



Course Syllabus: Social Work Research
College of Health Sciences and Human Services
Social Work Department
SOWK 3643-101
Fall 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Packiaraj Arumugham

Office: Department of Social Work, Centennial Hall, 450B

Office phone: 940-397-4659

E-Mail: packiaraj.arumugham@msutexas.edu

Office Hours:

Tuesdays: 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Wednesdays: 10.00 a.m. - Noon

Thursdays: 1:30-3:00 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social Science Research Methods is a study of empirically-based concepts and methods used in sociology, social work and criminal justice for social research; including community/societal needs, micro-level intervention and program effectiveness. The course focuses on the analytic approach to building knowledge and skills including: role of concepts and theory, hypothesis formulation, operationalization, research design, data collection, data processing, data analysis and report writing. Emphasis is given to both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to building knowledge. The course also prepares students to be good consumers of empirical literature, and to develop, use and communicate empirical knowledge across system levels.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

Knowledge Dimension:

1. Understand the relevance of research within social work practice (EPAS 4).

2. Demonstrate knowledge of the process of conducting research, types of research and issues of reliability, validity, and sampling (EPAS 4).

Values Dimension:

3. Identify ethical issues related to the design and conduct of research (EPAS 4).
4. Identify the importance of culturally competent research (EPAS 4).

Skills Dimension:

5. Synthesize all course content to design a research proposal, to collect, organize and interpret data, and present the results of the study at the MSU's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (UGRCA) Forum (EPAS 4).

Cognitive and Affective Dimension:

6. Apply knowledge in research to identify appropriate variables for measurement and research designs (EPAS 4).
7. In the research project, students will work collaboratively in groups (EPAS 4).

Alignment of CSWE Core Competency, Course Objectives, Practice Behaviors, and Assignments

Core Competency	Course Objective	Practice Behavior	Assignment
Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice	All the course objectives	Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs	Research Proposal and Research Project

Recommended Text:

Royse, D. (2011). Research Methods in Social Work (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

COURSE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course will be taught through the use of lectures, large and small group discussions, and audiovisual presentations. Students are expected to attend classes and to actively participate in discussions. The expectation is that students will have read the assigned readings to facilitate class dialogue and interaction.

Note: Please send your email via Outlook (instead of D2L). Except for the weekend, I will check my emails during all the weekdays. Please expect a reply within 24 hours. In case you need any clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me either via email or via office phone.

D2L

D2L will be used throughout the semester for communication between class sessions. The course material (Syllabus, Power points, and other relevant items) will be posted onto D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

AI-Generated Submissions:

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions (for example, ChatGPT) are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

Social Work Program Attendance Policy:

Students are allowed three excused absences as defined by MSU absence policy. For an absence to be excused the ***student must inform the instructor the reason for the absence** and provide documentation supporting the need for the class absence. ***A student who has missed five classes (including the three excused absences) will receive a lower letter grade. After six absences the student will be dropped from the class. If the sixth absence were to happen after the last day for “W”, the student will receive grade “F.”**

It is expected that students attend every class. If unable to attend class, please inform the instructor before the class starts (or before class time). If unable to attend class due to an emergency, please inform the instructor as soon as possible. Please note that ***for each “uninformed class absence” 5 points will be taken off from the final points.** Please note that you should inform the instructor directly via email or office phone. In case of an emergency, please inform the instructor as soon as possible. ***Coming late to class and leaving early from class without any prior notice will also have an adverse impact on attendance and participation grade.**

Class Participation:

It is expected that students will contribute to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment, by paying attention to lectures, to fellow students' contributions in the class and by not being disruptive in class. It is expected that students actively participate in class discussions and exercises. It is also expected that everyone who shares ideas/views is respectful of others' time and ideas/views. We could agree to disagree but we ought not to be disagreeable.

Class participation is expected not only at the time of class discussions but also during lectures by raising pertinent questions, by contributing relevant ideas and by sharing relevant examples. Students will be expected to read all the assigned materials prior to class and be prepared to engage in class discussions related to the class topics.

Until the day of the poster presentation at the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Forum (UGRCA), students will frequently be required to work in groups during class hours and, as needed, outside of class time on their research projects. **It is vitally important that every student actively participates in all research project-related work and activities. Failure to participate fully and consistently in the research project may adversely affect the student's grade.**

Laptop and Cell Phone regulation:

No photographing, recording, or text messaging is allowed without the permission of the instructor. Please turn off or set cell phones on vibrate. Please do not surf the internet or listen to music on personal devices while in class. ***Please note that using electronic devices during class time will have an adverse impact on attendance and participation grade.**

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the mission of Midwestern State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old papers when preparing for this paper, nor may they consult with students who have already written the paper. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students, and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers. We all share the obligation to maintain an environment which practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Student affairs for disciplinary action which could result in suspension or expulsion from Midwestern State University.

All students are expected to submit their own original work. The presentation of another's words or ideas as your own, without giving credit to the source is regarded as plagiarism. Academic

fraud, plagiarism, dishonesty, and cheating are serious acts of academic misconduct. If you are unclear about the proper use and citation of sources, or the details and guidelines for any assignment, you should discuss your concerns prior to the due date with the instructor.

Academic fraud and cheating include these and other misrepresentations:

- presentation of the ideas of others without credit to the source;
- use of direct quotations without quotation marks and without credit to source;
- paraphrasing without credit to the source;
- participation in group project which presents plagiarized material;
- failure to provide citations for material obtained through electronic research;
- downloading and submitting work from electronic data bases without citation;
- submitting material created/written by someone else as one's own;
- copying from someone else's exam, homework, or laboratory work;
- allowing someone else to copy or submit one's work as his/her own;
- accepting credit for a group project without doing one's share;
- submitting the same paper in more than one course;
- using notes or other materials during test without authorization;
- not following the guidelines specified by instructor for "take home" exams; and
- the fabrication of research data.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the [Tutoring & Academic Support Programs](#), located off the first floor of the Moffett Library. The MSU TASP Learning Center offers drop-in tutoring support for most general subject areas including but not limited to Writing, Math, Science, Business, and Foreign Languages. Students check in to work one-on-one with a tutor typically for an hour regarding specific concepts.

Research and Creative Activity Opportunities at MSU:

EURECA:

Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduates to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a system that supports faculty and students engaged in collaborative research and creative works. For more information contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at eureca@msutexas.edu or better yet, stop by the UGR office located in the atrium of the Clark Student Center, room 161. Information and resources are also available at [EURECA](#).

Note: Please check the EURECA webpage for further details.

Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR):

To support undergraduate research and creative activities, Midwestern State University holds an enhanced institutional membership with the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR). This institutional membership includes unlimited memberships for any interested faculty, staff, and students. Students may find information on benefits and resources at the CUR website.

The CUR Undergraduate Resources Webpage contains:

- Research Opportunities
- Presentation Opportunities
- Undergraduate Research Journals
- CUR-Sponsored Student Events
- The Registry of Undergraduate Researchers
- And more!

Note: National Council on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) conducts annual conferences. It is a **great opportunity for students to showcase their research projects** at the annual conference.

Posters on the Hill:

Posters on the Hill is a critical element in CUR's advocacy efforts. It is more important than ever that the voice of undergraduate researchers and their mentors are heard on Capitol Hill. This prestigious event celebrates the impressive work of the accepted students and supports the messages of the importance of undergraduate research at the federal level.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Reading quizzes and Final Exam:

There will be two reading quizzes (depending on time availability) and a final exam. The final exam will be given on the date scheduled by the university.

The quizzes and final exam will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions. Only material presented in class will be included on the quizzes and final exam, and a Scantron will be required for both.

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (50 Points):

In compliance with Midwestern State University's policy on human subjects' research, students must complete the free online CITI training in preparation for conducting research with human subjects. A certificate is awarded upon completion. Students must submit a copy of their certificate on the D2L course homepage. Please note that only PDF files will be accepted. Students are encouraged to keep a copy for their own records.

The course is available at: CITI Program.

You must create an account to use the CITI Program. On the CITI homepage, click "Register" in the upper right corner. Under "Select Your Organization Affiliation," type in and select "Midwestern State University," then follow the instructions to complete your account setup (username and password).

Please be sure to complete the "**Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research**" course.

Research Project (200 Points) (Meets EPAS 4):

The research project is the **major course assignment** and consists of the following components. The requirements of each component must be completed in full.

Research Topic/Problem Formulation:

As a group, choose a topic of interest (or identify a problem that needs to be addressed). Please choose a topic that is interdisciplinary in nature. The instructor's broad areas of research interest are listed below; students may select a topic from either area if interested:

- Religion and Spirituality
- Marriage and Family

Literature Review:

Conduct a literature review based on the chosen topic or identified problem. Each student, including the group leader, is responsible for reviewing at least three peer-reviewed journal articles on the chosen topic. This is only a minimum requirement — the more articles reviewed, the better. Articles should have been published within the last five years, and all sources must be cited and listed in APA format.

You may not always find a section explicitly labeled "Literature Review" in a journal article, but the introductory section typically references relevant scholarly sources. Read this section carefully, as it will help you understand how to write the literature review section of your research proposal.

Before submitting the final assignment, each student must write an individual summary of the chosen topic (at least one page, double-spaced) using scholarly sources and submit it to the group leader. The group leader will then compile all group members' summaries into a single group literature review (double-spaced, not exceeding three pages) and submit the final document as either a Word document or a PDF file.

In addition, every group member — including the group leader — must submit that same final group literature review (as a Word document or PDF file) to the D2L Dropbox. In other words, each student must upload an identical copy of the final group assignment.

Note: The literature review is a crucial component of the research project.

Research Question and Hypothesis (or Hypotheses):

Based on the literature review, formulate a research question and hypothesis (or hypotheses). The hypothesis (or hypotheses) should be narrow and specific, answerable through observable evidence, and relevant to social work practice.

Research Design:

Develop a research design appropriate to answering the research question and testing the hypothesis (or hypotheses). This includes specifying the following:

- Key variables
- Sampling
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Method(s) of recruitment
- Data collection method (e.g., survey)
- Potential ethical issues (if any)
- Instrument development (e.g., questionnaire)
- Data analysis

Presentation at the Undergraduate Research Forum:

Each group's participation and effort — in preparing documents for submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), collecting data, preparing presentation materials, and presenting on the scheduled day — will be considered in grading.

Students will collect primary data from study participants, code the data, and enter it into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. After analyzing the data, each group will discuss the significance of their findings, including implications for social work practice, address the study's limitations, and offer suggestions for future research. On the scheduled date of MSU's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum (UGRCAF) — **November 19, 2026** — each group will give either an oral or a poster presentation of their research.

Note: The grade for the research project (excluding CITI training) will be based on each student's participation throughout the research process. It is therefore essential that every group member actively participates and cooperates with the group and the group leader. If you find that someone in your group is not completing their expected work, please bring it to the instructor's attention as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor for help.

Group members should treat one another and the instructor with respect. Group leaders should guide their group collaboratively throughout the research process.

Research Proposal — 100 Points (Meets EPAS 4)

Each group will submit a research proposal using the same research topic as the research project. The components of the research proposal (problem and objectives, literature review, etc.) will be discussed in class, and all components covered in class must be included in the proposal. Further details will be provided in class.

Note: Many components of the research proposal will be similar to those of the research project.

Recording Classes

****Recording classes is generally prohibited without the professor's explicit permission.*** Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. Some faculty may not permit recordings of their classes. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

To support the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy related conditions, the University offers reasonable modifications based on the student's particular needs. Any student who is pregnant or parenting a child up to age 18 or has conditions related to pregnancy, may contact MSU's designated [Pregnancy and Parenting Liaison](#) to discuss support available through the University.

College Policies

Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination under State and Federal Law

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed

behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect such person(s) with resources and options in addressing the allegations made in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the office of Title IX. You may do so by contacting:

Laura Hetrick

Title IX Coordinator
Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse
940-397-4213
laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu

You may also file an online report 24/7 at
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MSUTexas&layout_id=6

Should you wish to visit with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, please visit <https://msutexas.edu/titleix/>

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "*Run. Hide. Fight.*" which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: "[Run. Hide. Fight.](#)"

Important Dates

Deadline for December graduates to file for graduation: September 21, 2026.

Deadline for May graduates to file for graduation: October 5, 2026.

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” November 23, 2026

Refer to: Drops, Withdrawals & Void

EVALUATION OF COURSE OUTCOMES:

The student’s achievement will be evaluated on the basis of written assignments, class exams, and class participation.

The final grade will be calculated based upon the points that a student has accumulated throughout the term. A student may earn points as follows:

Grade Item	Points
Class Attendance	20
Reading quizzes (2) Each worth 10 Points	20
CITI Training	50
Research Project	200
Research Proposal	100
Final Exam	30
Total	420

Late Assignments:

Late assignments shall have a negative effect on grade. Only electronic copy of the assignment will be accepted. Late assignments are assessed a penalty of 5 points per day. If no prior information is provided to the instructor about submitting the assignment late, no grade will be assigned. Do your assignments early to avoid computer, printer, or family emergencies. If anyone has difficulty with writing, please seek help from the University Writing Center.

Course Changes:

Although much thought, study, and research has gone into designing the course and learning opportunities, often the most significant learning comes in unexpected moments. The instructor cannot predict these times but only respond to them. Therefore, ***the instructor reserves the right to alter the course outline, assignments, or examination dates in order to incorporate these unexpected learning moments.***

GRADING SCALE

The total grade for the course is an accumulation of the points earned on each assignment. The following letter grades are used:

- A=90% of available points
- B=80-89% of available points
- C=70-79 % of available points
- D=60-69% of available points
- F=0-59% of available points

Social Work Program Grade Policy:

A course grade of below a C or an average of below 70% will be considered a failing grade. Students must repeat social work courses in which they receive a grade of D or F.

Note: This grade policy has been in effect since Fall 2020.

COURSE SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

Week	Topics	Assignments
Week 1 (August 25, Tuesday & August 27, Thursday, 2026)	Course Introduction Forming Research Groups Place of research & Evidence-based practice	N/A
Week 2 (September 1, Tuesday & September 3, Thursday)	Literature review	N/A
Week 3 (September 8, Tuesday & September 10, Thursday)	Literature review Cont.... Hypothesis Sampling	N/A
Week 4 (September 15, Tuesday & September 17, Thursday)	Data collection methods	N/A
Week 5 (September 22, Tuesday & September 24, Thursday)	Measurement Ethics in research and culturally competent research	N/A
Week 6 (September 29, Tuesday & October 1, Thursday)	Ethics in research and culturally competent research Cont.	N/A

Week	Topics	Assignments
Week 7 (October 6, Tuesday & October 8, Thursday)	Research designs	N/A
Week 8 (October 13, Tuesday & October 15, Thursday)	Research designs Cont.	N/A
Week 9 (October 20, Tuesday & October 22, Thursday)	Research process (quantitative & qualitative approaches)	N/A
Week 10 (October 27, Tuesday & October 29, Thursday)	Research process (quantitative & qualitative approaches) Cont.	N/A
Week 11 (November 3, Tuesday & November 5, Thursday)	Research process (quantitative & qualitative approaches) Cont.	N/A
Week 12 (November 10, Tuesday & November 12, Thursday)	Writing research proposals and research reports	N/A
Week 13 (November 17, Tuesday & November 19, Thursday)	Writing research proposals and research reports Cont.	UGRCA Forum Presentation (November 19, Thursday)
Week 14 (November 24, Tuesday)	Writing research proposals and research reports Cont.	
November 25-29, 2026	NO CLASSES- Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15 (December 1, Tuesday & December 3, Thursday)	Program Evaluation	Research Proposal due at 11:59 p.m. on December 5, Saturday (to be submitted in D2L DropBox)
Week 16 (December 8, Tuesday)	Final Exam (8:00-10:00 a.m.)	

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