I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

SWK 520 - The Social Work Research Process focuses on the research process in social work. The purpose of this course is to provide students with the knowledge, values, skills and cognitive and affective processes, to identify and describe the steps in the research process. Students will develop a holistic view of competence and will be able to demonstrate competence of knowledge, values, skills and cognitive and affective processes specific to research. With the relevant component behaviors students will be able to plan and prepare an advanced research project. Knowledge, values and skills related to research includes research methods and designs, research proposal writing, development of conceptual frameworks, data collection and data analysis. Students will be able to apply critical thinking, identify affective reactions and exercise judgement related to practice-informed research and research-informed practice. The course prepares students for the implementation and completion of a research plan. The course builds on generalist practice research (SWK 500). SWK 520 provides a basic framework for the implementation of the research proposal in SWK 530.

This course will enable the student plan inter-professional research and develop evidence-based strategies for systems of all sizes on an advanced level. By mastering the competencies and specific behaviors, students will be able to demonstrate leadership to enhance evidence-based practice.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
II. CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The MSW program of SFASU features the generalist practice and a single specialization: Advanced Generalist Practice in a Rural Context. Both are defined below.

It is important to note here that the BSW program and the MSW program have developed a shared definition of generalist practice, given below.

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice.

Briefly, generalist social work practice:
- Is multi-level to include individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
- Is multi-theory, allowing for the free selection of theories as appropriate.
- Utilizes problem identification and solving focus that follows a problem-solving framework.
- Addresses the complexity of individual, family, group, organizational and community system interactions.
- Requires and integration of awareness, competence, and professional response to issues of values, ethics, diversity, culture, social justice and populations-at-risk.

Advanced generalist practice builds on the Generalist Practice, incorporating the elements listed above, but characterized by a greater depth, breadth, and autonomy as demonstrated through specialized knowledge across problem areas, populations-at-risk and practice settings, with a greater selection of diverse interactions across practice levels.

Briefly, advanced generalist practice requires:
- The ability to engage and differentially assess complex problems with systems of all sizes, with a variety of advanced assessment skills.
- Specialized evidence-based interventions with systems of all sizes.
- Differential evaluation techniques with systems of all sizes.
- Strategies to advocate for clients and constituencies influenced by rural lifestyles.
- Readiness for leadership in a variety of areas including program development, coordination and administration; clinical and organizational supervision; policy creation, reform and implementation; leadership in research development and utilization, particularly in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary practice settings; professional development.

The specialized practice for the MSW program is advanced generalist practice for rural contexts. Theories that describe and predict rural ecological systems and rural strengths, including the incredibly rich interactions, simple and complex, formal and informal, wholesome and debilitating are emphasized. On this basis, the curriculum of the MSW Program emphasizes the ecological systems approach, the strengths perspective, and the social capital and social exchange theories.

Rural context refers to social work practice with people influenced by rural lifestyles and systems of all sizes within and outside of rural communities. There is no single accepted definition of rural. In fact, just as generalist practice in social work draws on multiple theories, generalist practice in rural contexts recognizes the many definitions currently in use and their advantages and disadvantages for research, practice, and advocacy. The School of Social Work at SFA utilizes several of these definitions within the United States and globally including:

- The United States Census Bureau (urbanized areas, urban clusters, and rural populations);
- Office of Management and Budget (metropolitan, micropolitan, and non-core), Economic Research Service (rural urban continuum codes); and the United Nations that defines urban and rural according to the census definition for each nation, but suggests a definition of rural areas as having a population of less than 2,000 for international comparisons.

III. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (CSWE CORE COMPETENCIES)

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4. Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

IV. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (CSWE BEHAVIORS)

1. Students will apply ethical decision-making and critical thinking to analyze and implement multiple codes of ethics with the purpose to enhance advanced generalist practice with rural people and communities. (Competency 1)

2. Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize and manage personal and professional values in order to engage in advanced rural practice with multiple systems. (Competency 1)

3. Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and apply social constructions of rurality within and across diverse groups (e.g. gender, ethnicity/race, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) and across multiple system levels. (Competency 2)

4. Students will demonstrate the ability to supervise the integration of awareness, self-regulation, sensitivity and professional response to issues of values, ethics, diversity, social justice and populations at risk. (Competency 2)

5. Students will demonstrate leadership skills to promote social, economic and environmental justice to systems of all sizes within and outside of rural communities. (Competency 3)

6. Students will provide leadership in specialized practices related to oppression and human rights violations at multiple levels advancing social, economic and environmental justice in rural environments. (Competency 3)

7. Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, evaluate, and implement multidisciplinary research and practice strategies with rural systems and social networks. (Competency 4)

8. Students will demonstrate leadership skills to design, develop and implement research and technological advances to enhance social work practice in a rural context. (Competency 4)

9. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop, prepare, implement, analyze and evaluate social welfare and economic policies to improve the well-being of rural populations and communities. (Competency 5)

10. Students will demonstrate leadership skills specific to advocacy with the purpose to advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice to deliver services to multiple systems in rural areas. (Competency 5)
11. Students will demonstrate leadership skills to engage multiple systems (individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations) and constituencies in rural environments. (Competency 6)

12. Students will demonstrate their ability to supervise the integration of knowledge, skills and values specific to human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment and appropriate theoretical frameworks. (Competency 6)

13. Students will select, implement and evaluate appropriate assessment instruments to assess diverse client systems on multiple levels in a rural context. (Competency 7)

14. Students will provide leadership to adapt, modify, develop, and implement differential assessment strategies, tools and approaches with diverse client systems and constituencies on multiple levels in a rural context. (Competency 7)

15. Students will design, identify, analyze, and implement advanced intervention strategies based on appropriate theories, models, and research across multiple system levels in a rural context. (Competency 8)

16. Students will demonstrate the ability to manage, supervise, monitor, coordinate and improve human service networks and service agencies in delivering services to rural clients. (Competency 8)

17. Students will apply leadership skills to supervise the design and implementation of advanced intervention strategies. (Competency 8)

18. Students will apply leadership skills to enhance interventions through interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational strategies. (Competency 8)

19. Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, develop, apply and monitor differential evaluation strategies in advanced social work interventions with systems of all sizes in rural communities. (Competency 9)

20. Students will develop leadership in the communication and dissemination of evaluation results to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. (Competency 9)

V. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The course will be taught as a face to face or a hybrid course. It will incorporate the following instructional strategies: lecture, extensive class discussion, group exercises, online activities, assigned readings, and individual projects. You are encouraged to actively
participate in activities, ask questions, and contribute comments for discussion. You are also encouraged to offer input regarding instructional strategies and assignments. Most importantly, you are expected to be an active learner and to ask for clarification when you have questions. To be successful in the class, it is important that you attend regularly, sign in to D2L, read the assigned material, and come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. You will be expected to not only know the material presented, but to be able to apply it in experiential activities. Lectures will not duplicate the reading material except to clarify or to expand upon it and to review material covered in prerequisite courses. The goal of this approach is to develop a safe learning environment that addresses a variety of learning styles, promotes critical thinking, and fosters creativity.

VI. COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS (per SFA Office of Instructional Technology)

This course will utilize D2L to support the delivery of course content. You will need computer skills for example to use a web browser, develop a PowerPoint presentation and use Excel. You must have access to a computer that meets the university’s minimum computer system requirements (for specific details go to SFA Online). Computers are available to you through a number of labs across campus, School of Social Work student lounge and Ralph W. Steen Library.

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Course overview
Professional social work research, inter-professional research and practice strategies
The nature and value of social work research
Social work research concepts
Research as a priority in social work
Ethics, critical thinking and decision-making in social work research
The Grand Challenges and social work research
The purpose and goals of research in social work
Knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes
Evidence-based practice, practice-informed research and research-informed practice
Social, economic and environmental justice
Using research to advocate for change
Culturally competent research (Diversity and difference in practice)
Conducting local, state, national and international social work research
Human rights and research
IRB procedures (Protection of human rights)

Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
Begun et al (2010)
Week 2 Conceptualization: The literature review
Intellectual tools as the basic elements for research
The place of literature reviews in research
Literature reviews
Literature controls
The difference between a literature review and a literature control
Types of literature reviews
Identifying concepts for the literature review

Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 8, 9 and 10
Archibald and Estreet (2017)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 3 Intellectual tools
Understanding specific concepts related to social work research
Deductive and inductive reasoning
Synthesis of induction and deduction
Setting social work parameters to research
Elements of research – critical thinking, scientific writing, argumentation
The parameters of social work – in essence what constitutes social work?

Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 7.
Belanger (2012) (i) and (ii)
Doughty and Oliphant (2009)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 4 Conceptualization: Writing the Literature Review
Analytical thinking – formulating arguments, analysis of literature, writing in a scientific manner
Using current research to inform the thinking process in research
Linking scientific thinking with writing
Conceptualization – identifying concepts, integrating different references
Seeking evidence
The importance of critical thinking
The formulation of a conceptual framework (how to formulate it, what to use, integrating theory, integrating scientific evidence

Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 8, 9 and 10
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.
Week 5  The research process
   The development of a research plan
   The specific phases of the research process
   The difference between qualitative and quantitative processes
   Outline of the research proposal

   Readings:
   Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 8 and 9
   Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 6  Research methodologies and designs
   Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies and designs
   Selection of appropriate designs
   Participatory action research
   Community needs assessments
   Appreciative inquiries
   Program evaluation strategies
   Intervention research

   Readings:
   Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 11,12,13,14, 18, 19 and 20
   Johnston-Goodstar (2013)
   Fifolt and Lander (2013)
   Hung (2017)
   Kevany and MacMichael (2014)
   Oliphant and Avant (2018)
   Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 7  Conceptualization: Conceptual Framework, Problem statement (s),
   Research question (s) and Hypotheses Development
   The importance of a well-formulated problem statement, research question,
   rationale, purpose, and objectives
   Link between the literature review and research questions, purpose and objectives
   The link between methodology and research questions
   Defining the research problem/problem statement
   Using practice, research and literature to develop a problem statement
   Developing research questions
   Using consumer application and practice experience

   Readings:
   Rubbin and Babbie Chapter
   Mills and Mills (2014)
   Oliphant (2013)
   Wilder (2017)
   Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.
Week 8 EXAM

Week 9 Conceptualization: Rationale, Aim, Purpose and Objectives
Understanding the link between research question(s), aim, purposes and objectives and anticipated outcomes
Describing the rationale for a study
Formulating the aim, purpose and objectives
Applying criteria for consistency purpose, data collection and analysis, and research outcomes
The link between research question, purposes, objectives, and anticipated outcomes

Readings:
Rubin and Babbie Chapter 7
Oliphant (2013)
Archibald and Estreet (2017)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 10 Data-collection: preparation, development of the data collection instrument, protocol development, IRB process
Process of data collection – qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodology
Methods of data collection
Trustworthiness, reliability and validity
Development of a data collection instrument
Procedures in collecting data (including Institutional Review Board and agency procedures)
Development and implementation of a protocol
Technology and data collection

Readings:
Rubin and Babbie Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 19
Barsky (2017)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 11 Data-collection – implementing data collection strategies
Planning and preparing tasks
Implementing data collection strategies
Addressing a target population
Sampling target population
Role of the researcher in data collection
Preserving data
Challenges in data collection

Readings:
Rubin and Babbie Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 19
Week 12 Data analysis: Qualitative methodology
Capturing and preserving data
Understanding and refining raw data
Preparing data for analysis
Qualitative analysis of data including programs such as Atlas and Nudist
Ensuring trustworthiness in the qualitative process and results
Formulating findings, results and themes (qualitative)
Formulating conclusions and recommendations
Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapters 20, 21 and 22
Carbajal (2017)
Copeland and Oliphant (2014)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 13 Data analysis: Using quantitative and qualitative methodology
Quantitative analysis of data
Programs such as SPSS and Excel
Understand different analysis techniques
Ensuring validity and reliability
Formulating findings and results (quantitative)
Formulating conclusions and recommendations
Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapters 20, 21 and 22
Priest et al (2013)
Additional material as handed out or provided on D2L.

Week 14 Formulating conclusions and recommendations
Conclusions – methodological, conceptual, research and practice
Recommendations – research, practice, policy and education
Using evidence to write conclusions and recommendations
Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 2
Villar-Loubet (2011)
Additional material as handed out.

Week 15 Dissemination of results
Writing the research reports
Presenting results
Posters/papers at professional meetings
Proposal finalization in preparation of SWK 530
Readings:
Rubbin and Babbie Chapter 23
Week 16 Final Exam

VIII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Attendance and Participation: In order for the class to discuss the readings, it is essential for you to read assigned material before coming to class, to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussion. You are responsible for all material covered in class and assigned in the syllabus, whether or not you have attended class.

Cell Phones/Pagers/Electronic Devices: Because such devices are disruptive to the classroom environment, I ask that you refrain from using them during class. I also ask that you either place such devices on silent mode or turn them off during class. Repeated interruptions may result in a deduction of points from the final average.

B. Readings: The course outline provides a list of required readings for each week (you will receive a detailed schedule the first full week of class that will outline the readings to be covered each class). Since lectures and class discussions are designed to answer questions about the material and expand upon the basic concepts, you are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class. Furthermore, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the information, as evidenced by active participation in class discussion. For example, you should present well formulated questions and comments that demonstrate prior preparation.

C. Exams: There will be one midterm and one final exam. Students are required to take the exam at the scheduled time. Makeup exams will be scheduled according to university policy with a university-approved excuse.

D. Quizzes/Exercises: There will be unannounced class exercises and/or quizzes. Students are required to participate in the exercises at the scheduled time. Makeup exercises will be scheduled according to university policy with a university-approved excuse.

E. Assignments/Presentations: There are two assignments for this class. The assignment should be submitted on D2L Dropbox. For all late assignments, one letter grade will be deducted after the beginning of class when the assignment is due, with an additional letter grade deduction for each day for which the assignment is late.
GRADING:

Class Participation, quizzes, class exercises 100
Midterm Exam 100
Assignment 1 100
Assignment 2 100
Final Exam 100

Total 500

GRADING SCALE:

- 450-500 A
- 400-449 B
- 350-399 C
- 300-349 D*
- Below 300 F* *Not applicable as credit toward graduate degree

IX. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism, as well as the appeal process. Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:
- using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam;
- falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment;
- helping or attempting to help other student(s) in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
- submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
- submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source;
- Incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty Penalties may include, but are not limited to, reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, resubmission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university. Procedure for Addressing Student Academic
Dishonesty a faculty member who has evidence and/or suspects that academic dishonesty has occurred will gather all pertinent information and initiate the following procedure:

1. The faculty member will discuss all evidence of cheating or plagiarism directly with the student(s) involved.
2. After consideration of the explanation provided by the student(s), the faculty member will determine whether academic dishonesty has occurred. The faculty member may consult with the academic unit head and/or dean in making a decision.
3. After a determination of academic dishonesty, the faculty member will inform the academic unit head and submit a Report of Academic Dishonesty with supporting documentation to the office of the dean of the student’s major. This report will become part of the student's record and will remain on file with the dean's office for at least four years even if the student withdraws prior to receiving a grade.
4. For a serious first offense or subsequent offenses, the dean of the student’s major will determine a course of action, which may include dismissal from the university. The dean may refer the case to the college council for review and recommendations before making this determination.

A student's record of academic dishonesty will not be available to faculty members. The purpose of the record is for the dean to track a pattern of academic dishonesty during a student's academic career at Stephen F. Austin State University. Student Appeals A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic dishonesty should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals by Students (6.3). [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf)

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (SFA Policy 5.5)**
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. Please read the complete policy on grades: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/5.5_course-grades.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/5.5_course-grades.pdf)

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

The MSW Student Handbook and Academic and MSW Professional Integrity Code outline acceptable student behavior. Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct of Conduct (SFA Policy 10.4). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, visits to agencies, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion.
over what behavior is appropriate or inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed. Please see the following link for the complete policy: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct_10.4.pdf

X. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf
Assignment 1: Literature Review
September 17, 2018

The assignment must be submitted online through D2L drop box by 11:59 pm. You have to provide and in-depth and comprehensive literature review related to your topic of research study. Your instructor will provide several topics, which can researched in SWK 530. You can also select a topic of your own if you prefer. This is a professional paper; it should be at least 15 pages in length (not including the cover page or references), typewritten, one and a half spacing and in APA style of writing. You need to at least use 10 articles as part of your literature review. Please address the following issues in your literature review:

1) What is the research problem and how does it related to practice, policy, education or research?

2) Conceptualization of the research topic including literature, census information if applicable, policy and previous research studies in your literature review and theoretical framework.

3) Based on the conceptualization – what are the major concepts, which set the parameters for the research? A concept is a definition of the specific issue you will address in your research.

4) Your literature review must end with the problem formulation, research questions and hypotheses (in the case of quantitative research) or open questions (qualitative research). You will use the research questions to guide the development of the research purpose and objectives for assignment 2. Ultimately your research question will answer be answered through your research.

5) Provide a synthesis of the literature review.
Assignment 2: Research proposal and IRB application  
October 15, 2018

The assignment must be submitted online through D2L drop box by 11:59 pm on the due date. For this assignment you have to follow the proposal guideline handed out in class to write your research proposal. It will also be available on D2L. The opening paragraph of the introduction is a brief but clear statement of the problem and its importance to rural social work. This is followed by a summary of a review of the literature, purpose of the study, research objectives, conceptualization, methods of data collection and data analysis. You must also include a list of at least 10 references from professional journals and books. You must follow the outline discussed during the class presentation. The references should be specific to your topic of research and not older than 5 years.

The completed IRB with all the supporting documents should be included – if applicable. Make sure you have original letters of support as well as the data collection instruments, permission if applicable, consent or ascent letters attached. Your IRB must be signed and dated. Your IRB will be forwarded for approval. The complete assignment should be scanned in and submitted on D2L. Your original letters from agencies will be included in the IRB application for university IRB approval.

Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm and final exam will test your ability to apply the knowledge and competencies acquired to a plan and conduct a research project. The exam will focus on (1) critical analysis (2) integration of theory and practice and (3) scientific reasoning.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES


Institute of Texas A&M University.
The full report and an FAQ about the study findings can be downloaded at
http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles.


Wilder, Ann Reed (2017). Book Chapter: *A sociological adaptation of the grandmother hypothesis or; Go ask your grandmother!* In *After the Happily Ever After: Empowering Women and Mothers in Relationships*. Ontario, Canada: New Demeter Press.