

**University of Vermont**  
**College of Education and Social Services**  
**Department of Social Work**  
**Syllabus Fall, 2004**

**SWSS 164 Introduction To Social Work Research**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 – 12:00 in 457 Waterman Building**

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## **1.0 COURSE DESCRIPTION**

### **1.1 Overview of the Course**

This is the required research course for the undergraduate social work curriculum. It focuses on the basic principles of contemporary social work research including research models and methods from a social work perspective. Students will be exposed to the essential elements of research design, methodology, data collection and analysis. Theories and approaches to research including positivist, post-positivist and post modern paradigms will be explored. Students will look at real life applications of social work research to practice, policy analysis and community development. The intent of the course is to assist students in the use of research to improve practice with individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities. A working assumption of the course is that research and practice are mutually informed and complementary of each other. Students will be expected to develop ways of thinking and value stances consistent with the UVM Department of Social Work's core philosophy that emphasizes the strengths perspective, social justice and human rights. The instructor will also emphasize the importance of listening to the authentic voice of oppressed and marginalized groups, individuals and families as part of the craft of social research.

#### **1.1.1 Relationship of the Course to the Undergraduate Curriculum**

This course is part of the required course of study for undergraduate social work students. The Social Work curriculum prepares students for generalist social work practice. Social work theory, knowledge, values and skills are taught through classroom and community field experiences (UVM Undergraduate Program Bulletin 2002-2003). This course also complements and expands on the liberal arts course of study required of all bachelor's level students. Through this course, students explore and apply research about contemporary social issues which they studied in Human Behavior in the Social Environment (SWSS 47 & 48), are focusing on in Policy (SWSS 165 & 166), and will potentially experience in Practice (SWSS 168 & 169), Field Seminar (SWSS 171 & 172) and Field Practica ( SWSS 173 & 174). In this way, linkages are

made with other course work. Students learn reasoning and analytical skills which are useful throughout the BSW Program. They practice professional writing, presenting, and team work. They review scholarly works associated with curricula areas and learn how to incorporate social work knowledge into their practice. All of these skills are useful across the curriculum and together help prepare students for entry-level, generalist practice and their various professional social work roles. A critical social constructionist perspective encourages an examination of the contribution of multidisciplinary knowledge to research and practice. Students learn to connect research from their liberal arts background, their understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of research methodologies, the historical and cultural context of research programs, and the literary conventions used to communicate research knowledge. This course also prepares students to understand research and its relationship to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In addition, course topics highlight both national social issues (e.g., dropout and violence prevention in schools) as well as statewide issues (e.g., early intervention programs, services to elders) which students will be engaged with after graduation.

## **1.2 Course Objectives**

The successful completion of this course will enable students to demonstrate:

### **1.2.1 Knowledge Objectives**

- an understanding of issues concerning the relationship between social research and social work;
- an understanding of the assumptions, logic and basic methods of quantitative and qualitative approaches to social work research;
- an understanding of critical research skills and assessment techniques in order to design and conduct research projects and assess a research study;
- an understanding of the basic principles of measurement, sampling techniques, and methods of survey research;
- knowledge of ethical, social, cultural and political issues and factors in the conduct of social work research;
- an understanding of the importance of different epistemological beliefs and theories and their relation to different types and approaches to research;
- a basic understanding of the use of computers and instructional technologies in research;
- knowledge of and sensitivity to issues related to the conduct of research with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

### **1.2.2 Skill Objectives**

- The ability to do a literature review using library computer data bases;
- The ability to design a descriptive research study;
- Use interviewing techniques to collect data;

- Follow a research design format to write a research report;
- Use descriptive statistical procedures to produce graphical representations;
- The ability to use APA style to write clearly and concisely;
- The ability to communicate research results to peers clearly and succinctly.

### 1.2.3 Value Objectives

- A commitment to social work research that adheres to social work values and ethics;
- A respect for research methods that are culturally-sensitive;
- A commitment to research that protects the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
- Recognition of the need for research to promote the knowledge base of the social work profession;
- Evidence of a respect for prior review of all research protocols by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the University.

## 1.3 Evaluation of Course Outcomes

### 1.3.1 Class Attendance

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, GROUP LEARNING AND PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The BSW program requires regular class attendance in addition to the satisfactory completion of course assignments in order to pass any social work courses. Sound professional social work practice relies on a rich mix of personal and professional learning. Although this occurs in a variety of venues during your BSW academic preparation, a primary location of this learning takes place in class. Through lectures, class discussions, group activities, films, and the presence of special guests the knowledge, skills, and values of the social work profession are explored, strengthened, and integrated. While satisfactory completion of papers and exams is expected and necessary, it is not sufficient preparation. Professional social work practice requires whole person learning. The personal, interpersonal, and group learning that comes from regular attendance in class is designed to enable the professional use of “self-as-instrument”. Your presence in class, therefore, is critical to your personal and professional learning as well as your learning colleague’s development and is expected.

This is consistent with the University of Vermont policies on attendance and statements made by accrediting and professional social work organizations, as well as basic respect for your learning colleagues in classroom and group activities.

The University of Vermont:

“Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes. The instructor has the

final authority to excuse absences. It is the responsibility of the instructor to inform students of his or her policy for handling absences and tardiness, and the penalties imposed . . . It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor regarding the reason for absence or tardiness from class, and to discuss these with the instructor in advance wherever possible” (The University of Vermont Catalogue, 2000, p. 31).

Specifics:

We assume that learning is the enterprise we are all engaged in together. Further that in class learning is central to your development and proficiency with the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession.

If you miss three, one hour and fifteen minute classes OR one, three hour class it is your responsibility to make an appointment with your course instructor to engage in additional learning to address the learning opportunities you missed in class.

Absence of more than 20% of in-class learning may result in the necessity to repeat the course.

### **1.3.2 Student Conduct**

Students are expected to show respect for others and their opinions and otherwise observe and demonstrate simple courtesy and civility to others in class. Students are also referred to the Cat’s Tale for standards on academic honesty including plagiarism. The instructor will also outline areas of academic honesty. Student behavior and participation in class are important in relation to the grade for the course and can make a difference as to A - or + for a final grade. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and not leave until the dismissal time. Excessive leaving class to attend to personal needs interrupts the learning process and should be kept to a minimum.

Students and faculty will maintain an appropriate academic climate by refraining from all actions which disrupt the learning environment (e.g., making noise, ostentatiously not paying attention, and leaving and reentering the classroom inappropriately). Repeated violations of the expectations for student conduct may result in disciplinary action and grade adjustment.

### **1.3.3 Course Assignments**

#### **RESEARCH PROJECT**

- I. Problem Statement/Question or Area of Inquiry -- 15% of Final Term’s Mark (Due Sept 28<sup>th</sup>)
  - Introduce the topic What specifically is this research/evaluation about?
  - What is it an important area/issue to study? Does it meet the ‘so what?’ test?
  - What is the scope of the study?
  - Briefly summarize issues in relevant literature.
  - Human subject considerations.

- II. Design and Methodology 15% of Final Term's Mark (Due Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>)  
 Your plan for answering the question/shedding light on the issue.  
 Operationalization of key concepts.  
 Explanation of approach, procedures and time lines for data collection and analysis.  
 Feasibility considerations.
- III. Final Paper 25% of Final Term's Mark [half of which is for composition\*] (Due Dec 9<sup>th</sup>)  
 Include edited versions of Parts I and II.  
 Presentation of data, discussion of findings, conclusions, recommendations.  
 \*composition includes: adequacy of referencing (in substantiating points and in following APA style for reference lists and in-text citations and for the adequacy of writing using APA manual as guide, attention to grammar, spelling, wording, organization of material, use of headings and sub-headings, clarity of writing an presentation.
- IV. In-Class Presentation 25% of Final Term's Mark  
 Twenty minute presentation using electronic media methods of presentation. Grading is based on clarity, organization and use of time. Ten to 15 minutes will be used in addition to your 20 minute presentation for the class and invited guests to ask questions.

## 2.0 COURSE METHODS

### 2.1 Required Text

Royse, D. (2004). *Research Methods in Social Work* (fourth edition). Thomson/Brooks Cole. Pacific Grove, CA.

Parrott, III, L. (1999). *How to Write Psychology Papers*. New York: Longman.

### 2.2 Supplemental reading – Selected Social work journal articles and class handouts

Note: We will also be referring to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (fifth edition). Students should always consult this reference for questions of style in writing for research reports for this course. A copy can be found in the Bailey-Howe library. Some people find the APA Research Style Crib Sheet by Russ Dewey helpful. It can be found at: <http://www.wooster.edu/psychology/apa-crib.html>

### 2.3 Teaching Methods

The class is a mix of lecture/discussion, hands-on experiential activity. The completion of a research project is required.

## 3.0 COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings are to be completed corresponding to the week that they are assigned on the syllabus.

### Week 1

**August 31:** Introduction, course expectations and discussion on what is research in social work?  
Also introduction to technology and research. Course themes.

**Sept. 2:** Understanding the language and craft of social research  
Sources of Knowledge- Modern and Post-Modernist Approaches

Readings: Royse text, Chap1: Introduction  
Handout: Epistemic Inventory

### Week 2

**Sept. 7:** Research Questions and the Literature Search

**Sept. 9:** The Literature Search continued; Research and Social Work Ethical standards

Readings: Royse, Chap. 2 & 3: The Way Research Proceeds & Ethical Thinking and Research

### Week 3

**Sept. 14:** Research writing in Social Work

**Sept. 16:** Research Design (Single System Designs)

Readings: Royse, Chaps, 13 & 4: Professional Writing & Single System Designs

### Week 4

**Sept. 21:** Research Designs (Single System Designs)

**Sept. 23:** Quantitative research : Group designs

Readings: Royse, Chaps. 4 & 5: Single System Designs & Research Designs for Group Comparisons

### Week 5

**Sept. 28:** Quantitative research : Group designs **Problem Statement/Question or Area of Inquiry due at beginning of class**

**Sept. 30:** Case Study and Qualitative Research

Readings: Royse, Chaps. 5 & 10: Research Designs for Group Comparisons & Qualitative Research

### Week 6

**Oct. 5:** Case Study and Qualitative Research

**Oct. 7:** Sampling, Measurement and Research Instruments, Data Collection

Readings: Royse, Chaps. 10, 6, 7, 8, 9: Qualitative Research; Understanding and Using Research Instruments; Developing Data Collection Instruments; Survey Research; Unobtrusive Approaches

### **Weeks 7 & 8**

**Oct. 12:** Sampling, Measurement and Research Instruments, Data Collection

**Oct. 14:**

**Oct. 19:**

**Oct. 21**

Readings: Royse, Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9: Understanding and Using Research Instruments; Developing Data Collection Instruments; Survey Research; Unobtrusive Approaches

### **Week 9**

**Oct. 26:** Data Analysis

**Oct. 28:** Data Analysis

Readings: Royse, Chap. 12: Data Analysis

### **Week 10**

**Nov. 2:** Data Analysis

**Nov. 4:** Data Analysis **Design and Methodology due at the beginning of class**

Readings: Royse, Chap. 12: Data Analysis

### **Week 11**

**Nov. 9:** Using Research Findings

**Nov. 11:** Program evaluation

Readings: Royse, Chap 11: Program Evaluation

### **Week 12**

**Nov. 16:** Review Week -- TBA

**Nov. 18:** Review Week -- TBA

### **Week 13**

**Nov. 23:** ORAL Presentations

**Nov 25:** Thanksgiving break

### **Week 14**

**Nov. 30:** ORAL PRESENTATIONS

**Dec. 2:** ORAL PRESENTATIONS

**Week 15**

**Dec. 7: ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Dec. 9: ORAL PRESENTATIONS; Course Wrap-up**

**Final paper due in Social Work Department Office by Friday, Dec. 9 by 4:00 p.m.**