Course Title: SWK 691 – Social Work Research Methods

Semester & Year: Fall, 2016

Instructor: Liz DePoy PhD, edepoy@maine.edu

Office hours:
On-line most of the time
On site, by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

SWK 691 is the first of the two-course graduate research sequence in the School of Social Work. This course provides the opportunity for students to acquire and apply knowledge of and skill in research design and methods to inquiry related to social work thinking and action. Students will study a full range of methods relevant to social work knowledge and evaluation, critically analyze current systematic study, propose a study to be completed in SWK 692, and disseminate
their work. Attention will be given to ethical dilemmas in research and the use of systematic knowing to promote human flourishing.

The course will begin with an overview of the philosophical and logical foundations of knowledge and science, proceed to critically examine the diverse ways in which social workers come to know about and systematically inform practice, explore the reciprocal interaction between practice and knowledge, and provide the opportunity for students to complete a research proposal to be carried out in the second course in the research sequence. Students will work in small study groups to discuss readings, ideas, and to complete assignments.

Course Objectives
Students will:
1. Distinguish research from evaluation;
2. Identify their roles in professional social work practice in diverse settings with attention to advanced generalist approaches;
3. Apply ethical decision making frameworks to identify and resolve complex dilemmas encountered in the generation and use of knowledge in social work;
4. Critically evaluate the generation and use of evidence based practice in social work;
5. Use systematic thinking to critically evaluate commonly used assessment, intervention and evaluation tools used in diverse practice settings;
6. Identify the roles of practice experience and wisdom in social work knowledge;
7. Examine how research and evaluation can be integrated into social work practice in a variety of settings.

Course Format
Blackboard will be the communication venue for this course. This course will use a variety of instruction methods.
1. Recorded audio and visual lecture – instructions regarding how to access the video and audio lectures will be provided on the class conference folder. Some of the videos will be on YouTube (the address and names to be provided); other audio-visual lectures will be linked to a site identified in a weekly email on the conference folder.
2. Lectures in the form of narrated PowerPoints.
3. Some of the sessions will be in the form of word document outlines to guide your thinking and discussion.
4. Student postings and responses to your study group to be identified on September 5th.
Contacting me: Please feel free to contact me in several ways. If you have a general question about the class material, processes and assignments, please post it on the discussions forum so that all students can benefit from your inquiry. If you have a specific question that does not concern others, please write to me on email using my individual account.

Technology Needs

Reliable Internet Access. Since this is an on-line course, you will need reliable access to the Internet.
To be successful in an online course you will need access to an Internet-ready computer (PC or Mac) with the capacity for viewing video and other images.
Please remember to contact IT Help, CED Tech Help, or University Technology Support Center if you are having technical difficulties.
For content-related problems such as broken links, content or tables not available: post a note on discussions or contact me directly via email.
Please make sure to craft your work in Microsoft Word or Open Office and then cut and paste directly to the thread. Microsoft Office is available for students at no charge (see https://mycampus.maine.edu/documents/504867/0/MSOffice+flyer.pdf/3efd5d74-ca9c-4f4c-8e29-b694fa07ccdd)
Open Office is available at http://www.freedownloadpc.com/en/openoffice/

Course Policies

Announcements/E-mails

It is your responsibility to check the course site regularly and to keep a functioning email account. I will post all important e-mail messages in announcements on the course site. You are responsible for all information contained in the announcements.

Academic honesty (plagiarism, etc.):

Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism and all forms of misrepresentation in academic work, and is unacceptable at The University of Maine. As stated in the University of Maine’s materials, “plagiarism (the submission of another’s work without appropriate attribution) and cheating are violations of The University of Maine Student Conduct Code. An instructor who has probable cause or reason to believe a student has cheated may act upon such evidence, and should report the case to the supervising faculty member or the Department Chair for appropriate action.
Student Accommodations:

Any student who may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of this course is encouraged to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Course Grading:

The course grading scale is based on percentage points, so that 91-100% = A, 81-90% = B, below B is a failing grade for graduate students at the University of Maine. Grading is on a plus/minus basis.

Requests for a grade of I (Incomplete) will be considered only when a student has a situation preventing completion of the course and assignments within the normal course schedule and has already completed 75% of the course work with satisfactory grades.


EPAS http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=72120

You may purchase SPSS or use free Statistical software

Here are some options:
http://statpages.org/javasta2.html
or
PSPP
For Windows:
http://sourceforge.net/projects/pspp4windows/
Web-based statistics calculator

Assignments
Study groups of no more than 4 students will be created by random assignment. Assignments 1 and 3 will be shared with your study group and will form the basis for discussion.

Assignment #1 - Self assessments. This assignment has two parts and is graded as completed or not completed:
   a. For some sessions, a self-assessment will be posted. Please answer the questions and post your responses to your study group on the day following the lecture and presentation of the topic. (For example, For Session 2, listed for September 5th, please post your self assessment by September 6th)...20%
   b. Read the responses of your study group members and discuss any areas of disagreement. Please complete this part of assignment #1 before the next class session. (For example, post all Session 2 discussion on the self assessment before September 12th). For this part, please do not simply post a statement of agreement but rather discuss areas in which you did not agree....20%

Assignment #2-Ethics training. Please access

Complete training by October 15 and send me a note just letting me know that you were successful…required for course completion but not graded.

Assignment #3-Exercises
   a. Exercises-All exercises are clearly identified as Assignment #3. Please complete them and post to your study group no later than 2 days following the lecture on the topic…20%
b. Read the work of your study group members and discuss any areas of disagreement. Please complete this part of assignment #2 before the next class session….20%

Assignment #4-Final Exam…20%

Course Outline

Week of August 29– Session 1 -Welcome, introductions and overview of course

Questions to ponder:
What are research and evaluation and why are they important for social work?
Why do you have to study research and evaluation methods in social work curricula?

Assignment #3: By Friday (September 2), access the draft Educational Policy and Accreditation standards at http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=72120), read and post (to your study group folder) comments on the roles of research and evaluation in social work education and practice.

Week of September 5- Session 2-Examined Practice and the Foundation for Social Work Knowing
Read DePoy and Gilson-Chapters 1 and 2; pp.283-287 (Janice-Exemplar #1)
Assignment #1-Self Assessment 1

Week of September 12- Session 3 Reflexive Intervention and Outcomes
Read DePoy & Gilson- Chapters 3 & 4
Assignment #1-Self assessment 2

Week of September 19- Session 4 Ethics
Skim http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html
Read: DePoy and Gilson, pp.196-201
Assignment #2: Start the University of Maine research ethics training at http://umaine.edu/research/faculty/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-for-the-protection-of-human-subjects-irb/required-training/

Week of September 26- Three traditions and their philosophical foundations
Read DePoy and Gilson; Chapter 6
Assignment #3-Exercise

Week of October 3- Session 6– Theory and Literature
Read DePoy & Gilson, Chapter 7; pp.287-291 (Dean-Exemplar #2)
Assignment #1-Self Assessment 3

Week of October 10- Session 7- Theory and Literature
Assignment #3-Exercise

Week of October 17- Session 8 Questions, hypotheses and queries
Read DePoy & Gilson, Chapter 8
Assignment #1-Self Assessment 4

Week of October 24- Session 9 Questions, hypotheses and queries
Assignment #3-Exercise

Week of October 31- Session 10 Design in Both Traditions
Read DePoy & Gilson, Chapter 9, 297-301 (Exemplar #4-TAP)
Assignment #1-Self Assessment 5

Week of November 7- Session 11- Design in Both Traditions
Assignment #3-Exercise

Week of November 14- Session 12 Selecting Boundaries
Read DePoy & Gilson, pp.192-195; 201-221
Assignment 1-Self Assessment 6

Week of November 21 Session 13–Obtaining Information
Read DePoy & Gilson, Chapter 11
Assignment 1-Self Assessment 7

Week of November 28-Session 14 Obtaining Information
Assignment #3-Exercise

Week of Dec 5 –Session 15 –Basic statistics
Read DePoy & Gilson, pp. 247-272

Final exam will be posted during exam week.