams or assignments, or submitting work for one class which has already been submitted for another class for credit. Use of citations from the Internet without paraphrasing content AND proper referencing is regarded as plagiarism. Professors have the right to use electronic review programs (such as Turn It In™) to identify plagiarism.

The department does not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. A student found to be engaging in such illegal and unethical conduct may receive a failing grade in the course and may be subjected to further disciplinary proceedings. Any assignment or exam that lacks honesty will be given a grade of "0".

### **ACCEPTABLE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:**

“Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to obey all federal, state, and local laws, in addition to the regulations of the University. The standards of Student Conduct including disciplinary rules and procedures are designed to provide and conform to the basic tenets of due process, as developed by institutions of higher education. As such, the University distinguishes these procedures and regulations as an educational and growth process which is not intended to conform to adversary proceedings as in a court of law. (Student’s Guide Book, 2011, p. 35).

### **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS**

The Department of Social Work expects all social work students to conduct themselves in an ethical, professional manner. Professional ethics are at the core of social work. The profession articulates its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards as set forth in the *NASW Code of Ethics* to guide social workers’ conduct. The *Code* is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. Accordingly, we expect social work students to demonstrate courtesy, respect and support for fellow students, instructors, clients, and all other persons.

All students enrolled in BSW or MSW classes are expected to observe the tenets of the NASW Code of Ethics and the Social Work Student Code of Conduct. Our Code of Conduct is reflective of

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professional and academic expectations – a student who cannot demonstrate appropriate behaviors will not be appropriate for practice in the social work profession. Students who violate these Codes may be asked to meet with appropriate Social Work faculty (instructors or Program Directors). In addition, the department's Academic and Professional Issues (API) Committee is responsible for dealing with student issues when requested by faculty.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

It is the policy of Texas A&M University-Commerce and the Social Work Department to do everything we can to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law, and the University's commitment to providing equal opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example, in accessibility, seating placement or in arrangements for examinations should not hesitate to inform the instructor. If required, large type, Braille or cassette recordings of syllabus or assignments can be provided.

Students with conditions that require special attention or accommodation should contact the Director of Disability Resources & Services at 903-468-5150 (located in the Library, Room 132).



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APPENDIX A

Critique of the Literature: For A Single Article (Journal Club)

A. *Introduction*

- a. What are the research question(s) and hypotheses of the study?

B. *Methodology*

a. Sample

1. How many people were involved in the study? What characteristics are known about them?
2. What criteria were used for inclusion or exclusion?

b. Procedures

1. How were people recruited? What informed consent procedures were used? Did you need permission from supervisors or stakeholders?
2. What sources of data were used? How was data obtained? By whom? When?

c. Results

1. What statistical test(s) were used?
2. Why were the chosen tests utilized? Did they address the research questions?
3. What were the results?
  - a. Did they achieve clinical or statistical significance?
  - b. Were there any noticeable trends?

C. *Discussion*

- a. What are the implications of the results for the program/client?
- b. How might the findings be incorporated into social work practice?
- c. Who might be interested in the results and why?

D. *Limitations*

- a. What methodological issues (design, sampling, and measures) might have influenced the results?
- b. What were some problems encountered during the course of the study?
- c. How could the study been improved?

E. *References*

- a. Were there current and relevant references used?

## APPENDIX B

### Review of the Literature: For Topic

Students are required to complete a literature review as part of the larger research proposal. The section should be original and presented in a clear and concise manner. It is also important to remember that this is a graduate level course. Generally, expectations are considerably higher at this level than in undergraduate courses.

The purpose of the literature review is to demonstrate your ability to research and synthesize scholarly literature and present results in a clear, systematic fashion. You must also demonstrate your ability to critically analyze various positions, compare and contrast strengths and weaknesses of extant evidence.

#### **Elements of Literature Review (Not to be used as headings):**

1. Introduction

This section introduces the reader to the topic or problem. It can often describe the problem, when and how it occurs and why it is of concern to the reader.

2. Key Points

As you begin to examine the literature, look for patterns and results of studies that agree, or disagree. Look for patterns in the way researchers use terms and the kinds of problems they have in defining variables or analyzing data.

This is the body of the text. Do not present each article one after another. Present the literature as a whole and try and relate the information to your study. What does it say about your variables? Is there any information about your population of interest? Essentially, you are synthesizing the available knowledge as it relates to your topic.

Remember that this is a special type of paper. Your opinions, while probably superior, do not belong here. Everything you state or report must be cited. Avoid direct quotations.

3. Conclusion

Summarize the key points you have developed in the body of the paper. Lead the reader directly from what is known to your specific research question. In other words, given what is known it is logical that the next step would be what you propose to do in your study.

4. References

Make sure your references within the text and on the reference page are APA style. You might lose points if they are not so, double check!

APPENDIX B

Additional Literature Review Tips

1. Before beginning your search it is helpful to have a fairly developed research question. Example: *“What therapeutic techniques have been proven to work with reducing guilt feelings of adult survivors of sexual abuse?”* or *“What factors are related to MSW student’s extreme anxiety?”*
2. If a complete research question is not possible, at least try and narrow the topic as much as possible before the search begins. Example: *“Maybe something about adult survivors of sexual abuse.”*
3. When you are searching, you are looking for research articles that report activities of gathering, analyzing and presenting data.
4. It may take several tries to identify the exact wording of the topics you are looking for. Sometimes the words you use are not what researchers might call things. Keep trying!
5. Books can be helpful for summarizing the state of the knowledge. They can give you help identifying terms or popular theories. They are, however, often outdated quickly so be sure and supplement books with the most current articles from journals.
6. Be careful with web sites. While there is much valuable information on the web, there are also a lot of opinions presented as fact. Make sure you know who wrote the article and that there is evidence for the stated remarks. In general, WIKAPEDIA is not a good reference.

APPENDIX C

Tentative Evaluation Proposal Grading Rubric (150 points)

Component	Points Available	Points Earned
<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Brief overview of agency or program</li> <li>b. State research question(s) or hypotheses</li> </ul>	5	
<p><b>Literature Review</b></p> <p>Empirical information on the general problem area relating to intervention used, or question being asked; empirical, scientific literature related to the service population, the intervention and /or its efficacy; gaps in the literature. Demonstrate the connection of your project (research questions) to the empirical research.</p>	35	
<p><b>Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Which design will be used?</li> <li>b. Why this design?</li> </ul>	15	
<p><b>Measurement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All variables conceptualized and operationalized</li> <li>b. Measures: Reliability and Validity</li> <li>c. Other supporting information about variables included?</li> <li>d. Include a copy of all measures in an appendix.</li> </ul>	20	
<p><b>Sample</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Strategy</li> <li>b. Inclusion or exclusion criteria</li> </ul>	10	
<p><b>Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Informed consent procedures? Did you need permission from supervisors or stakeholders?</li> <li>b. What sources of data will be used? How will be data obtained? By Whom? When?</li> <li>c. Is study procedure clear and complete?</li> </ul>	15	
<p><b>Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Test(s) to be used?</li> <li>b. Why were the tests chosen?</li> </ul>	15	
<p><b>Limitations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Possible issues that may influence results?</li> </ul>	5	
<p><b>References:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 10 approved sources</li> <li>b. IRB Document</li> <li>c. Certificate of Ethics</li> </ul>	10	
<p><b>Appendices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Copies of instruments, consent forms and other materials</li> </ul>		

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included	5	
<b><i>Presentation</i></b> a. Organized b. Concise & clearly written, grammatically correct c. APA (Including <b><i>References:</i></b> Cited in Discussion or Limitations)	15	



**APPENDIX D**

**Evaluation Proposal Presentation Elements**

1. Briefly describe the program or intervention you will be researching.
2. State your research question(s) concerning the program or intervention; why is/are this question(s) important?
3. What design will be used and why?
4. How is each variable conceptualized and operationalized? Are there any issues in trying to define and measure these variables?
5. What measures will be used? What is known about this measure (reliability and validity)?
6. What sampling strategy will be used? Why this strategy? Where will the participants come from? What will be the exclusion/inclusion criteria for selecting participants?
7. What informed consent procedures will be used? Do you need permission from supervisors or stakeholders?
8. What sources of data will be used? How will the data obtained? By whom? When?
9. What statistical test(s) will be used? Why were these tests chosen?
10. Discuss the overall usefulness of your study, i.e. why should we care?
11. What methodological issues (design, sampling, and measures) might influence the results?