

**University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Policy & Practice**

SW615 Introduction to Social Work Research

Spring 2019

Asynchronous Online Platform Section

CANVAS is available 24/7 with weekly modules, activities, and discussions

**Note that the instructor/TA will reply to you within 24 hours of your email message
Between Monday and Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
If you send an email during the weekend, they will reply the next business day**

Announcements: Please check the Announcements Section of CANVAS for messages.

Course Purpose

Research and evaluation are critical components of professional social work practice. Practice on all levels must be based on sound and empirically validated concepts and theory, of which Evidence Based Practice is but one area where this is relevant. This course is designed to introduce you to social research methods in the context of social work practice and social welfare policy. First year foundation courses hone critical thinking skills that build on a liberal arts undergraduate education in science, social sciences, and the humanities. This course further builds on that foundation with conceptual skills and methods of inquiry for testing theory and evaluating the effectiveness of social work practice. This course will teach you about research methods. It will also teach how research skills are integrated with social work practice. It will integrate research skills with other areas of the MSW curriculum, including policy, human behavior in the social environment, racism, and social change. Specifically, this course will examine the relationship between theory and research,

conceptualization of research questions and hypotheses, and elements of research design. It will introduce qualitative and quantitative methodologies to build knowledge for practice.

Learning objectives for introduction to social work research

1. Students will exhibit a spirit of inquiry and informed skepticism.
2. Students will understand the language and methods of systematic inquiry through empirical social research as it applies to research on social work practice. They will develop and conceptualize research questions and hypotheses from theory, test hypotheses, understand how concepts are measured, how generalizable samples are collected and the conceptual issues in the design of experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental research.
3. Students will use introductory applied data analysis tools for qualitative and quantitative data.
4. Students will understand the use of research skills to provide high-quality services, to initiate change, to improve practice, policy and social service delivery and to evaluate their own practice.
5. Students will apply guidelines of research ethics to research in social work practice settings.
6. Students will gain access to multiple information sources for conceptualizing research problems, including agency information, professional and academic books, peer reviewed journals, and electronic media.
7. Students will critically assess information from all these sources.
8. Students will gain a basic understanding of Evidence Based Practice including evidence search, evidence appraisal, and implementation of evidence in a practice context.
9. Students will communicate empirical-based knowledge, including evidence-based interventions, in an effective manner.
10. Students will understand the contributions of both quantitative and qualitative methods to research on social work practice.
11. Students will draw implications for practice and policy from published research literature.
12. Students will apply knowledge and skills of social research to facilitate planned social change in practice settings.

Texts & Required Readings

Required Text

*** Monette, D. R., Sullivan, T. J., DeJong, C. R., Hilton, T. P. (2014). *Applied social research: Tool for the human services (9th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Thomson.

Readings: Evidence-based/Evidence-Informed Practice, Week 1

NASW. (2017). NASW Practice Snapshot: Evidence-Based Practice. Retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data/Social-Work-Policy-Research/Evidence-Based-Practice>.

Woodbury, M.G. & Kuhnke, J.L. (2014). Evidence-based practice vs. evidence-informed practice: What's the difference? *Wound Care Canada*, 12(1), 26-29. Retrieved December 20, 2017,

from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260793333_Evidence-based_Practice_vs_Evidence-informed_Practice_What's_the_Difference

Readings: Problem Formulation, Week 2

Gambrill, E. & Gibbs, L. (2009). Developing well-structured questions for evidence-informed practice. In Roberts, A. (ed.) *Social Workers' Desk Reference 2nd edition* (pp. 1120-1126). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Readings: Systematic Review, Week 3

Corcoran, J., & Secret, M. (2013). *A Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Agency-Based Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Chapter 4.

Readings: Quasi-Experimental and Non-Experimental Research, Week 7

Eifert, G. H., Forsyth, J. P., Arch, J., Espejo, E., Keller, M., & Langer, D. (2009). Acceptance and commitment therapy for anxiety disorders: Three case studies exemplifying a unified treatment protocol. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 16*(4), 368-385.

Readings: Community-Engaged Research Methods, Week 9

Cacari-Stone, L., Wallerstein, N., Garcia, A.P., & Minkler, M. (2014). The promise of community-based participatory research for health equity: A conceptual model for bridging evidence with policy. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*, 1615-1623.

Maton, K.I. (2008). Empowering community settings: Agents of individual development, community betterment, and positive social change. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(1-2), 4-21.

Readings: Qualitative and Mixed Methods in Social Work, Week 10

Padgett, D.K. (2012). *Qualitative and Mixed Methods in Public Health*. Chapter 3 (Mixed methods) & Chapter 6 (Entering the field and conducting observation), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Readings: Qualitative Data Analysis, Week 11

Curry, S., & Abrams, L. S. (2015). “They lay down the foundation and then they leave room for us to build the house”: A visual qualitative exploration of young adults’ experiences of transitional housing. *Journal of the Society for Social Work Research, 6*(1), 145–172.

Readings: Evaluation Research Week 12

Millar, A., Simeone, R.S., & Carnevale, J.T. (2001). Logic models: a system tool for performance management. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 24*, 73-81.

Course Online Learning Activities

Each week the course covers a module. **The course week runs from Sunday to Saturday.** Review the course calendar and follow it to keep you on track.

Weekly course module will consist of the following activities and tasks:

1. Assigned readings on the topic to be covered (chapters from the textbook and other readings)
2. Lecture slides over voice by the instructor that cover contents of the module
3. A PDF of lecture slides
4. In some weeks, on-line or in-person lecture delivered by experts on special topics
5. In some weeks, a practice quiz for you to review materials covered
6. In some weeks, discussion group questions and student responses (frequent, ongoing participation with your group peers is essential and required to create a successful online learning experience). The following are guidelines for the discussion group and student response:
 - a. Remember to respond to the discussion questions first, **between Sunday and Wednesday**. This provides sufficient time for responses from your group peers.
 - b. Then, provide comments and feedback responses to each of your discussion group peers between Wednesday and Saturday of each week. If you are inclined, you can respond to students at any time, even on the same day to all of your group peers.
7. **Please refer to the SWRK 615 Course Calendar Activities and Assignment Schedule at the end of the syllabus for the specific activities and tasks required for each module.**

Online Course Tips:

1. Course engagement requires students to have purposeful and timely discussions. Get to know your group peers as they will be a supportive network throughout the course.
2. Do not wait to respond to your peers until Saturday of the module that has a group discussion component, that is, bunching up all your responses on the weekend. This is ineffective for timely group discussion, and it may negatively affect your grade.
3. Complete the practice quizzes. The quizzes will enhance your learning of the course material and will be graded as “complete” or “not complete.”
4. There are five assignments and two exams for the entire course. Mark your personal calendars for the due dates.
5. All start and end dates for the weekly modules are listed in the Course Calendar.

Grading Scheme & Description of Assignments

Grades will be based on the following:

Participation	20%
CITI on-line human research course	5%
Practice-based research assignments (1 non-credited and 2 graded assignments)	40%
Peer review of practice-based research assignments	5%
Exams (2 * 15 points per exam)	30%

Participation (20%)

You are expected to fully prepare for class for each module. This means that you read all required readings, complete quizzes, and participate in discussion groups. Your score for participation, which will account for 20% of your final course grade, will be assessed by the amount of effort you make in being an ongoing participant in quizzes and discussion group. While you are required to take all quizzes, the number of correct answers is not counted toward a numerical grade. Instead, the quizzes are graded as “complete” or “incomplete.” For discussion group, you are required to respond to the discussion questions and to provide comments and feedback responses to all your discussion group peers. Students will be organized into 6 small groups of 4 students each. If applicable, reading assignments will be available on Canvas under “Modules”.

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative On-Line Human Research Course (5%)

Students are required to complete the CITI on-line human research ethics course for students engaged in social and behavioral science research. Enrollment in the course is available through www.citiprogram.org.

Students who have previously completed the course “Basic Human Subjects – Social & Behavioral Focus” (including a Refresher Course) and have a Certificate of Completion with an expiration date of April 27, 2019 or after will not have to take course. They may email the instructor their Certificate of Completion for credits. Students who believe they have completed a course equivalent to the course “Basic Human Subjects – Social & Behavioral Focus” may contact the instructor to see the course taken meets the requirement.

- Click “Register” to Create a New Registration
- Enter “University of Pennsylvania” when prompted “Select Your Organization Affiliation” → Click “Continue to Create Your CITI Program Username/Password.”
- Enter “Personal Information” and create “Username & Password” and “Country of Residence”

- Answer questions in the next screen. Answer “no” to the CE credits question if you do not intend to purchase the credits.
- Provide information requested by University of Pennsylvania
- In the same screen, under the question “Which Course Do You Plan To Take?”: Enter “**Basic Human Subjects – Social & Behavioral Focus**”. This is the course you are required to enroll. (Note that the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course (RCR) does not meet the course requirement. **DO NOT** take the RCR course.)
- The course will appear under “My courses.” There will be a button next to the course that lists “enroll” please click that button.
- After you finish the course and pass the quizzes, upload your Completion Report, which includes the modules information to Canvas.
- An example of what the “Basic Human Subjects – Social & Behavioral Focus” certificate looks like is available on Canvas under Module 3.

This assignment has to be completed by February 2, 2019.

Practice-Based Research (PBR) Assignments (45% in total)

All assignments must be turned in on time. They must be typewritten and double-spaced. Use APA format and reference style.

PBR Assignment 1: Problem Statement (not credited) – Due February 9, 2019

The goal of this assignment is to learn how to formulate a problem statement ending with a question or questions for research in a human service setting. The problem statement should not exceed one-page. Your practice experience may be helpful in coming up with a research question(s). The problem statement lays the foundation for the proposed research project that you will further describe in the next two PBR assignments. The key concepts that you introduce here will be the basis for your search for relevant literature for PBR assignment 2 (the research literature review). The problem statement should include the following elements:

1. State the problem/ issue
2. State why it is important to address this problem/ issue
3. Discuss what the current practice is in regard to this problem/ issue
4. Discuss what is still unclear or unknown about the problem/ issue
5. State your research question: “The purpose of this study is to address this gap in knowledge by exploring the relationship between ‘independent variable’ and ‘dependent variable’, guided by the following research question:_____”

PBR Assignment 2: Research Literature Review (25% in total with the following distribution: 10% on a summary of 4 studies and 15% on the literature review paper) – Due March 23, 2019

This assignment builds on the problem statement assignment. Complete a literature review that includes a systematic review/meta-analysis, quantitative studies, and qualitative studies and that builds the background and significance for your research question(s) for further study. This review should be organized around concepts that are important for understanding the topic and how these

concepts relate to social work practice. The paper should be 4 to 5 pages of text and end with a research question/questions and a research hypothesis/hypotheses. (This research question(s) is the same question or an amended question that you ended the problem statement assignment with). Note that references and other relevant materials, such as tables and charts, are not counted toward the 4 to 5 pages.

In addition to the 4 to 5 pages literature review that concludes with a research question/questions and a research hypothesis/hypotheses, students will complete a summary of four studies. Students will summarize information on the key elements of these studies using a spreadsheet with 4 tabs, one tab per one study. The information provided on the elements should be concise. The maximum length of an answer to an element should not be more than 4-5 sentences. If you cannot find information on a certain element, just acknowledge that in your answer.

All four studies must be published in peer-reviewed journals on the topic examined by the PBR assignments. The four studies include one study in each of the following methodological areas: (1) systematic review/meta-analysis; (2) quantitative randomized control trial or quasi-/pre-experimental study on an intervention, a treatment or a therapy; (3) quantitative observational study (cross-sectional or longitudinal); and (4) qualitative study.

This paper should be based on no less than 6 citations of research literature. The articles cited should include at least one quantitative research study and one qualitative research study, conducted by the authors and based on analysis of empirical data. Students may include an article that is a formulation of a conceptual framework based on thorough literature review. All articles should be cited and referenced using APA reference format.

It is important to select and review your research articles carefully. Assessment of this assignment will be in part based on how thoroughly you have reviewed and critiqued the selected articles. A synthesis of the cited articles that justifies the relationship of independent variable(s) to explaining or predicting your dependent variable(s) is necessary for developing a framework for your proposed research question. Furthermore, noting the strengths and limitations of the studies reported in the articles, as well as specifying how your research question(s) is building upon existing research, is a necessary component to justifying your research question(s).

The paper should be written as an essay and avoid appearing as an annotated bibliography. You will be judged by the use of resources and the logical flow of your essay that leads from what is known to what should be further studied.

It should include the following components:

1. Introduce the problem: Expand upon the problem/issue that you had introduced in your Problem Statement.
2. Discuss the specific variables (independent and dependent) and population of interest. (If you are testing out an intervention (which would be your independent variable), describe the intervention.
3. Discuss the literature for each variable.
4. Provide a critical assessment of the literature on a whole.
5. Specify how your study builds on existing research (what will your research study add to existing research?)

6. State the research question(s) and hypothesis/ hypotheses.

PBR Assignment 3: Research Proposal Outline (15%) – Due April 27, 2019

Building on assignment 2 and responding to feedback from the instructor and your peers, submit a 7 – 9 page research proposal to address the question/hypothesis (questions/hypotheses) posed at the conclusion of the research literature review. Note that the total length of the proposal is 7 -9 pages, **including** the research literature review. Also note that references and other relevant materials, such as tables and charts, are not counted toward the 7 to 9 pages. The proposal part of assignment 3 starts with a research question/hypothesis (questions/hypotheses) and should be **3-5 pages** in length.

The proposed study should include both qualitative and quantitative methods, and address the match between the question(s) and methods. Begin this proposal outline with a revised version of the research literature review (based on instructor's comments/suggestions), then specify the usual methodological and ethical elements of a proposal. You should follow this format in writing your research proposal outline:

1. Research Literature Review (4-5 pages): This is your PBR assignment 2 with corrections that respond to instructor's feedback.
2. Operationalize Variables (1 paragraph):
 - Identify, define, and operationalize the variables
 - Clearly label them as independent and dependent variables (also control variables if applicable)
3. Describe Study Population and Sample (1-2 paragraphs):
 - Define the study population
 - Identify the sample and provide an estimated recruitment number
 - Explain sampling method (include where and how you would obtain a sample)
 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - State how the sample represents (or doesn't) the theoretical population.
4. Research Design and Methods (1-2 pages):
 - Describe the quantitative research design: Is it an experimental or quasi-experimental or non-experimental (observational/naturalistic study) design?
 - If conducting an intervention, how will participants be assigned to intervention groups? How long is the intervention and when are the follow-up assessments?
 - If using a longitudinal design, how will participants be followed in the course of the study?
 - Describe the qualitative component: What qualitative method(s) will you use? When will you collect the data? What sort of data are you looking for?
 - Explain how you will collect data
5. Feasibility & Limitations (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Feasibility: Discuss the agency, policy, or client restraints that may compromise the application of your research proposal to the real world setting.
 - Limitations: Identify any limitations of your research design and methods – could include:
 - Limits in sampling plan and study population
 - Threats to internal validity
 - Threats to external validity
6. Practice Implications & Ethics (1-2 paragraphs):

- Discuss the ethical issues that relate to your proposed research, paying particular attention to the human service setting.
- Discuss the potential implications of the study for practice and/or policy.

Peer review of practice-based research assignment # 2 (5%) – Due March 30, 2019

Students will review PBR assignment 2 submitted by their group peers. Each student will review one paper and give feedback to their group peer. Students may use the “track changes” and “new comment” functions of word to give feedback to their peers. In addition, they will respond to peers’ feedback by posing follow-up questions for discussion.

Exams (30%)

There will be two exams scheduled during module 6 and module 12, respectively. Each exam is assigned a maximum of 15 points. Exam 1 will cover all aspects of the course from module 1 through module 5. Exam 2 will cover all aspects of the course from module 6 through module 11. Students are given 2 hours each to complete Exam 1 and Exam 2.

GRADING POLICY

Points are given for all assignments. The following distribution will be used:

A+	97 – 100
A	94 – 96
A-	90 – 93
B+	87 – 89
B	84 – 86
B-	80 – 83
C+	77 – 79
C	74 – 76
C-	70 – 73
F	Below 70

PENN POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity, which presents standards regarding plagiarism, multiple submissions and other actions.

Students are expected to be familiar with the Code, which can be found at <https://provost.upenn.edu/policies/faculty-handbook/students/iv-b>

Course Calendar: Schedule of Activities and Assignments

<u>Module</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Activities / Assignments Due</u>
Pre-class	1/7	1/16	On-line orientation of the course 1. Introduction of instructor and TA 2. Review the course syllabus and instructions	Take a tour of the CANVAS course site Review course syllabus Complete online student survey
1	1/16	1/16	Introduction to the course & evidence-based / evidence-informed practice 1. Overview: syllabus & expectations 2. Research in the human services 3. Evidence-based / evidence-informed practice Formation of student discussion groups	In-person class: Caster Bldg., D-26; 6:00 - 8:00 pm Read: Monette et al., Chapter 1 NASW, 2017 Woodbury & Kuhnke, 2014 In-person lecture (Wong) Formation of discussion groups (a total of 6 groups with 4 members each group)
2	1/20	1/26	Problem formulation 1. Theories, concepts, and hypotheses 2. Selecting a research problem 3. Shaping and refining a research problem 4. Feasibility of a research project 5. Writing research questions and hypotheses 6. Formulating research problems in a human service agency setting	Read: Monette et al., Chapters 2 & 4 Gambrill & Gibbs, 2009 Review lecture (Wong) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture <i>Participate in discussion group: generating ideas for PBR assignment 1</i>
3	1/27	2/2	Ethical issues in social research 1. Informed consent 2. Protection of human subjects 3. Research in social and political context 4. Research case studies Systematic review 1. Systematic reviews/meta-analyses & how to find one 2. Differences between literature reviews & systematic reviews 3. Meta-synthesis	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 3 Corcoran & Secret, Chapter 4 Review lecture on systematic review by Jacqueline Corcoran (SP2) Take quiz based on Corcoran's lecture Assignment due: CITI online human research course certificate (2/2)

4	2/3	2/9	Process of measurement <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ways of measuring 2. Levels of measurement 3. Evaluating measures (reliability and validity) 4. Errors in measurement 	Read: Monette et al., Chapters 5 & 13 Review lecture (Wong) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture <i>Participate in discussion group on the article "Panel Suggests Using Inmates in Drug Trials"</i> Assignment due: PBR assignment 1 (non-credited, due 2/9)
5	2/10	2/16	Sampling <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purpose of sampling 2. Sampling terminology 3. Probability sampling 4. Non-probability sampling 	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 6 Review lecture (Wong) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture <i>Participate in discussion group on Exam 1 review</i>
6	2/17	2/23	Experimental research <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Logic of experimentation 2. Internal & external validity 3. Categories and elements of experimental designs 	Read: Monette et al., Chapters 10 & 11 Review lecture (Wong) Assignment due: Exam # 1 (2/23) covering module 1-5
7	2/24	3/2	True experimental and quasi-experimental designs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. True experimental designs 2. Pre-experimental designs 3. Quasi-experimental designs 4. Single-case designs 5. Inferring from research findings 6. Planning a study 	Read: Monette et al., Chapters 10 & 11 Eifert et al., 2009 Review lecture (Wong) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture for module 6 & 7 Review lecture on ACT (Ben-Avraham) <i>Participate in discussion group: case study on ACT based on Eifert et al.'s study</i>
	3/3	3/9	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)	

8	3/10	3/16	Non-experimental design and survey research 1. Correlational studies 2. Cross sectional and longitudinal studies 3. Interview & questionnaires 4. Formulating questions 5. Response rate	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 7 Review lecture (Wong) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture
9	3/17	3/23	Community-engaged research methods 1. Alternative frameworks in social science 2. Research partnership and community-based participatory research (CBPR) 3. Empowering community settings 4. Relevance of CBPR and empowerment for social work practice Special topic: Culture and Social Wellbeing in NYC: Concepts and Methods	Read: Cacari-Stone et al., 2014 Maton, 2008 Review lecture on culture and social wellbeing in NYC by Mark Stern (SP2) Take quiz based on Stern's lecture Review lecture (Wong) Assignment due: PBR assignment 2 (3/23)
10	3/24	3/30	Qualitative and mixed methods in social work 1. Characteristics of qualitative methods and epistemological differences from quantitative methods 2. Field research 3. Other qualitative methods 4. Mixed methods design In-person, joint-class lecture on March 25, 2019 (Monday) 6:30 – 8:00 pm: Mixed Methods in Social Work	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 9 Padgett, 2012, Chapters 3 & 6 Attend in-person, joint-class lecture on mixed methods in social work by Deborah Padgett (NYU)—March 25, 2019 (Monday) 6:30 – 8:00 pm in Stiteler Hall room B6 Review lecture (Wong) <i>Participate in discussion group: peer review of PBR assignment 2</i> Assignment due: PBR assignment 2 peer review (3/30)

11	3/31	4/6	Qualitative data analysis 1. Basic qualitative research principles 2. Goals of qualitative data analysis 3. Data reduction and analysis 4. Displaying and reporting data 5. Conclusion and verification Special topic: A survey of qualitative data collection tools	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 16 Curry & Abrams 2015 Review lecture entitled "Own Qualitative Tool Box Runneth Over" by Rosie Frasso (Thomas Jefferson University) Review lecture (Wong) <i>Participate in discussion group on a news article "A 'Bright Light,' Dimmed in the Shadows of Homelessness"</i> <i>Participate in discussion group on Exam 2 review</i>
12	4/7	4/13	Evaluation research 1. What is evaluation? 2. Formative and summative evaluation 3. Logic model	Read: Monette et al., Chapter 12 Millar et al., 2001 Review lecture (Renno) Assignment due: Exam 2 (4/13) covering module 6-11
13	4/14	4/20	Quantitative data analysis 1. Data preparation and presentation 2. Consideration in choosing statistics 3. Descriptive and inferential statistics	Read: Monette et al., Chapters 14 & 15 Review lecture (Mallonee) Take quiz based on Wong's lecture
14	4/21	4/27	Presentations on PBR assignment 3	<i>Participate in discussion group: review presentations and provide feedback</i> Assignment due: PBR assignment 3 (4/27)