

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**



**Applied Social Work Research
SWRK 640 3 credit hours total Spring 2022**

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Office Hours: By appointment
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Class Meeting Times & Locations:

Class meeting times/dates: 1/24/23, 2/14/23, 2/28/23, 3/21/23, 4/4/23, 4/25/23 from 5:30-7:30pm
CT via Zoom

Prerequisite:

Completion of all required 500 level MSW courses or admission to the Advanced Standing

Co-requisite:

SWRK 661 Advanced Field Practicum II

Course Description:

Focuses on skills, knowledge, and values for evaluation of advanced rural social work with emphasis on single subject design and program evaluation. Students conduct a research project on their practice.

Course Information:

This course teaches skills necessary for the evaluation of social work practice across client system levels within the rural practice context. It provides an historical and value context for practice evaluations. From an historical standpoint, more modern and diverse methods have evolved for the evaluation of social programs and professional social work practice. Moreover, evaluation has become increasingly expected. The main social forces driving these developments have been cycles of decreasing public resources, the advent of managed care in health and mental health care reimbursement arenas, concerns over liability, and discourse in the literature promoting increasing accountability for the profession as a whole. The course expands upon skills taught in foundation practice, practicum and research courses. Course topics include a deeper conceptualization of research as a practice role; a critical analysis of the political and social context within which this role is carried out; development of a

broader understanding of, and competency around, specific research issues, tasks and skills.

Required Text:

Royse, D., Thyer, B., & Padgett, D. K. (2016). *Program evaluation: An introduction to an evidence-based approach* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN-10: 1-305-40182-4/ ISBN-13: 978-1-305-40182-2

American Psychological Association [APA]. (2019). *Publication of the American Psychological Association*. (7th ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

MSW Mission Statement:

The mission of the MSW program at WKU is to prepare students for advance professional social work practice to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural population in the community, in Kentucky, and in a global society.

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Definition of Specialized Practice and Required Core Competencies for MSW Education

[The Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#) Commission on Accreditation (COA) and Commission on Educational Policy (COEP) developed the [2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate and Master's Social Work Programs](#). These standards form the basis for the WKU MSW Generalist Year Curriculum. As part of these standards, each master's social work program must design at least nine unique competencies that are used in the creation of their specialized year. Here at WKU, our specialty is Advanced Generalist Practice in Rural Settings. Our program faculty have developed nine (9) unique competencies that are the focus for the specialized year curriculum. Please review the competencies at [WKU MSW Advanced Generalist Competencies](#) to develop an understanding of the content that all WKU MSW students must master prior to graduation. Core competencies addressed in this class are defined as follows:

CSWE EPAS Core Competencies for MSW Education

2015 Competencies Addressed in Course	Course Assignments	Course Learning Outcomes	Competency Dimension
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	Professionalism	6	C/A Processes
	Quizzes	1, 2	Knowledge
	DB 1: Ethical Aspects of Program Evaluation	3	Knowledge, Values
	DB 5: Measurement	1, 2, 3	Knowledge, Values

2015 Competencies Addressed in Course	Course Assignments	Course Learning Outcomes	Competency Dimension
	Group Evaluation Rubric	4, 5, 6	Values, Skills, C/A Processes
	Infographic	6	Knowledge, Values, Skills, C/A Processes
	Applied Research Project	3, 4, 5, 6	Values, Skills, C/A Processes
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	Quizzes	1, 2	Knowledge
	DB 2: Qualitative Research Methods	1, 2	Knowledge
	DB 3: Issues with Client Satisfaction Surveys	1, 2	Knowledge, Values
	DB 4: Cost-Effectiveness and Cost Analysis	1, 2	Knowledge
	DB 5: Measurement	1, 2	Knowledge
	Infographic	6	Knowledge, Values, Skills, C/A Processes
	Applied Research Project	3, 4, 5, 6	Values, Skills, C/A Processes
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Applied Research Project	3, 4, 5, 6	Values, Skills, C/A Processes

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Knowledge

1. Identify key concepts related to applied social work research.
2. Differentiate between various types of program evaluations.

Values

3. Evaluate ethical issues related to applied social work research, such as the application of principles such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and the NASW *Code of Ethics*.

Skills

4. Design an applied social work research project, with attention paid to ethical considerations and diversity.
5. Conduct basic descriptive and inferential data analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Cognitive & Affective Processes

6. Synthesize results of an applied social work research project and incorporate findings into a professional research report.

Course Assignments:

Discussion Board Exercises (20 percent of grade)

Discussion Board exercises (completed on Blackboard) are designed to assess course preparation such as reviewing course readings, video lectures, video clips, and other materials. Students complete 5 postings during the semester worth 4 points each. These exercises help students learn and apply core components of the material covered in this course. A high level of quality and critical synthesis of information is expected on these exercises. **A Discussion Board rubric is available through Blackboard to assure clarity in this area.**

Quizzes (20 percent of grade)

There will be five (5) quizzes over the course of this semester. They will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Quizzes will open under the Assignment Dropbox tab on Blackboard the Monday of the specified week at 8am CST and will close on Sunday of the specified week at 11pm CST. The time allotted for each quiz is based upon the number and type of questions included on the quiz. **Please check Blackboard for more information.**

Infographic (15 Percent of grade)

Each student will create an infographic based on their area of interest selected for their Applied Social Work Research project. An infographic is an electronic visual aid that contains digital images and text, developed strategically for a specific audience. Given the recent work of Jones, Sage, and Hitchcock (2019), you are going to develop an infographic that highlights the importance of your chosen area of interest. You will be expected to choose stakeholders that you will hypothetically present this to, as the goal is to use this infographic to seek “buy-in” and illustrate why your research project matters. As an example, if you choose the Foster Care Study for your project, you might present to the Children’s Alliance or the Department for Community Based Services.

This practical and valuable exercise will challenge you to critically think about your chosen population and repackage information effectively for community-based practitioners to utilize. Examples of infographics can be found on www.wku.edu/childwelfare under the “Research and Publications” tab.

This assignment will be assessed based on the following:

- The quality of your infographic.
- A brief (4 minute) recorded video presentation.
- Meaningful contributions to at least three of your peers, who are in a different group than you for the Applied Social Work Research Project.

Applied Social Work Research Project (30 percent of grade)

The **main assignment** in the course is an applied social work research project. This will be a group project, where each group will select a secondary dataset (on Blackboard), based on their area of interest, and complete an applied research report. There are 10 datasets to choose from, including the following:

- General Social Survey (2006 & 2014)
- Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Study
- Foster Care Study
- HIV/AIDS Risk Study
- National Youth-at-Risk Behavior Survey
- SAMHDA Treatment Episodes Data
- Sexual Abuse Study
- Welfare to Work Data
- Youth Development Study

Each of these datasets has an accompanying codebook that will give you additional information about each dataset. During the first week, each student will be expected to examine the codebooks and select their top three choices. Students will provide feedback about their preferences (e.g., top three choices) via Blackboard survey, and the instructor will then assign groups based upon their review.

Once you have been assigned a group, you will be expected to participate in group discussion boards. While these group discussion boards will not earn points per se, your effort will be assessed by a Group Grading Rubric (see corresponding section). These group discussion boards will be related to your applied social work research project and are designed to help you be successful on the final project.

The final applied research project should be written in APA 7th edition (student style) and include the following:

- Cover page
- Introduction, including an advanced organizer
- Literature Review
- Methods, including research question(s)
 - Description of the dataset
 - Sampling Strategy
 - Research Design
 - Measures
 - Data Analysis
- Results, including at least one APA-formatted table
- Discussion, including answer to your research questions
 - Implications for social work policy and practice
 - Limitations
 - Future research
- References

The final paper is expected to be between 10-15 pages, not including the cover page, or references. More specific details about this assignment will be provided on Blackboard under the Assignment Dropbox tab. We will also discuss this project extensively in class throughout the semester.

Applied Social Work Research Group Evaluation (10 percent of grade)

In preparing your group discussion boards, please communicate with your group. Students will be assigned into groups for their Applied Social Work Research Project. It is imperative that each group member make a meaningful contribution to their group. As such, each group member will rate themselves and each group member using the Assessing Group Members' Rubric posted on Blackboard. This rubric assesses level of participation in five areas: (a) listening skills; (b) openness to others' ideas; (c) preparation; (d) contribution; and (e) leadership.

Participation and Professionalism (5 percent of grade)

The Professionalism Rubric on Blackboard outlines 15 behaviors indicative of professionalism (i.e., attendance, punctuality, active participation, communication, respect, self-awareness, diversity awareness, collegiality, oral expression, written expression, initiative & reliability, responsiveness to feedback, compliance with professional requirements, responsiveness to communication, professional appearance). There are two parts to this assignment:

1. Using the rubric, you are asked to rate yourself in each of these areas providing justification for each of your ratings using clear examples.

2. Complete the strengths, opportunities for growth, and improvement plan which is located following the 15 rubric items.

Evaluation and Grading

Course grading is based on the following criteria, using a weighted mean formula (total grade for each assignment is multiplied by its respective worth, and then points summed for score).

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Grade Percentage</u>
Discussion Boards (5)	20%
Quizzes (5)	20%
Infographic w/Presentation and 3 Responses	15%
Applied Social Work Research Project	30%
Applied Social Work Research Group Evaluation	10%
Professionalism/Participation	5%
<hr/>	
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

0-59=F

Academic Support

Most of us find that we need some academic support and direction during our time in the university. WKU offers many resources that can help you be successful in this course. These are listed below:

Student Accessibility Resource Center

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in DSU Room 1074 in the Downing Student Union. The phone number is 270-745-5004, or email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Student Accessibility Resource Center.

Writing Center Assistance

The Writing Center on the Bowling Green campus is offering only remote assistance to writers during the covid-19 pandemic. WKU students may request feedback on their writing via email or arrange a real-time Zoom conference to discuss a paper. See instructions and how-to videos on the website

(www.wku.edu/writingcenter) for making online synchronous (Zoom) or asynchronous (email) appointments. Students may also get short writing questions answered via email; just put “Quick question” in the subject line to (writingcenter@wku.edu).

Off Campus Library Support

The Extended Campus Library Services Office will copy citations and pull library books for students at extended campuses and send them through the mail. There is no cost to students (although you do have to pay to return the library books). WKU also has a courier service to extended campuses. For further information, go to the [Extended Campus Library Support](#) website. Turn-around time can be anywhere from a few days to two weeks, so plan ahead!

COVID-19

All students are strongly encouraged to get the COVID-19 vaccine. In accordance with WKU policy, all students must call the WKU COVID-19 Assistance Line at 270-745-2019 within 4 hours of testing positive for COVID-19 or being identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive. The COVID Assistance Line is available to answer questions regarding any COVID-19 related issue. This guidance is subject to change based on requirements set forth by federal, state, and local public health entities. Please refer to the Healthy on the Hill website for the most current information.

Policy

Students are expected to adhere to all policies contained with the [MSW Handbook](#) and the [Code of Student Conduct](#) at Western Kentucky University.

Professionalism

The [NASW Code of Ethics](#) is a guiding framework and source for identifying professional performance. Students are expected to practice in an ethical manner while in the classroom or completing assignments pertaining to this course in accordance with the *MSW Student Handbook*, *WKU Student Code of Conduct* and the *NASW Code of Ethics*. Behaviors especially under consideration are those related to professional practice, mental illness and/or substance use, illegal activity and classroom behavior. Concerns in any of these four circumstances will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review. Students are expected to understand the policy, in its entirety, found in the *MSW Student Handbook*.

Students are expected to behave professionally in the classroom, handling all information in a manner consistent with the ethic of confidentiality, and addressing all questions posited with respect and personal regard. This class involves some discussion of highly sensitive topics and there may be some

personal disclosure, so students are expected to handle this in a professional manner. Conduct toward classmates, the instructor, and any guests should include a respect of, and allow for, differing opinions. Fulfilling these Professionalism and Performance Expectations will be reflected in the professionalism grade (Rubric posted on Bb).

Social Media

Privacy, confidentiality and professional boundaries must be examined as professional social workers especially in the age of technology. Professional standards found in the *NASW Code of Ethics* must be strictly followed concerning social media. Students using social media sites are expected to use the highest privacy settings on their social media profiles, so field agency personnel and/or clients cannot access photographs and private information. Students are not permitted to link to or view the social media profiles of clients or employees of the field placement agency. In the event that a student's social media profile or linkage is considered a poor professional practice or an ethical violation, the student issue will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism and cheating are prohibited. Academic dishonesty is prohibited by the MSW Handbook, the University Code of Student Conduct and is also counter to social work values and ethics included in the *NASW Code of Ethics*. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and ethical guidelines and to follow them at all times. Any instances of academic dishonesty will mean a grade of "zero" for the assignment and/or course failure. Student should review the "Academic Offences" section of the WKU Student Handbook and the "Ethical Principles" and "Acknowledging Credit" sections of the 1999 Code of Ethics, National Association of Social.

Students are expected to be familiar with university policies regarding plagiarism, cheating, and/or academic dishonesty (see the WKU Student Handbook). These behaviors WILL result in a zero for the assignment/exam and/or failure for the course. If one uses direct quotes in papers, the quotes must have quotation marks around them and have the author, year, and page number cited. As well, all authors cited in the text must be properly cited on the reference page and the reference page should not have authors who are not cited in the text of the paper.

APA

Students are expected to use APA style (7th ed.) for writing, citing and listing references. Written assignments must be grammatically correct, typed, double-spaced, and display correct form. Students are expected to submit work that is

written at the college level. Students are encouraged to make use university writing resources if needed. The social work profession involves a significant amount of writing (documentation); therefore, the instructor reserves the right to heavily penalize written work that is of poor quality. This is for all course work to include papers, and online assignments. Online assignments must include in text references and full text at the end of the assignment just as all other written documents in this course.

Participation and Attendance:

Students are expected to participate in developing a positive learning environment with the desire to learn. Class participation is required and includes taking part in class and blackboard discussions through active listening and/or verbal comments. Class discussion is a turn-taking activity; participation includes not talking out-of-turn and not monopolizing the discussion. Reading magazines, browsing on electronic devices, and whispering/talking to others is not appropriate in class. Attendance is important to overall spontaneous learning. Student may miss one class without penalty. However, this is highly discouraged due to the low number of classes in each master's course. After missing one class, the second class will result in minus 10% off the total grade of the class. Missing two classes will result in failure course.

In the event of a real emergency that precludes a student from coming to class, the professor expects to be contacted in a timely manner. It is up to the discretion of the professor as to whether the absence is excused (with documentation) and if in-class graded assignments can be made up.

Assignment Completion:

Students are expected to turn all assignments in on time. Assignments, which are late, will be reduced at a rate of 10% per day. Therefore, if you would have received 50 points on an assignment, which is three days late, the score will be reduced by a total of 15 points. After one-week, late assignments will no longer be accepted for credit but must be turned in to complete the course.

All assignments must be submitted to pass the course (no exceptions)!

Disclaimer:

All class schedules and activities are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed with reasonable notice and accommodations.

References

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- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (5th ed). Thousand, Oaks, CA: Sage.
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- Thyer, B.A. (2001). *The handbook of social work research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
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- Wolfer, L. (2007). *Real research: Conducting and evaluating research in the*

social sciences. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Yegidis, B., Weinbach, R., & Myers, L. (2018). *Research methods for social workers* (8th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

York, R. (2009). *Evaluating human services: A practical approach for the human services profession*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Helpful Websites:

Center for Social Work Research: <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/cswr>

Council on Social Work Education: <http://www.cswe.org>

National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

Society for Social Work and Research: <http://sswr.org>

APPENDIX A

Rubric for Applied Social Work Research Project

SWRK 640: Program Evaluation Project Rubric C1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; C4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice; C9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities						
Dimension	1 Beginning	2 Developing	3 Marginal	4 Proficient	5 Exemplary	Score/ Comments
1. Introduction and Conclusion	Includes EITHER an introduction OR conclusion	Includes an introduction AND conclusion; BUT is missing 3 of the bulleted items under the exemplary category	Includes an introduction AND conclusion; BUT is missing 2 of the bulleted items under the exemplary category	Includes an introduction AND conclusion; BUT is missing 1 of the bulleted items under the exemplary category	Introduction includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief introduction of topic; Advanced organizer outlining what will be covered in the rest of the paper; AND conclusion includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restates the purpose of the paper; Highlights important details covered in the paper; 	<hr/> Score earned
Items 2 & 3 C4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice						
2. Literature Review	Includes 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence Causes Consequences BUT evidence is not explicitly linked to the research question AND does not include any research question(s)	Includes 2 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence Causes Consequences BUT evidence is not explicitly linked to the research question AND concludes with the research question(s); BUT research question(s) are not clearly stated	Includes 2 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence Causes Consequences AND evidence presented supports research question AND concludes with the research question(s)	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence Causes Consequences BUT evidence is not explicitly linked to the research question AND concludes with the research question(s)	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence Causes Consequences AND evidence presented supports research question AND concludes with the research question(s)	<hr/> Score earned X 4 <hr/> Score earned

SWRK 640: Program Evaluation Project Rubric C1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; C4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice; C9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities						
Items 3 & 4						
C9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities						
3. Methodology	Methodology includes 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the dataset Sampling strategy Research design Variables defined Measures used Data analysis Ethical considerations (i.e., IRB) OR more than 5 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Methodology includes 2-3 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the dataset Sampling strategy Research design Variables defined Measures used Data analysis Ethical considerations (i.e., IRB) OR 4-5 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Methodology includes 4-6 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the dataset Sampling strategy Research design Variables defined Measures used Data analysis Ethical considerations (i.e., IRB) OR 2-3 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Methodology includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the dataset Sampling strategy Research design Variables defined Measures used Data analysis Ethical considerations (i.e., IRB) BUT at least 1 area is under-developed/ inaccurate	Methodology includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the dataset Sampling strategy Research design Variables defined Measures used Data analysis Ethical considerations (i.e., IRB) 	Score earned X 5 Score earned
4. Results	Includes 2 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics; Inferential statistics; Only presents factual information (i.e., no opinions); A meaningful APA-formatted table OR all areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Includes 3 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics; Inferential statistics; Only presents factual information (i.e., no opinions); A meaningful APA-formatted table OR more than 2 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics; Inferential statistics; Only presents factual information (i.e., no opinions); A meaningful APA-formatted table OR 2 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics; Inferential statistics; Only presents factual information (i.e., no opinions); A meaningful APA-formatted table BUT at least 1 area is under-developed/ inaccurate	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics; Inferential statistics; Only presents factual information (i.e., no opinions); A meaningful APA-formatted table 	Score earned X 4 Score earned
5. Discussion	Includes 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers the research question(s); Succinctly summarizes the findings of the data; Identifies strengths and limitations of 	Includes 2-3 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers the research question(s); Succinctly summarizes the findings of the data; Identifies strengths and limitations of 	Includes 4 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers the research question(s); Succinctly summarizes the findings of the data; Identifies strengths and limitations of the 	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers the research question(s); Succinctly summarizes the findings of the data; Identifies strengths and limitations of 	Includes ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers the research question(s); Succinctly summarizes the findings of the data; Identifies strengths and limitations of 	Score earned X 4 Score earned

SWRK 640: Program Evaluation Project Rubric C1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; C4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice; C9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities						
	the research study; • Discusses implications for social work practice and/or policy • Outlines areas of future research OR more than 3 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	the research study; • Discusses implications for social work practice and/or policy • Outlines areas of future research OR 3 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	research study; • Discusses implications for social work practice and/or policy • Outlines areas of future research OR 2 areas are under-developed/ inaccurate	the research study; • Discusses implications for social work practice and/or policy • Outlines areas of future research BUT at least 1 area is under-developed/ inaccurate	the research study; • Discusses implications for social work practice and/or policy • Outlines areas of future research	
Item 7 C1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior						
6. Writing and APA	Paper has more than 10 spelling and/or grammar errors. OR more than 10 APA errors; AND includes less than 3 peer-reviewed sources AND is conceptually and/or logically unsound.	Paper has 7-10 spelling and/or grammar errors; or 7-10 APA errors; AND includes at least 3 peer-reviewed sources AND lacks flow and is not logically presented.	Paper has 4-6 spelling and/or grammar errors; OR 4-6 APA errors; AND includes at least 7 peer-reviewed sources AND lacks flow but is conceptually sound.	Paper has 2-3 spelling and/or grammar errors; OR 2-3 APA errors; AND includes at least 11 peer-reviewed sources; AND paper is presented logically so that ideas flow nicely.	Paper has 0-1 spelling and/or grammar errors; OR 0-1 APA errors; AND includes at least 15 peer-reviewed sources; AND paper is logically and conceptually sound.	_____ Score earned X 2 _____ Score earned

Total score: _____ / 100 points possible

Final score: _____ points