



Course Syllabus: Social Work Research  
College of Health Sciences and Human Services  
Social Work Department  
SOWK 3643-101  
Fall 2021

Contact Information

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***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, the students should be able to:

***Knowledge Dimension:***

1. Understand the relevance of research within social work practice.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the process of conducting research, types of research and issues of reliability, validity, and sampling.

**Values Dimension:**

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

**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.

**Cognitive and Affective Dimension:**

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

**Relationships among Core Competencies, Course Objectives, and Assignments:**

<b>Core Competencies</b>	<b>Course Objectives</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	3, 4, and 7	Research Project
Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	All the course objectives	Research Project, Quizzes, and Exam

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 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 on 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:**

### ***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 the instructor should be informed 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 poster presentation at the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum (UGRCA), students will be frequently required to work in groups during class hours and also outside class time (as needed) for their research projects. **It is**

**vitaly important that everyone participates in all work related to research projects. Failure to do so will have an adverse impact on grade.**

Laptop and Cell Phone regulation:

No Photographing, recording, 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, listen to IPOD music while in class. **Please note that using electronic devices during class time will have an adverse impact on attendance and participation grade.**

Students with Disabilities: Note: Individuals requiring special accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act, please present the instructor with a special Accommodation Request Form from the Midwestern State University Counseling Center.

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 includes 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.

### ***Research and Creative Activity Opportunities at MSU***

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@mwsu.edu](mailto:eureca@mwsu.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 [www.mwsu.edu/eureca](http://www.mwsu.edu/eureca).

### ***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 [www.cur.org/resources/for\\_students](http://www.cur.org/resources/for_students) and may sign up at [members.cur.org/members\\_online/members/newmember.asp](http://members.cur.org/members_online/members/newmember.asp).

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.

### ***Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW)***

Like EURECA, UGROW provides opportunities for students to conduct research with faculty. However, the research occurs in the summer. For five weeks UGROW students experience the authenticity of scientific research as well as research and creative activities in art, music, theater education, business, health and social sciences, English, history, etc. in a highly interdisciplinary environment. Students work on projects of their choice and present their findings at the end of program and the MSU Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum. Faculty members will introduce their research ideas on the specified date (to be announced) at Comanche Suites, Clark Student Center. A break-out session with individual faculty members will follow. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at [eureca@mwsu.edu](mailto:eureca@mwsu.edu). More information and resources are available at [www.mwsu.edu/ugrow](http://www.mwsu.edu/ugrow).

### ***ScholarBridge***

Midwestern State University is excited to announce a new resource designed to address a commonly expressed student need—the creation of a centralized searchable database of faculty research interests and opportunities. We have entered into a partnership with ScholarBridge (<http://www.scholarbridge.com>), a website designed to help students participate in undergraduate research and creative activities. I strongly encourage you to join ScholarBridge at your earliest convenience.

### ***COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:***

**Reading quizzes and Final Exam:** There will be three reading quizzes (each worth 10 points) and a final exam (worth 30 points). The final exam will be given on the date scheduled by the university.

The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions and true or false statements. The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answers. ONLY what is presented in class will be included in the quizzes and final exam.

### ***Research Project:***

Research project is the “**major course assignment**” which consists of the following components. The requirements of each component must be completed.

***Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (50 Points):*** In compliance with Midwestern State University’s policy regarding human subjects’ research, students will need to complete the free online CITI training as preparation to conduct research with human subjects. Certificates are awarded for completion. Students will be required to

**submit a copy of the certificate to the instructor.** They are encouraged to keep a copy for themselves.

The **course is available at:** <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/>

You must set up an account to use the CITI program. On the CITI homepage, click on the “Register” box in the upper right corner. Under “Select Your Organization Affiliation,” type in and select “Midwestern State University.” Follow the instructions to continue with your account set-up (username and password).

Please make sure to complete the “Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Basic Course.”

### **Research Proposal (100 Points)**

Students who have been assigned to a group will prepare a research proposal. Each group will have a group leader as decided by the group. Students are required to cooperate with the group leader. The instructor will require groups to work on the elements of research proposal described below and submit them as needed for the preparation of Institutional Review Board (IRB) documents. The final grade for the research proposal will be assigned only after the proposal has been submitted (please check the due date mentioned in the course schedule).

Please note below elements of the research proposal:

#### **Research Question & Topic (10 Points):**

Each group will select a broad research question and a research topic based on their interest, literature review and availability of time to complete the research project (later, the group will formulate specific research question[s] and research title). Please make sure to choose a topic, which would be interdisciplinary in nature. The instructor’s broad areas of research interests are listed below and students (if interested) could select topics pertaining to any of these areas:

- Religion and Social Work
- Marriage and Family
- International social work
- Social work with communities.

#### **Literature Review (50 Points):**

**Each student** (including each group leader) will be responsible for reviewing **at least three peer-reviewed journal articles** on the chosen topic. Please note **this is only a minimum requirement**. The more articles you review, the better. The articles should have been published within the last 5 years. You may or may not find the heading, “Literature Review” in the journal articles but in the first section of a journal article, the

author(s) would have referenced various scholarly sources. Please make sure to read this section thoroughly so you will know how to prepare the literature review. Each student will write a summary (not less than a page, double-spaced) relating to the chosen topic referencing scholarly sources and submit the same to the group leader. The group leader will compile the group's summaries and submit the group's literature review assignment (a Word document, double-spaced, not exceeding three pages) to the instructor.

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

### ***Research Hypothesis/hypotheses (10 Points):***

Based on the review of literature, research hypothesis/hypotheses should be formulated. The research hypothesis/hypotheses should be narrow and specific, can be answered by observable evidence, and should also have relevance for social work practice.

### ***Research Design (30 Points):***

Each group will develop a quantitative, or qualitative, or mixed-methods research design to answer the research question(s) and/or hypothesis/hypotheses. This will involve specifying the following:

- Key variables
- Sampling
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Method(s) of recruitment
- Data collection method (e.g., Survey),
- Identifying potential ethical issues (if any)
- Creating the instrument (e.g., Questionnaire), and
- Data analysis

### ***Presentation at the Undergraduate Research Forum (200 Points)***

Please note that the groups' efforts in preparing the IRB documents, data collection, preparation of presentation materials and presentation on the scheduled day will all be considered for assigning grades.

Students will collect primary data from study participants, code the data and then enter the data in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). After data entry, they will analyze the collected data using SPSS. After analyzing the collected data, each group will discuss the importance of their research findings, including implications for social work practice. Limitations of the study will be addressed and suggestions for future research will be made. ***On the scheduled date of MSU's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum (UGRCA), each group will either do an oral***

**presentation or a poster presentation of their research.** Due to COVID-19, the UGRCA will be a hybrid event in Fall 2021. Hence, students have the option to either present their research in person or virtually. Further guidelines will be given in class.

**Note:** The grade for the research project (except for the CITI training) will be based on students' participation throughout the research process. Therefore, it is vitally important that everyone in the group takes part in the process actively and cooperates with the group and the group leader. If at any point, you find anyone in your group not doing the expected work, please bring it to the instructor's notice ASAP. Please also do not hesitate to ask for help from the instructor.

Take advantage of MSU Writing Center:

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the MSU Writing Center, located off the 2nd floor atrium of Prothro-Yeager! Tutoring is available Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; you can also find a tutor at the satellite location in Moffett Library Honors Lounge, Sunday and Thursday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading.

**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:

Class Attendance	20 Points
Reading quizzes (3) – Each worth 10 Points	30 Points
CITI Training	50 Points
Research Proposal	100 Points
Data Collection, Analysis & Presentation	200 Points
Final Exam	30 Points
Total	430 Points

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. 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 is in effect since the Fall of 2020.

### ***COURSE SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)***

<b>Week</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Week 1 (August 24, Tuesday & August 26, Thursday, 2021)	Course Introduction Forming Research Groups  Place of research & Evidence-based practice	N/A
Week 2 (September 3, Tuesday & September 5, Thursday)	Literature review	N/A
Week 3 (August 31, Tuesday & September 2, Thursday)	Literature review contd... & Hypothesis, Sampling	Reading Quiz 1 on September 14, Tuesday
Week 4 (September 7, Tuesday & September 9, Thursday)	Data collection methods	N/A
Week 5 (September 14, Tuesday & September 16, Thursday)	Measurement  Ethics in research and culturally competent research	N/A
Week 6 (September 21, Tuesday & September 23, Thursday)	Ethics in research and culturally competent research contd...	Reading Quiz 2 on October 7, Thursday
Week 7 (September 28, Tuesday & September 30, Thursday)	Research designs	N/A
Week 8 (October 5, Tuesday & October 7, Thursday)	Research designs contd...	N/A
Week 9 (October 12, Tuesday & October 14, Thursday)	Research process (quantitative approach)	Reading Quiz 3 on November 4, Thursday
Week 10 (October 19, Tuesday & October 21, Thursday)	Research process (qualitative approach)	N/A
Week 11 (October 26, Tuesday & October 28, Thursday)	Research process (qualitative approach) contd...	N/A
Week 12 (November 2, Tuesday & November 4, Thursday)	Writing research proposals and research reports	N/A

Week 13 (November 9, Tuesday & November 11, Thursday)	Writing research proposals and research reports contd...	N/A
Week 14 (November 16, Tuesday & November 18, Thursday)	Program Evaluation	November: UGRCA Forum Presentation
Week 15 (November 23, Tuesday)	Program Evaluation contd...	
November 24-28, 2021	NO CLASSES- Thanksgiving Break	N/A
Week 16 (November 30, Tuesday & December 2, Thursday)	Program Evaluation contd...	N/A
Week 17 (December 7, Tuesday)	Final Exam (8.00-10.00 a.m.)	N/A

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