

SOCIAL WORK 8990
Master's Thesis
(6 Credit Hours)

1.0 Course Description Information

1.1 Catalog Description:

The Master's thesis provides students the opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in research methods under competent direction. With the guidance of the thesis coordinator and a supervisory committee, the student prepares a research proposal, carries out the proposed study, and writes a detailed report of the purpose, design, results, and implications of the findings.

1.2 Prerequisites of the course: SOWK 8190 and permission of the School.

1.3 Overview of content and purpose of the course:

The Master's thesis provides students the opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in research methods under competent direction. With the guidance of the thesis coordinator and a supervisory committee, the student prepares a research proposal, carries out the proposed study, and writes a detailed report of the purpose, design, results, and implications of the findings.

1.4 For whom the course is intended:

This course is open to graduate students in the Master of Social Work program. It meets the requirement for the advanced research course. **Students in the dual degree MPA/MSW program may take this course; however, it will be an extra course, in addition to the required advanced research course in SOWK 8940 - Program Evaluation.**

1.5 Unusual circumstances of the course:

Students will receive permission to register only after meeting with the Social Work Coordinator of Thesis and after formally setting up the thesis supervisory committee of University of Nebraska Graduate Faculty members who agree to serve. One faculty person must be from outside the School of Social Work. The student must register for 6 credits of Thesis, but these need not be taken in one semester. Until the thesis is fully completed, the grade of IP, in progress, will be assigned. A detailed guide for thesis requirements is available from the Office of Graduate Studies or at www.unomaha.edu/graduate/thesis_guide.php

2.0 Course Justification Information

2.1 Anticipated audience/demand: This course is an advanced research elective for MSW students.

2.2 Indicate how often this course will be offered and the anticipated enrollment: The course is offered each semester. Enrollment depends upon demand.

2.3 If it is a significant change to an existing course, please explain why it is needed: This course syllabus links MSW Program Objectives to course objectives and assignments.

3.0 Objective Information

3.1 List of performance objectives stated in learning outcomes:

The MSW Program Objectives are:

MSW Program Objective #1: To apply critical thinking skills within the historical and contemporary contexts of professional social work practice.

MSW Program Objective #2: Apply and analyze social work values, ethical principles and legal mandates in professional social work practice.

MSW Program Objective #3: Demonstrate cultural competency in professional social work practice.

- MSW Program Objective #4:** Identify, serve, and advocate for vulnerable client systems and populations at risk.
- MSW Program Objective #5:** Work effectively in multidisciplinary teams and settings.
- MSW Program Objective #6:** Apply bio-psycho-social-spiritual-cultural factors to assess human behavior in the social and environmental context.
- MSW Program Objective #7:** Identify and use formal diagnostic classification systems.
- MSW Program Objective #8:** Identify, select and apply empirically supported methods for clinical and integrated social work practice.
- MSW Program Objective #9:** Identify and conduct multidimensional assessments with client systems.
- MSW Program Objective #10:** Communicate effectively in oral and written forms in professional social work practice.
- MSW Program Objective #11:** Use effective supervisory, consultative and administrative skills in professional social work practice.
- MSW Program Objective #12:** Function effectively within agency and community structures to deliver professional social work services.
- MSW Program Objective #13:** Apply research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, services, policies and programs.
- MSW Program Objective #14:** Develop, implement, and analyze policies, practices, and administrative structures that promote socially just institutions and communities.

3.1.1 The overall MSW Program Objectives that are most relevant to the objectives of this course are:

1. To apply critical thinking skills within the historical and contemporary contexts of professional social work practice.
2. Apply and analyze social work values, ethical principles and legal mandates in professional social work practice.
8. Identify, select and apply empirically supported methods for clinical and integrated social work practice.
13. Apply research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, services, policies and programs.

Depending on the research topic, other MSW Program Objectives may also be relevant.

3.1.2 Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Develop a research proposal: identify and refine an issue that merits research, conceptualize a problem, and operationalize variables.
2. Write a formal proposal that meet standards for advanced level research.
3. Complete a comprehensive literature review.
4. Determine research methodology as it relates to the research project, including design, sampling, measurement, and ethics.
5. Carry out a research study: gain IRB approval, develop or obtain measures, collect data, manage data, and process and analyze data.
6. Write a complete formal research report that includes introduction and literature review, method, results, and discussion of their meaning and implications.
7. Defend orally, present, and discuss the research, findings, and their significance.

Thesis Course Objectives	MSW Program Objectives	Assignments
Select a research proposal: identify and refine an issue that merits research, conceptualize a problem, and operationalize variables,	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Meet with persons with expertise Meet with Thesis Coordinator
Write a formal proposal that meet standards for advanced level research.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Obtain thesis syllabus and Graduate Studies policies, guidelines. Meet with Thesis Coordinator

		Submit proposal draft with initial literature review
Complete a comprehensive literature review.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Write, refine proposal with comprehensive literature review
Determine research methodology as it relates to the research project, including design, sampling, measurement, and ethics.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Submit proposal Meet with committee Revise proposal per guidance
Carry out a research study: gain IRB approval, develop or obtain measures, collect data, manage data, and process and analyze data.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Obtain measures, refine instruments, gain needed permissions, etc. Submit IRB application Conduct the research
Write a complete formal research report that includes introduction and literature review, method, results, and discussion of their meaning and implications.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Meet as needed with committee members Submit drafts to Thesis Coordinator
Defend orally, present, and discuss the research, findings, and their significance.	# 1, 2, 8, 13	Submit final written thesis Defend in committee meeting

4.0 Content and Organization Information

4.1 List of topics to be covered in chronological sequence:

- 4.1.1 Review of research process
- 4.1.2 Initial identification of research topic
- 4.1.3 Literature search to refine and support topic
- 4.1.4 Format and content for research proposal, including IRB application
- 4.1.5 Logistics of data collection, entry, and analysis
- 4.1.6 Review of research writing and required style
- 4.1.7 Process of presenting and defending the thesis report
- 4.1.8 Issues in adapting report for publication

5.0 Teaching Methodology Information

5.1 Methods to be used: Thesis supervision by the chair and members of the committee provides individualized tutorial instruction as needed for each stage of the thesis; written and oral feedback and guidance are given periodically to assure timely completion.

5.2 Student role in the course: The student must assume a primary role in initiating the thesis project and in maintaining a schedule of completion of required products as guided by the committee. This requires the ability to do independent student learning tasks and the responsibility to stay in contact with the committee chair and other members in order to gain the specific guidance needed.

5.3 Contact hours: Minimal required contact includes: initial meeting with Social Work Coordinator of Thesis to start the student on the process; meetings as needed to finalize the proposal; meeting with the supervisory committee for proposal approval; meeting as needed with committee members for specific guidance; and meeting with the committee for the oral defense. For 6 credit hours, the minimal expected clock hours of student work are 270.

6.0 Evaluation Information

6.1 Types of student projects that will be the basis for evaluating student performance

- 6.1.1 Projects and assignments
Students will develop a proposal and carry it out. The proposal will include the goals and objectives of the project, research methodology, including instruments, and analysis of data. The final report will be written in the length and style for a formal thesis report; it must include the following: introduction (statement of problem and literature review), method, results, discussion, references, and appendices.

6.2 Basis for determining the final grade

Planning and carrying out all research stages	30 points
Final formal written report	50 points
Oral Defense	20 points
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Total	100 points

6.3 Grading Type

A+ = 98% and above	B+ = 88-90.9	C+ = 78-80.9	D+ = 68-70.9
A = 94-97.9	B = 84-87.9	C = 74-77.9	D = 64-67.9
A- = 91-93.9	B- = 81-83.9	C- = 71-73.9	D- = 61-63.9
			F = 60.9 and below

7.0 Resource Material

7.1 Textbooks or other required readings used in course:

No specific textbook is prescribed. The student must follow the style of the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

7.2 Other suggested reading material

The supervisory committee may suggest books, research reports, etc.; and the student will review the literature relevant to the research topic, data analysis, and implications.

Babbie, E., Halley, F., & Zaino, J. (2003). *Adventures in social research: Data analysis using SPSS 11.0/11.5 for Windows*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press/Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DiLeonardi, J. W., & Curtis, P. A. (1992). *What to do when the numbers are in: A user's guide to statistical data analysis in the human services*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Field, A. (2000). *Discovering statistics using SPSS for Windows*. London: Sage Publications.

Galvan, J. L. (1999). *Writing literature reviews*. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing.

Green, S. B., Salkind, N. J., & Akey, T. M. (2000). *Using SPSS for Windows: Analyzing and understanding data*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Monette, D. R., Sullivan, T. J., & DeJong, C. R. (2005). *Applied social research: Tool for the human services*, 6th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.

Patterson, D. A., & Basham, R. E. (2006). *Data analysis with spreadsheets*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Pyrczak, F., & Bruce, R. R. (2000). *Writing empirical research reports*. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing.

Royse, D., Thyer, B. A., Padgett, D. K., & Logan, T. K. (2006). *Program evaluation: An introduction*, 4th ed. Thomson Brooks/Cole. ISBN 0-534-50827-8.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2005). *Research methods for social work*, 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Brooks/Cole.

Szuchman, L. T., & Thomlison, B. (2004). *Writing with style: APA style for social work*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2000). *Using multivariate statistics*, 4th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

8.0 Other Information

8.1 Plagiarism

This issue is extremely important for the Master's Thesis. Students are expected to adhere strictly to the guidelines and discuss this issue with the Thesis committee chairperson.

The Executive Body of the School of Social Work has passed a policy alerting students to, and emphasizing the importance of, the issue of plagiarism. The UNO policy on plagiarism is as follows:

"The prevention of plagiarism and the imposition of sanctions upon those who resort to plagiarism is necessary in any university that espouses the ideals embodied in the concept of academic freedom. Plagiarism is the appropriation of the work (be it ideas or words) of another without crediting the source. Such a practice is particularly reprehensible in a community dedicated to the pursuit and advancement of knowledge."

The UNO policy on Academic Integrity reads as follows:

"The maintenance of academic honesty and integrity is a vital concern of the University community. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty shall be subject to both academic and disciplinary sanctions."

Academic dishonesty definitions, procedures and sanctions are available on the current University of Nebraska at Omaha web-site.

8.2 Procedure Regarding Student Grades/Papers

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 requires that student grades not be published in a personally identifiable fashion. Therefore, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor, students must provide a self-addressed adequately stamped envelope for papers, projects, or exams that were not returned to them in class. Any remaining papers, projects or exams will be kept by the instructor for 3 months after the semester ends, at which time they will be shredded.

8.3 Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are provided for students with certified disabilities. For more information contact Services for Students with Disabilities, EAB 117 or 554.2872, TTY 554.3799.

8.4 Additional Assistance

Students who have concerns about their competence in writing papers or who have extreme anxiety in taking tests or giving class presentations should address these concerns by seeking professional counseling through the University Division Counseling Services.

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