



SWRK 345: Social Work Research
(3 credit hours)
SEMESTER: Fall 2021

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Meeting Time and Location
WEB

Course Description:

Prerequisite: SWRK 344. An introduction to concepts, research design, and program evaluation in social work research. Emphasis will be placed on developing skills in utilizing research information in social work practice.

Required Text:

Engel, R.J., & Schutt, R. K. (2017). *The practice of research in social work (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. ISBN: 978-1-4522-2546-3

Recommended Text:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

BSW Mission Statement

The mission of the BSW Program at Western Kentucky University is to prepare culturally competent professionals who practice with diverse communities and client systems. The program promotes a commitment to professional ethics, leadership, professionalism, social justice and lifelong learning in order for graduates to practice successfully in a global community.

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

The Council on Social Work Education defines Generalist Practice as the following:

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice. The baccalaureate program in social work prepares students for generalist practice. The descriptions of the nine Social Work Competencies presented in the EPAS identify the knowledge, values, skills, cognitive and affective processes, and behaviors associated with competence at the generalist level of practice (EPAS, 2015, p. 11).

Learning Outcomes

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

Knowledge

1. Explain the process of scientific inquiry as it relates to social work practice.

Values

2. Analyze ethical dilemmas in conducting research.
3. Identify the impact of diversity on the research process and the impact of the research process on diverse populations.

Skills

4. Design and implement a research plan to answer a social work practice question.

Cognitive/Affective

5. Compare and contrast the efficacy of various research designs to answer social work practice questions.

CSWE EPAS Core Competencies for BSW Education

The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) core competencies taught in all Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited BSW programs are included in **Appendix 1** of this syllabus. Core competencies addressed in this class are included in **Appendix 2** of this syllabus.

Topical Outline:

Unit I: Introductions and Course Overview

- A. Introductions and Review of Course Outline and Expectations.
- B. Importance of Research in Generalist Practice.
- C. Why does the Code of Ethics require us to engage in research?

Unit II: Scientific Reasoning and Problem Formation

- A. Errors of Everyday Reasoning
- B. Validity
- C. Types of Research

- D. Social Work Research Questions
- E. Critically Reviewing Prior Research
- F. Ethical Issues in Problem Formation

Unit III: Research Strategies, Conceptualization, and Operationalization

- A. Role of Theory
- B. Inductive and Deductive
- C. Operational Definitions
- D. Indicators and Scales

Unit IV: Research Ethics and Diversity Issues

- A. Diversity Considerations throughout the Research Cycle.
- B. Ethical Issues in Social Work Research
- C. The IRB Process
- D. Examples of Unethical Research
- E. Ethical Issues that Arise in Work with Minority and Oppressed Populations

Unit V: Measurement Psychometrics

- A. Variables
- B. Levels of Measurement
- C. Measurement Error
- D. Reliability and Validity
- E. Measurement and Social Diversity
- F. Implications for Evidence-based Practice

Unit VI: Sampling

- A. Sampling Theory
- B. Probability/Non-probability
- C. Recruiting Diverse Populations
- D. Ethical Concerns
- E. Implications for Evidence-based Practice

Unit VII: Research Design

- A. Surveys
- B. Experimental Designs
- C. Single Subject Designs
- D. Evaluation Designs
- E. Qualitative Methods

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance (Online)

Student attendance in online courses is defined as **active participation**. Active participation in this course is as follows:

- Completion of tests or quizzes
- Completion of discussion forums
- Submission/completion of assignments

- Communication with the instructor and fellow students when required
- Any other course participation

Students are required to log in to this course by the second day during the week in which the course officially begins. As a component of attendance student email, course announcements and discussion forums should be checked frequently (daily is recommended). You are solely responsible for checking updates related to the course. Note: nonattendance may affect your financial aid.

Attendance (In Class)

Attendance is taken at each class session. The instructor does not differentiate between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, therefore, students are not required to provide the instructor with any formal absence excuses or documentation. Students are allowed to miss two classes without penalty. Absences subsequent to the first absence will result in a **5 percent deduction (50 points) from the final grade for the course**. Students missing **6 or more class sessions will automatically receive an "F"** for the course. The "FN" grade (failure due to nonattendance) is given for students who do not officially withdraw from a course, but who stop attending PRIOR to or on the 60% point of the semester. You are expected to attend and actively participate in class. You want to be actively engaged in your learning experience. Questions and development of critical skills are important in case management and you will practice these skills in this class.

Course Assignments by Unit:

Unit I: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

- Each student will select a social problem addressed in their field placement. The semester will focus on that particular issue so be sure to be specific in your interest. The assignment in Unit One is to construct a well written literature review on the student selected social problem. Students will demonstrate beginning competency in articulating a research proposal, as they will fine tune their research question(s) throughout this unit. The literature review will introduce the processes of scientific inquiry and its relationship to the practice of social work.

Research Literacy: Reading a Journal Article (40 pts)

- Choose **one** peer reviewed journal from the **five** articles located in Blackboard and complete the four guiding questions that will allow you to find pertinent material needed to understand the study.

Literature Review (150 pts)

- **Each** student will thoroughly review **5** peer reviewed articles related to their research question(s) and compose a literature review that adequately defines the social problem as evidenced by including the following:

- Research Question
- Prevalence
- Causes
- Consequences
- APA format

Students are required to complete any edits and combine all relevant articles to produce one Literature Review by the end of the semester. Total length 3 pages maximum.

Develop a Research Question (10 points)

- Submit 2 draft research questions that you have interest in learning about your selected social problem addressed at your agency.

Unit I Quizzes 5 @ 10 points (50pts)

Unit II: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9

In this unit, students will apply an understanding of ethical concerns in research as they pertain to human subjects and social work practice. They will review the protection of human subjects' approval process as it stands at WKU. Students will develop an understanding of collecting and measuring data and apply this knowledge to their field project. In addition, all research that involves the use of humans (e.g., survey, experimental, evaluation, biomedical research) must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), according to the University's Assurance of Compliance Agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services. Therefore, students will complete the trainings required to conduct research at WKU.

Complete CITI Trainings (100 points)

- **IRB** applicants are to complete the following trainings – [1] Social/Behavioral Research Course & [2] Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course (RCR) (Each of the two modules have been reported to take roughly a minimum of 2-3 hours to complete, please consider this in your research time line). Once you have completed the modules, you will take three tests to demonstrate your understanding.

Go to [CITI Training](#)

- Select "New Users"
- Step 1 - Participating Institutions: Western Kentucky University
- Step 2 - Create a username and password
- Step 3 - Enter your name
- Step 4 - Enter e-mail address
- Complete contact information fields
- Check the course you are required to complete

Complete these COURSE tests and submit both (2) certificates

[1] Social/Behavioral Research Course & [2] Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course (RCR)

Pre and Post Test Assignment (20 points)

- Students will take a pre test on survey development. They will then watch an instructional video on the factors considered in survey development. They will then complete a post test. The results of the pre and post tests will be shared in class. Students will calculate the mean of the questions and develop a table indicating the outcomes.

Unit II Quizzes 4 @ 10 points (40 points)

Unit III: Chapters 10, 11, 13, 14

In this unit, students will develop the methodology for their research proposal. This entails selecting participants, outlining the intervention, and discussing the plan for project evaluation.

Methodology (50 points)

a. Study Design

What is the specific approach that will be used to investigate the research question or hypothesis? How many measurements will you be taking? When?

b. Participants

Who, or what, will be the sources(s) of study information? What eligibility criteria will be set for participation? What type of sampling technique will you use? How will study subjects be selected? How many subjects will be needed?

Research Evaluation Proposal (100 points)

This evaluation plan will utilize what was learned from the literature review. You will research evidenced based interventions targeting your population of interest. You will develop a program evaluation survey. There must be at least 3 references (2 for the intervention, and 1 for the survey development).

Program Evaluation Proposal

- Describe how you will survey your target population. Use the chapters related to surveying participants (informed consent, procedures for surveying participants). (1-2 paragraphs)
- Describe the intervention you have selected with citations. (1-2 paragraphs)
 - This requires you to search the research literature to learn about evidenced based programs that target your population. You will need 2 citations.
 - You will also be required to research surveys used to measure program outcomes. You MUST cite any surveys that you may have utilized to create your own.
- Create a program (intervention) evaluation survey.

- This should have minimum 10 questions, max 20 total questions (ordinal and Likert combined).
- All survey questions need to follow the proper format detailed in Ch 4 and 9.
- You will utilize ordinal (nominal) scales for the demographic information detailed in Ch 4.
- You will utilize a Likert Scale for the survey questions in Ch 9.

Unit III 4 quizzes @ 10 points (40 pts).

Evaluation & Grading:

1.	Quizzes	35%
2.	Research Project and Assignments	65%

Grading Scale:	90% - 100%	A
	80% - 89.99%	B
	70% - 79.99%	C
	60% - 69.99%	D
	0% - 59.99%	F

Academic Integrity

The WKU Undergraduate Catalog (2016-2017) provides the following Student Life Policies.

Academic Offenses

The maintenance of academic integrity is of fundamental importance to the University. Thus, it should be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts risks punishment of a serious nature. A student who believes a faculty member has dealt unfairly with him/her in a course involving academic offenses, such as plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty, may seek relief through the Student Complaint Procedure. Questions about the complaint procedure should be directed to the Student Ombudsperson at (270) 745-6169.

Academic Dishonesty

Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the coursework in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary sanctions.

Plagiarism

To represent written work taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism.

Cheating

No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment, or other project that is submitted for purposes o

Other Type of Academic Dishonesty

Other types of academic offenses, such as the theft or sale of tests, should be reported to the Office of Student Conduct at (270) 745-5429 for judicial sanction.

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 \(SARC\)](https://www.wku.edu/sarc/) (<https://www.wku.edu/sarc/>) located in the Student Success Center in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The contact telephone number is 270-745-5004 or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from SARC.

Learning Assistance at WKU

[The Learning Center \(TLC\)](http://www.wku.edu/tlc/) is located on the Bowling Green campus in the Academic Advising and Retention Center, DSU 2141. Should students require academic assistance with this course, or any other General Education Course, there are several places that can provide them with help. TLC tutors in most major undergraduate subjects and course levels throughout the week--they can also direct students to one of many tutoring and assistance Centers across campus. To make an appointment, or to request a tutor for a specific class, students should call 270-745-6254 or stop by DSU 2141. Students can log on to TLC's website at <http://www.wku.edu/tlc/> to find out more. The Glasgow campus also has a Resource Center.

On the Bowling Green campus, students are also encouraged to make use of the [Writing Center](http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter) located in Cherry Hall 123. The Writing Center offers online consultations for students. See instructions of the website www.wku.edu/writingcenter for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call 270-745-5719 to schedule an appointment.

Disclaimer

The professor reserves the right to make announced changes in the course due to extenuating circumstances.

Appendix 1

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)

Core Competencies

In 2008 CSWE adopted a competency-based education framework for its EPAS. As in related health and human service professions, the policy moved from a model of curriculum design focused on content (what students should be taught) and structure (the format and organization of educational components) to one focused on student learning outcomes. A competency-based approach refers to identifying and assessing what students demonstrate in practice. In social work this approach involves assessing the students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. (EPAS, 2015, p. 4)

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

- Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models of ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
- Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written and electronic communication;
- Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

- Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and

strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
- Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:

- Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
- Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
- Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy and service delivery.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structure of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

- Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
- Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services; and
- Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and

constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

- Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
- Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve clients and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and

communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

- Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
- Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
- Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
- Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individual, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
- Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes, and
- Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Appendix II

Course Matrix			
Competency	Course Content	Dimensions of Student Learning	Course Unit
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	Research Literacy CITI Trainings Program Evaluation	K, V	Units I, II, IV, and VI
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice	Research Literacy Survey Development Literature Review	V	Units IV, and VI
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	Literature Review Program Evaluation		Units IV, and VI
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	Research Literacy Literature Review CITI Trainings Program Evaluation	K, V, S, C/A	Units I, II, IV, V, VI and VII
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	Research Literacy CITI Trainings Program Evaluation		Units I, II, IV, and VI
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Survey Development Program Evaluation		Units IV, VI, and VII
Competency 7: Assess with Individuals, Families,	Literature Review, Survey Development		Units I, II, IV, VI, and VII

Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Program Evaluation		
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Literature Review Survey Development Program Evaluation		Units I, II, IV, and VII
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Literature Review Survey Development Program Evaluation		Units I, II, IV, and VII