

SW 6412-730: RESEARCH FOR PRACTICE: UTILIZATION & EVALUATION

Meeting Room: CSW 251

Meeting Day and Time: Thursdays, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

College of Social Work
University of Utah
Summer, 2012
E-mail: joanne.yaffe@utah.edu

Joanne Yaffe, PhD, ACSW
Office: CSW 314
Phone: 801-581-4829
Fax: 801-585-3219

Introduction

This 3-hour, first-semester course serves as an introduction to research concepts and skills to enable MSW-level practitioners to engage in evidence-based practice. This course is followed in the second year of the MSW program by a two-semester course sequence specific to the student's selected domain that will further students' knowledge about evidence-based practice and how to evaluate their own practice.

Course Goals & Objectives

This course is designed to teach students practical skills needed for the critical utilization of evidence-based research on social service systems, including applied research and evaluations of micro, mezzo, and macro social work interventions. This course also covers criteria for judging the methodological quality of research, considerations in working with populations-at-risk, people across the lifespan, and people of diversity, as well as ethical concerns in research. This content will prepare students to be critical consumers of research who are able to select evidence-based practices for social work intervention. Students who complete the course will have the skills, values and knowledge to do the following:

1. discuss the importance of critical thinking to effective social work practice;
2. explain the research process as a systematic approach to solving problems and expanding knowledge that progresses through a defined series of phases,
3. identify various types of research, researchable questions/hypotheses, research designs, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and common types of statistical analyses used in social work practice research,
4. identify potential biases of scientific research,
5. discuss implications of research for clients of diverse backgrounds,
6. pose specific questions of importance to practice,
7. use electronic databases and methodological filters to select the most relevant evidence to answer practice questions., and
8. critically appraise the quality and applicability of practice-relevant research.

Paperless Course

This is a paperless course. All materials, except for the textbook, are available on the class website via Instructure Canvas. Additional readings are available through electronic reserve. Students are expected to monitor the class website regularly, and are encouraged to login as often as possible to view new postings in the class discussion and to look at materials prepared for class sessions. You should NOT need to print all materials, and are specifically discouraged from doing so, except when necessary for your own learning style.

Theoretical Framework

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (1999, Section 5.02c) stipulates that “Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice.” The Council on Social Work Education, which accredits social work programs, states in its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2008, Section 2.1.6) that social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Further, the accreditation standards state that social workers use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and use research evidence to inform practice.

This commitment to evidence-based practice requires that social workers be accountable for their practice activities to their clients, and must select interventions from evidence-based methods. Further, a commitment to evidence-based practice requires that students understand the technical/logistical problems and the political/ethical concerns associated with the systematic phases of program planning and the evaluative research process, that they be able to selectively retrieve practice-relevant research from electronic databases, to evaluate the quality of retrieved research, and to apply selected findings to their practice.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Utah College of Social Work seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, <http://disability.utah.edu/>, 162 Olpin Union, 801-581-5020 (Voice and TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification.

Changes to Course Content and Syllabus

The instructor reserves the right to change the course requirements as warranted. The instructor changes the syllabus and course requirements each time the course is taught, and has been known to make errors which require correction.

Required Texts

Rubin, A. (2008). *Practitioner's guide to using research for evidence-based practice*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. **(Rubin)**

Greenhalgh, T. (2010) *How to read a paper: The basics of evidence-based medicine* (4th edition). Hoboken, NJ: BMJ Books. **(Greenhalgh)**

Additional required readings other than the text are on electronic reserve or otherwise through the Marriott Library website. A copy of Rubin is on regular reserve.

Evaluation of Student Performance

Students are expected to attend class regularly, keep up with the assigned readings and participate actively in class discussions. Student performance in the course is assessed using several different criteria, including class participation, discussion board participation and three written assignments.

Assignments

The following assignments are all required for this course and are briefly described below. The guidelines for each assignment are available on Instructure Canvas. Each of the assigned papers should be prepared using MS Word, double-spaced and **citations, references and headings should be in APA (6th edition) format. Copies of articles appraised by students and records related to search activities should be either in MS Word or .pdf format. All written assignments should be submitted as an assignment on Instructure Canvas.**

Specific assignments are as follows:

1. **Class participation (5 points)**. Students are expected to attend every class session, arriving on time and staying until the class meeting ends. Attendance will be noted. Significant class contributions, which are defined as questions or statements indicating comprehension of course material and which may be helpful to other students' learning, will earn full credit.
2. **Discussion postings (20 points)**. Students are expected to post to the electronic discussion for the class at least once per session in response to the instructor's discussion item or brief assignment. Please note that sessions for which major assignments are due will generally not have an associated discussion topic. Postings should reflect students' best efforts to incorporate course material, but are graded on an all-or-none basis – if you submit your best effort, you will receive full credit. Responses to postings from other students should be on topic, respectful, and helpful to other students' learning, and will contribute to class participation points (see #1 above). Spamming the discussion board with social chatter is specifically discouraged. Students are encouraged to read all postings. **Postings should be made before Midnight on Wednesday.** See additional comments on weekly discussions under the "assignments" link on Instructure Canvas.
3. **Weekly Self-Assessments (15 points)**. Students are asked to submit weekly self-assessments of their learning, reflecting the reading and other assignments for the next session. **Submissions should be made before Midnight on Wednesday.** These self-assessments are intended to help the instructor tailor the next session to the needs of students to the best of her ability and receive credit if submitted on a timely basis. See additional comments on weekly self-assessments under the "assignments" link on Instructure Canvas.
4. **PICO Questions (10 points)**. Due June 9, 2012. This assignment is intended to help you learn how to ask well-formed questions to help guide your professional decisions. Please see additional instructions for this assignment on Instructure Canvas.
5. **Searching and Locating the Needed Evidence (20 points)**. Due June 28, 2012. This assignment is intended to help you learn to search logically, efficiently, and in an unbiased way for the best evidence with which to answer questions about intervention effectiveness. Please see additional instructions for this assignment on Instructure Canvas.
6. **Critical Appraisal of Research (30 points)**. This assignment is intended to give you practice in appraising the scientific validity and applicability of research studies about intervention effectiveness. Please see additional instructions for this assignment on Instructure Canvas. **Articles for this assignment need to be submitted and approved by July 19, 2012. Please give me at least 24 hours to look at your study.** Assignment is due August 2, 2012.

Grading Policies

1. All submissions for the course must utilize citations in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (Sixth Edition, 2010).
2. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated.
3. Papers must be formatted in MS Word, so that I can provide comments in Track Changes.
4. **Late assignments will have up to one-third of the points deducted unless prior arrangement has been made with the instructor. Assignments are due before class.**
5. Incompletes are granted only in accordance with University policy.
6. This course is not graded on a curve; therefore, your grade will be based on the total you receive of 100 possible points. Final grades will be calculated as follows:
 - A 95 to 100 points
 - A- 90 to 95 points
 - B+ 87 to 90 points
 - B 83 to 87 points
 - B- 80 to 83 points
 - C+ 77 to 80 points
 - C 73 to 77 points
 - C- 70 to 73 points
 - D 65 to 70 points
 - E less than 65 points

Office Hours

My office is located in Social Work 314 (801-581-4829). Office hours are by appointment, at our mutual convenience; please [email me](#) at any time to find a time that works for both of us. **I encourage you to consult with me by email for questions or comments at any time.** Please contact me by e-mail at joanne.yaffe@utah.edu or via Instructure Canvas. My office telephone is rarely answered, so please don't rely on it for messages.

COURSE OUTLINE

May 17

Course Introduction

- Introductions
- Course Overview
- Course Assignments
- Instructure Canvas
- Introduction to Evidence-Based Practice

May 24 Thinking about Practice

- The role of research in social work
- Ways of knowing
- Critical thinking
- Scientific attitudes
- Overview of Evidence-Based Practice

Reading: Rubin, Chapters 1 & 2
Greenhalgh, Chapter 1

May 31 Problem Formulation

Misty McIntyre Goodsell will special guest lecture!

- Problem identification
- Exploration/description/explanation
- Quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Intervention Effectiveness, Assessment, and Background questions
- PICO questions

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 3

June 7 Intervention Effectiveness: The Role of Systematic Reviews

- Advantages of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
- Campbell and Cochrane Collaborations

Reading: About the Campbell Collaboration
(http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/about_us/index.php)
The Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org/>)
SCIE: The Social Care Institute for Excellence: (<http://www.scie.org.uk/>)

June 9 Finding Studies to Answer Questions about Intervention Effectiveness

Saturday

(PICO Assignment Due)

Saturday class, 8 am to 12:30 pm

Demonstration & Practice on searches using library databases

- Using electronic databases to retrieve literature
- Using Methodological Filters to refine your search
- Finding Systematic Reviews, Randomized Control Trials, and Quasi-Experiments

Reading: Greenhalgh, Chapter 2

June 14 Criteria for Appraising Studies of Intervention Effectiveness

- Internal Validity
- Measurement Issues
- Statistical Chance and Effect Size
- External Validity
- Ethics
- Relevance to Clinical Context and Client

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 4 and Appendix A
Greenhalgh, Chapters 3 & 4

June 21 Ethics, Politics, and Cultural Competency in Research

- NASW code of ethics
- Obligation to human subjects
- Gender and culture in research
- Diverse and vulnerable populations
- Politics of social work research

Reading: [U of Utah Institutional Review Board](#)
[San Diego State University Human Subjects Tutorial](#)
[NASW Code of Ethics](#)

Epstein, W. M. (2004). Confirmational response bias and the quality of the editorial processes among American social work journals. *Research on Social Work Practice, 14*, 450-458. DOI: 10.1177/1049731504265838.

Article for Next Discussion:

Berzin, S., Cohen, E., Thomas, K., & Dawson, W. C. (2008). Does family group decision making affect child welfare outcomes? Findings from a randomized control study. *Child Welfare, 87*(4), 35-54.

June 28 Critically Appraising Randomized Control Studies (Search Assignment Due)

- Types of Experimental Designs
- Threats to Internal Validity
- Threats to External Validity
- Statistical Significance and Effect Size

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 5 and Appendix B
Greenhalgh, Chapters 5 & 6

July 5 **Critically Appraising Quasi-Experiments**

- Nonequivalent Comparison Group Designs
- Pilot Studies
- Time Series Designs
- Single System Designs

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 6 and 7 and Appendixes C & D
Greenhalgh, Chapter 7

Article for Next Discussion:

McClatchey, I. S., Vonk, M. E., & Palardy, G. (2009). Efficacy of a camp-based intervention for childhood traumatic grief. *Research on Social Work Practice, 19*, 19-30. DOI: 10.1177/1049731508314276

July 12 **Critically Appraising Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses**

- Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analyses
- Critical Appraisal of Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analyses

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 8 and Appendix E
Greenhalgh, Chapter 9

Article for Next Discussion:

[Winokur, M., Holtan, A., & Valentine, D. \(2009\) Kinship care for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children removed from the home for maltreatment. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*. doi: 10.4073/csr.2009.1](#)

July 14 **Critically Appraising Background/Descriptive Studies**
Saturday

Saturday Class; 1- 3:30 pm, followed by BBQ 3:30-5:30

- Surveys
- Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Studies
- Case-Control Studies
- Qualitative Observation
- Qualitative Interviewing
- Qualitative Sampling
- Grounded Theory

Reading: Rubin, Chapters 9 & 10 and Appendixes F & G
Greenhalgh, Chapters 12 & 13
Narendorf, S. C., Fedoravicius, J., McMillen, J. C., McNelly, D., & Robinson, D. R. (2012). Stepping down and stepping in: Youth's perspectives on making the transition from residential treatment to treatment foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 43-49.

July 19 Critically Appraising Studies about Assessment (Articles must be approved by today)

- Reliability
- Validity
- Sensitivity
- Feasibility
- Sample Characteristics
- Locating Assessment Instruments

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 11 and Appendix H
Greenhalgh, Chapter 8

Article for the Next Discussion:

Leschied, A. W., Chiodo, D., Whitehead, P. C., Hurley, D., & Marshall, L. (2003). The empirical basis of risk assessment in child welfare: The accuracy of risk assessment and clinical judgment. *Child Welfare, 82*(5), 527-540.

July 26 Evaluating Your Own Practice

- Historical overview of program evaluation
- Program evaluation approaches
- Practitioner-Friendly Design
- Feasible Assessment Techniques

Reading: Rubin, Chapter 12
Greenhalgh, Chapter 14

August 2 Course Wrap-up (Critical Appraisal Assignment Due)

- Getting Evidence into Practice
- Feedback on course content
- Feedback on course structure
- Feedback on assignments as learning experiences

Reading: Greenhalgh, Chapter 15