SSS 950
Research Foundations: Introduction
Spring 2014
Instructor: Karlynn BrintzenhofeSzoc, Ph.D., MSW

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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/quals.html

NIH IRB Training online course

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 6 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.
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 7 and submit via email
by 6 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 12.

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 draft outline Class 5.
   c. The paper will be around 25 pages 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 69</td>
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Revised 1/15/2013
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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| 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 |
| 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  
                behavior scale: Initial reliability and validity. Research on Social Work  
                Practice, 19(1), 83-92. |
| 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: 6-2a-c |
| Class 9 | Research Design Overview |

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1/15/2013
Class 14

Review

Problem Formulation Paper and Presentation Due