

Evaluating Social Work Research
Spring 2009

Course: SWK 326 70/71
Credits: 4
Tuesdays 4:00-6:30 p.m.

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Course Domain

This course is designed for students to understand and apply the scientific, ethical and analytic approaches to building knowledge for practice and evaluation of service delivery. One goal of the course is to provide students with the opportunity to conceptualize, operationalize and carry out an original research study that evaluates service delivery in all areas of practice. This course has students critically evaluate all research findings including the research hypotheses, data analysis strategies, implications, limitations and conclusions drawn from the study. The overall goals of the course include building research knowledge aimed at having students understand the scientific and analytic approaches from practice and evaluation of service delivery.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Use critical thinking skills to analyze results obtained from either a quantitative or qualitative research study.
2. Develop a working knowledge of the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).
3. Perform successful statistical analyses using SPSS.
4. Evaluate research data by analyzing basic causal models, interpret statistical output based on significance tests, correlation coefficients and simple regression equations.
5. Develop skill in developing, organizing, conducting and writing an original research study.
6. Conduct an original study adhering to the ethics of research and the values of the profession, while remaining cognizant of specific cultural, gender and justice issues related to research and evaluating service delivery.
7. Critically evaluate all research findings including research hypotheses, data analysis strategies and conclusions drawn from the original study.

8. Understand and apply the reasons for scientific approaches to building knowledge for practice and evaluations of social work service delivery.

Course Outcomes

Students will demonstrate understanding and scientific and analytic approaches to building knowledge for practice and evaluation of service delivery.

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete a research study that includes a complete research proposal, evaluation of findings and conclusions drawn from the study. Study findings are presented at the annual Health and Wellness Conference.

Students will demonstrate ability in evaluating research data by performing statistical analyses using SPSS.

Assessment:

Students will critically evaluate all research findings including research hypotheses, data analysis strategies and conclusions drawn from their original research study.

Students will demonstrate understanding of basic statistical analyses, interpret statistical output based on significance tests, correlation coefficients and simple regression equations.

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete two written examinations.

Texts and Other

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research methods for social work*, (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Perrin, R. (2007). *Pocket guide to APA style*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Cronk, B. (2002). *How to use SPSS*. Glendale, CA: Pyrezak Publishing

One flash drive for saving data.

Student Assignments

Each student is expected to fulfill the following assignments:

1. To read all assigned readings in advance of class and participate in class discussions.
2. To regularly attend and participate in class sessions, group presentations. Attendance will be taken and will comprise a portion of the course grade.

3. To complete original research project, (either individually or in groups of two students) that will include the problem statement, literature review, methodology, data analysis and conclusions.
4. Prepare for and successfully complete two exams covering the course material.
5. Present all research findings in a formal presentation for the Health and Wellness Conference.

Note: All assignments are due on the dates indicated on the class schedule. Assignments turned in later than those due dates will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each day late including weekends. All assigned work must be submitted on the last day the class is scheduled to meet.

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

Appropriate classroom behavior is implicit in the Cedar Crest College Honor Code. Such behavior is defined and guided by complete protection for the rights of all students and faculty to a courteous, respectful classroom environment. That environment is free from distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, cell phones/beepers, inappropriate conversations and any other behaviors that might disrupt instruction and/or compromise students' access to their Cedar Crest College education.

Furthermore:

Students are expected to have prompt and regular classroom attendance in accordance with the policy stated on the syllabus.

Faculty are expected to make clear on the first day of class reasons for specific classroom decorum and repercussions for non-compliance. Faculty should be aware of setting boundaries and procedures for exceptions to expectation stated in the syllabus.

Disclosures about personal issues are not appropriate for class discussions and presentations.

HONOR PHILOSOPHY

The Cedar Crest College Honor Philosophy is based upon the principle that, as a self-governing body, students have the ability to create an atmosphere of trust and support. Within this environment, individuals are empowered to make their own decisions, develop personal regard for the system under which they live, and achieve a sense of integrity and judgment that will guide them through life.

Social Work Program Attendance Policy

Social work courses typically meet only fourteen sessions each semester. In the interests of your development as a professional social work practitioner as well as the interests of your future clients, it is vital for you to attend these class sessions. Therefore, the Social Work Program's Attendance Policy is as follows:

- 1) You may miss two class sessions for whatever reasons without penalty.
- 2) If you miss a third class session the highest overall grade you can receive for the course is a “B”.
- 3) If you miss a fourth class session the highest overall grade you can receive for the course is a “C”.
- 4) Five or more class absences will result in your need to retake the course.

Note: Save your two accepted absences for unforeseen circumstances such as illness, transportation problems, work and child care responsibilities, etc. These will not be acceptable excuses for absence if you have already miss two class sessions.

***Late arrival to class/early departures will cumulatively count toward your accepted absences.**

Grading

Class attendance, preparation and Participation	5%
Examination One	20%
Examination Two	20%
Completed Research Study	45%
Poster Presentation	<u>10%</u>
	100%

Course Outline: Note, all work must be completed individually this semester.

Jan. 20	Introduction to SWK 326 Chapter 1 – Introduction to SPSS (Cronk book) Chapter 13 – Issues in Program Evaluation - Abstract Writing
Jan. 27	Chapter 20 – Quantitative Data Analysis Pilot testing of surveys – must bring copies for entire class
Feb. 3	Chapter 20 – Quantitative Data Analysis (cont.) Chapter 2 – Entering Data (SPSS text) Abstract due – one abstract per group
Feb. 10	Chapter 21 – Inferential Data Analysis: Part I
Feb. 17	Chapter 22 – Inferential Data Analysis: Part II Submit Revised Proposals Chapter 2 – Entering and Modifying Data Chapter 3 – Descriptive Statistics Final Changes to abstract due
Feb. 24	1st Exam (Chapters 13, 20, 21)
Mar. 3	Chapter 22: Inferential Data Analysis: Part 2 (cont.)

- Mar. 10** **No Class – Spring Break**
- Mar. 17 Chapter 2 – SPSS
 Chapter 4 – Graphing Data
 Chapter 5 – Prediction and Association
 Chapter 7 – Nonparametric Inferential Statistics
- Mar. 24 ***2nd Exam – Take Home due on Mar. 31, 2009 – No late submissions.**
 Review of Writing up analyses and results sections.
 Each take-home exam must be completed individually – **no** group work.
- Mar. 31 **Take Home Exam Due in Class – Completed with data attached. No late submissions. Must be completed individually.**
 Writing up the data (**See attached outline**)
 Writing up the discussion of the research (**See attached outline**)
 Chapter 23: Writing Research Proposals and Reports
- Apr. 7 **Drafts of Data Analysis and Discussion due – No late submissions (must follow outline in syllabus). All work must be completed individually – no group submissions.**
 Chi Square
 T - Tests
 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
 Linear regression and correlation
 Appendix I – Rubin & Babbie text
- Apr. 14 **Finalization of all SWK 326 research studies**
Brief class presentation on findings, conclusions, implications and areas identified for further research.
- Apr. 21 ***All completed research projects (Problem Statement, Lit. Review, Methodology, Data Analysis and Discussion) due Apr. 21 – No exceptions – No late submissions.**
 Brief class presentation on findings, conclusions – **All posters turned in for Health and Wellness Conference.** Present posters in class.
- Apr. 28 Poster presentation for Health and Wellness Conference – *Tuesday, April 28, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in TCC.*

Dates to Remember:

Jan. 27	Pilot testing of all surveys
Feb. 3	Abstracts due
Feb. 24	1 st Exam
Mar. 24	2 nd Exam
Apr. 21	All completed research projects due (no exceptions), all poster sessions ready for conference.
Apr. 21	Posters turned in for Health and Wellness Conference
Apr. 28	Poster presentations at Health and Wellness Conference

Outline for Research Proposal Due Apr. 21, 2009

Title Page
Abstract
Problem Statement
Literature Review
Methodology
Analysis of Data
Discussion
References
Tables

Appendix I

Survey
Cover letter
Informed consent
Approval from IRB
Agency letters (if appropriate)

Writing up the Results

IV. **Analysis of Data** – (main centered heading)

- Give a brief introduction of this section.

Respondent Characteristics (use as your heading)

- Discuss how many surveys were mailed, how many returned the survey and give the calculated response rate in a percentage.
 - Who was the study sample
 - Discuss how many surveys (%) were usable
 - Discuss the survey instrument including reliability and validity (this should be detailed.)
 - Review in text demographic information (e.g. age, educational level, race, religion, etc.)

- Provide a table of respondent characteristics (age, gender, etc.)
 - Number and give a title for each table
 - Use Frequency distributions for nominal data
 - Use means table for interval data
- Tables are located after the reference page, note in text what table number and title you are referencing.

Dependent Variable (use the name of the D.V. here)

- Identify the dependent variable in the study (this is in text form/narrative) - this is a description of the important points in the table.
 - Give the frequencies and percentages and/or means of the dependent variables in narrative form.
 - Give table of frequencies, percentages or means (if appropriate) provide table number and name of table in text and have corresponding table after reference page.
 - If providing the mean of the D.V. also provide the standard deviation.
What was the scoring guideline (i.e. a Likert type scale of 1-5, etc.)
- *Make sure your D.V. has a means table or f/% tables of the questions that made up the D.V.
- *Remember to sequentially number and title all tables

Independent Variables

- If different from the demographic variables define each I.V., how it was measured.
- If **all** of your I.V.'s are also demographic variables then state where they have been discussed and what table they are reported in.
- Give a summary of the findings of the I.V.(s)
 - Provide a Summary table of all I.V.s
 - Use frequencies and percentages for nominal data, use means table for data that is interval/ratio.

Testing the Hypothesis

- Put **all** hypotheses in the Null form.
Ex.: Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship betweenanda (name the statistical test used, whether there was a significant relationship and if you accept or reject the null hypothesis.)
 - Provide a table giving results of all hypotheses tested
 - Additional Findings – if additional statistical tests were run talk about these findings.
- *Note: All hypotheses must be in correct format (see above)

Summary

- Provide a summary of the findings – **only discuss the main findings** (not what you think, and no opinions).

V. **Discussion of the Research** – give brief introduction to this section

Dependent variable/Independent Variable

- Discuss the dependent variable studied and what were the findings? (Do not repeat statistics here, this is a narrative of what you found.)
- Discuss each independent variable and what were the findings? (Again, this is in narrative form. Do not repeat statistics.)
- What are the implications? In other words, what do the findings tell us?
- What actions should be taken by individuals or organizations based on the results of the study?
- What are areas for future research? –need to identify what still needs to be studied in relation to your topic. Point out specific areas that could be researched to advance knowledge of a topic.
- What are the limitations of the study? This must include addressing internal and external validity.
- Provide a concluding summary to the report.

Reference page – Give complete reference pages for all literature and studies cited using APA format.

Appendix

- Cover letter
- Informed Consent
- Copy of survey or data collection sheet
- Letters from supporting agencies
- Approval letter from IRB

Sample Tables

Example:

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondent Characteristics

N=

<u>Variables</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male		
Female		
<u>Race</u>		
White		
Black		
Hispanic		
<u>Education</u>		
BA/BS		
MSW/MS		
PhD/DSW		

Table 2: Means table of age and years experience

N=

Variables	mean	SD
Age		
Year's experience		

Table 3: Results of Correlation testing

N=

Name of Independent Variable	r	rho	p
Name of Dependent Variable			

Table 4: Results of Chi Square testing

N=

Name of IV	chi square	p
Name of DV		

Additional Writing Tips

- Spell out numbers that are less than ten
- In the discussion section –
 - Indicate whether the data supports the hypotheses
 - Do not repeat all the details - just the highlights
- Point out the extent to which results of your study are consistent with the results of the literature you reviewed in the Literature Review
- When interpreting the results in the Discussion section, offer explanations for them.
- You must address the limitations of the study
- The Discussion section is used to summarize and interpret what was presented in the Data Analysis – do not introduce new data or references.

Evaluating Social Work Practice

SWK 326

Evaluation of Research Study

This is a self-evaluation of your proposal.

This will also be used to grade your research projects.

IV. Analysis of Data

	Low ----- High						
• Thorough discussion of respondents	1	2	3	4	5		
• Response rate, sample size reviewed	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussion of instrument used to collect data	1	2	3	4	5		
• Overview in text of demographic information	1	2	3	4	5		
• Provided <u>all</u> relevant tables, numbered and titled	1	2	3	4	5		
• Identified the dependent variable in text	1	2	3	4	5		
• Provided frequencies and percentages/means in text	1	2	3	4	5		
• Provided table of findings	1	2	3	4	5		
• All tables numbered and titled	1	2	3	4	5		
• Identified independent variables in text	1	2	3	4	5		
• If IV's are reported earlier in text, then reference given to location of information	1	2	3	4	5		
• Any IV's reported – tables provided	1	2	3	4	5		
• All hypotheses tested stated in null form	1	2	3	4	5		
• All null hypotheses state statistical test used to test the null	1	2	3	4	5		
• Each null hypothesis is accepted or rejected	1	2	3	4	5		
• Provided a table giving results of all hypotheses tested	1	2	3	4	5		
• Additional findings reported	1	2	3	4	5		
• Summary of the findings – only discussed the main findings	1	2	3	4	5		

V. Discussion of the Research

	Low ----- High						
• Discussed the D.V. studied	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed the findings	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed the IV studied	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed the findings	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed the implications – what do the findings tell us?	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed actions needed to be taken by individuals/ organizations based on the findings	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed areas for future research	1	2	3	4	5		
• Discussed limitations of study – internal and external validity	1	2	3	4	5		
• Provided a concluding summary to the research study.	1	2	3	4	5		

Reference Page

• Current sources relevant to topic	1	2	3	4	5		
• Minimum of 10 primary sources	1	2	3	4	5		
• Complete reference page in APA style	1	2	3	4	5		
• Appendix includes cover letter, informed consent, copy of survey, letters from agencies, approval from IRB	1	2	3	4	5		

Overall research project	1	2	3	4	5		

Grade: _____