**uno grace abbott school of social work**

**SOWK 8990 Master’s Thesis**

(6 credit hours)

**SYLLABUS**

1. **Course description information**

**1.1 Catalog description:** The Master’s thesis provides students the opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in research methods under faculty direction. With the guidance of the thesis coordinator and a supervisory committee, the student prepares a research proposal, conducts the proposed study, and prepares a detailed report of the purpose, design, results, and implications of the findings.

* 1. **Prerequisites of the course:** SOWK 8190 and permission of the School.
  2. **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 faculty direction. With the guidance of the thesis coordinator and a supervisory committee, the student develops a formal research proposal and gains IRB approval. The thesis will include a conceptualization of the problem, a comprehensive literature review, and research methodology. The student will develop or obtain measures, and collect and analyze data. The student will present the thesis in an oral defense to the thesis coordinator and supervisory committee.
  3. **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 <http://www.unomaha.edu/graduate-studies/current-students/thesis-masters.php>

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.

**2.0 Course justification information**

**2.1 Anticipated audience/demand:** Every MSW student must take an 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.)

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

* 1. **If it is a significant change to an existing course, please explain why it is needed**: The course objectives have been revised to meet accreditation standards. Course objectives and assignments are now linked with CSWE EPAS competencies and practice behaviors. The bibliography has also been updated.

**3.0 Objective information**

**3.1 List of performance objectives stated in learning outcomes in a student’s perspective:**

By the end of this course, students 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 meets 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. Conduct a research study: gain IRB approval, develop or obtain measures, collect data, manage data, and process and analyze data

6. Prepare a complete formal research report that includes introduction and literature review, method, results, and discussion of their meaning and implications.

7. Present thesis in an oral defense.

| **Course Objectives** | **EPAS Competencies** | **Advanced Generalist Practice Behaviors** | **Clinical Practice Behaviors** | **Assignments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Develop a research proposal: identify and refine an issue that merits research, conceptualize a problem, and operationalize variables. | **Comp #3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.3 Evaluate, select, and implement appropriate assessments, interventions and evaluation practices.  AGen 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to various practice situations. | Clin 3.3 Evaluate, select, and implement appropriate multidimensional assessment, diagnostic, intervention, and practice evaluation tools.  Clin 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations. | Readings  Discussion  (Meet with persons with expertise.  Meet with Thesis Coordinator) |
| **Comp #6**  Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. | AGen 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process for interventions with various systems.  AGen 6.2 Participate in the generation of new advanced generalist knowledge, through research and practice.  AGen 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate change efforts for efficiency, quality, and effectiveness. | Clin 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process in clinical assessment and intervention with clients.  Clin 6.2 Participate in the generation of new clinical knowledge, through research and practice.  Clin 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate clinical practice effectiveness and/or outcomes. |
| 2.Write a formal proposal that meets standards for advanced level research. | **Comp #3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Clin 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Readings  Discussion  Paper |
| 3.Complete a comprehensive literature review. | **Comp #3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to various practice situations. | Clin 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations. | Readings  Discussion  Paper  Readings  Discussion  Paper  (Submit draft of literature review.) |
| **Comp #7**  Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. | AGen 7.1 Synthesize and differentially apply practice theories relevant to individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and societal institutions. | Clin 7.1 Synthesize and differentially apply theories of human behavior and the social environment to guide clinical practice. |
| 4.Determine research methodology as it relates to the research project, including design, sampling, measurement, and ethics. | **Comp # 3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to various practice situations. | Clin 3.4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations. | Readings  Discussion  Paper  (Submit proposal  Meet with committee  Revise proposal per guidance) |
| **Comp # 6**  Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. | AGen 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process for interventions with various systems.  AGen 6.2 Participate in the generation of new advanced generalist knowledge, through research and practice.  AGen 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate change efforts for efficiency, quality, and effectiveness. | Clin 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process in clinical assessment and intervention with clients.  Clin 6.2 Participate in the generation of new clinical knowledge, through research and practice.  Clin 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate clinical practice effectiveness and/or outcomes |
| 5.Conduct a research study: gain IRB approval, develop or obtain measures, collect data, manage data, and process and analyze data | **Comp #2**  Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice. | AGen 2.1 Apply ethical decisions making skills to issues specific to advanced generalist social work.  AGen 2.2 Employ strategies of ethical reasoning to address the use of technology in advanced generalist practice and its impact on client and larger systems. | Clin 2.1 Apply ethical decisions making skills to issues specific to clinical social work.  Clin 2.2 Employ strategies of ethical reasoning to address the use of technology in clinical practice and its impact on client rights.. | Readings  Discussion  Experiential activities  (Obtain/develop measures, refine instruments, gain needed permissions, etc.  Submit IRB application  Conduct the research) |
| **Comp # 6**  Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. | AGen 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process for interventions with various systems.  AGen 6.2 Participate in the generation of new advanced generalist knowledge, through research and practice.  AGen 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate change efforts for efficiency, quality, and effectiveness. | Clin 6.1 Use the evidence-based practice process in clinical assessment and intervention with clients.  Clin 6.2 Participate in the generation of new clinical knowledge, through research and practice.  Clin 6.3 Use research methodology to evaluate clinical practice effectiveness and/or outcomes. |
| 6.Prepare a complete formal research report that includes introduction and literature review, method, results, and discussion of their meaning and implications. | **Comp #3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Clin 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Discussion  Paper  (Meet as needed with Thesis Coordinator, supervisory committee.  Submit drafts to Thesis Coordinator). |
| 7.Present thesis in an oral defense. | **Comp #3**  Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | AGen 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Clin 3.5 Communicate professional judgments to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines, in both verbal and written formats. | Paper  Presentation  Discussion  (Submit final written thesis.  Defend in committee meeting. Make final revisions.) |
|  |  |  |  |  |

\*The student and instructor/tutor will develop and adapt the following competencies and practice behaviors to reflect advanced Clinical and/or Advanced Generalist levels for the selected area of study and ensure that the project encompasses advanced level professional and research competencies and practice behaviors.

**4.0 Content and organization information**

**4.1 List the major topics central to this course:**

* Review of research process
* Initial identification of research topic
* Literature search to refine and support topic
* Format and content for research proposal, including IRB application
* Logistics of data collection, entry, and analysis
* Review of research writing and required style
* Process of presenting and defending the thesis report
* 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.

* 1. **Student role:** 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.

1. **Evaluation information**

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

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** **Describe the typical basis for determining the final grade (e.g. weighting of various student projects):**

Planning and carrying out all research stages 30 points

Final formal written report 50 points

Oral Defense 20 points

Total 100 points

* 1. **Grading type:**

A+ = 98% or above C+= 78 to 80.9%

A = 94 to 97.9% C = 74 to 77.9%

A- = 91 to 93.9% C- = 71 to 73.9%

B+ = 88 to 90.9% D+ = 68 to 70.9%

B = 84 to 87.9% D = 64 to 67.9%

B- = 81 to 83.9% D- = 61 to 63.9%

F = 60.9% and below

1. **Resource material information**
   1. **Textbook(s) 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.*

* 1. **Other student suggested reading material:**

Determined by Instructor, as needed.

* 1. **Current bibliography and other resources:**

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.

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.

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 Accommodations statement:**

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with UNO Disability Services and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact UNO Disability Services (EAB 117, Phone: 554-2872, TTY: 554-3799) or go to the website: [www.unomaha.edu/disability](http://www.unomaha.edu/disability)

**8.2 Plagiarism/academic integrity:**

In this course, you will submit written work in which you make use of information and ideas found in print or online sources. Whenever you use material from another writer, it is important that you quote or paraphrase appropriately and *cite the source.* Never let it appear that ideas and information gleaned from other sources are your own.

The UNO Academic Integrity policy defines plagiarism as “presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting . . . academic work in whole or in part as one’s own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person.”

Failure to cite sources appropriately is plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Consequences for plagiarism are up to the discretion of the instructor; they may range, for example, from rewriting all or part of a paper to a grade of F for the course. Students who plagiarize more than once are subject to disciplinary action, which may include expulsion from the university.

UNO Faculty Senate, March, 2010

**Additional note on plagiarism/academic integrity from the UNO School of Social Work:**

The School of Social Work views plagiarism as a very serious offense. The NASW Code of Ethics includes a high value on integrity and the importance of behaving in a trustworthy manner (see NASW Code of Ethics, [www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp), 4.04 and 4.08). In addition, the *Publication Manual of the APA* (2010) states, “Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotation marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. *Each time* you paraphrase another author, you need to credit the source in the text” (p. 15).

The School of Social Work will hold a Level 2 or 3 Student Review for any student who is alleged to have plagiarized or cheated in any of their academic courses.

**8.3 Procedures 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.

**8.4 Resources for students:**

* UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work, <http://socialwork.unomaha.edu>
* UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work, *Academic Policies and Standards*, <http://www.unomaha.edu/socialwork/documents/academic_policies.pdf>
* UNO Criss Library, Research Guide for Social Work, <http://libguides.unomaha.edu/socialwork>
* UNO Counseling Center, <http://counseling.unomaha.edu>
* UNO Speech Center, <http://www.unomaha.edu/speechcenter>
* UNO Writing Center, [www.unomaha.edu/writingcenter](http://www.unomaha.edu/writingcenter)
* Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>

11-15-2011