I. COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce student to the language of science and social work research. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between theory and research, conceptualization and problem formulation, operationalization and measurement, sampling strategies, and types of research design.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a working command of the language of science.
2. To know and understand the central concepts of science, knowledge and theory building, and the scientific process.
3. To know and understand the foundations of measurement and the concepts of reliability and validity.
4. To know and understand the logic of research design and the several types of research approaches.
5. To develop coherent research questions developed from the context of a thorough review of a body of research literature.
6. To be able to write bivariate hypotheses and multivariate hypotheses developed out of research questions.
7. Be capable of critically evaluating existing standardized research instrument.
8. To develop a working knowledge of instrument development.
9. Be able to critically evaluate a published research article utilizing threats to internal and external validity as criteria.
III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Texts


OR


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media

Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/

The Qualitative Report – An online journal dedicated to qualitative research since 1990 http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/qualres.html


D. Course Assignments

1. Hypothesis Writing Assignment
   a. Complete the hypothesis writing assignment, which will be handed out in class;
   b. E-mail completed assignment to Instructor by 3 PM Day of Class 3.

2. Measurement Assignment
   a. Students are to select a standardized measure which has been used in social work research;
   b. Find two articles that report using the measure empirical research;
   c. Critique the measure in terms of reliability and validity;
d. Review the two articles on how the measure was used: and 
e. Write a short 3-4 page paper on the critique and review in APA Style 
f. Email to instructor by 3 PM Day of Class 4.

3. Evaluating a Survey
a. Students will be given a non-standardized survey which they will 
evaluate using one of the three methods presented in class. 
b. Write up the evaluation with a rationale as to why you selected the 
method you selected and your suggested changes. 
c. Be prepared to discuss your evaluation in Class 6 and submit via email 
by 3 PM.

4. Research Design Assignment
a. Students will be given a published article, which utilizes a quasi-
experimental design or experimental design to critique in terms of 
internal and external validity issues. 
b. Be prepared to participate in an in-depth discussion during Class 13.

5. Problem Formulation with Literature Review
a. Students are to select an issue of relevance to social work and conduct a 
thorough review of the empirical and theoretical literature in order to 
develop a literature based problem formulation paper. 
b. Hand in topic and outline Class 5. 
c. The paper will be 18 - 20 pages in APA style. 
d. Present a short summary of your topic in Class 14.

6. Mid-Term Take Home Examination

7. Final Take Home Examination

E. Grading Policy and Weights of Assignments
Grades will be based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the Graduate 
Announcements. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted 
late. No credit will be given for assignments submitted after they have been 
reviewed in class. The following provides weights for the various course 
assignments:

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Assignment 2</td>
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<td>Assignment 3</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
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<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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Grading System

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>F</td>
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F. Preparation, Attendance & Participation
Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion/activities. Different students will make different kinds of contributions. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions while others will be more comfortable making planned statements about key ideas from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued.

G. Course and Instructor Evaluation
The NCSSS doctoral program requires evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, an evaluation form will be distributed in class. Results will not be given to the instructor until grades are submitted. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (http://ncsss.cua.edu/courses/index.cfm), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

NCSSS is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members - including students, faculty, administrators, and staff – strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life experiences will arise. It is how we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

A. Scholastic Expectations
All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.
B. Behavioral Requirements:
Students are expected to maintain accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity in the classroom. Students should:
- Attend all classes and contribute constructively to the classroom culture
- Recognize and avoid behavior that jeopardizes the learning/teaching environment of other students or the instructor
- Demonstrate competence in planning academic activities and in following through on those plans
- Reasonably respond to and respect others’ reactions to one’s comments or actions in the classroom
- Use an appropriate level of class time and instructor’s time and attention in and out of class
- Behave in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of the social work profession.

C. Academic Honesty
Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy (http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm) and appropriate Program Handbooks.

D. Confidentiality
Each student is expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement that is signed at the beginning of every semester. This agreement covers “practice materials” in classes, supervisory sessions, case conferences, seminars, and other educational settings within the NCSSS BSW or MSW programs are for professional learning purposes only and are subject to strict professional standards of confidentiality. These same standards of confidentiality also extend to various forms of written communication and peer consultation.

Adherence to these standards means all students refrain from communicating beyond the classroom setting about practice material that is presented in class. I will also refrain from using social media outlets (blogs, twitter, Facebook, etc.) or email to discuss practice settings, program responsibilities and projects with individuals who are not in teaching or supervision roles directly related to the situation.

E. Accommodations
Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, you much present that documentation to your instructors and arrange a meeting with as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
F. Use of Electronic Devices
Please turn off all cell phones or other devices that would disrupt the learning environment of the classroom and put them away and removed from the classroom environment.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1  
Review of SSS 945 Content  
   Ethics and Research  
   Theory and Research  
   Problem Formulation  
   Philosophical Issues in Research  
   Literature Review  
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 1 sections 1-1a – h; 1-2a – c; 1-3a; Chapter 6: 6-1a,b,c

Class 2  
Overview of the Research Process  
   Example of a Research Project from Start to Finish  
   Writing Research Questions and Hypotheses  
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 1 sections 1-4a  
White – Chapters 1 - 3

Class 3  
Variables and Measurement  
   Conceptualization  
   Operationalization  
   Measurement Error  
   Reliability  
   Validity  
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 1 sections 1-2d; Chapter 3: 3-1a-c, 3-2a-e; 3-3a; Chapter 6: 6-2a-c  
White – Chapters 4 - 5  

Class 4  
Measurement  
   Qualitative Measures  
   Evaluating Instruments  
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 2; Chapter 6: 6-1d

Class 5-6  
Constructing Measurement Instruments  
Dillman. Chapter 3

Class 7-8  
Sampling  
   Sampling Terminology  
   Sampling  
   Randomness vs. Randomization  
   Factors affecting choice of sampling design  
   Factors determining sampling size  
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 4: 4-1a-f; 4-2a-d; 4-3a-c; Chapter 5; Chapter 6: 6-
Class 9
Research Design Overview
- Casual Inference and Research Design
- Types of Research Designs
- Unobtrusive Research Methods
- Threats to Internal and External Validity
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 7: 7-1a-d; 7-2; 7-3

Class 10 - 11
Research Design II
- Pre-Experimental Designs for Research
- Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research
- Experimental Designs for Research
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 9: 9-1a-d; 9-6a-b; Chapter 10: 10-1a-b; 10-3a-d; Chapter 11: 11-1a-e; 11-2; 11-3a-g

Class 12-13
**Research Design Discussion**
Research Design IV
- Qualitative Research Methods
Trochim & Donnelly Chapter 6; Chapter 8

Class 14
**Review**
Problem Formulation Paper and Presentation Due