

**City University of Hong Kong**

**Information on a Course  
offered by Department of Applied Social Sciences  
with effect from Semester A in 2014/2015**

---

---

**Part I**

Course Title:	Social Work Research Methods
Course Code:	SS5213
Course Duration:	One Semester
No. of Credit Units:	3
Level:	P5
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites:	Nil
Precursors:	Nil
Equivalent Courses:	Nil
Exclusive Courses	Nil

**Part II**

**1. Course Aims**

Social workers are guided by theories, research and practice wisdom in their work. It is important for students to be able to understand the importance of knowledge developed from research and to utilize this knowledge in their clinical and administrative practice. In order to build a firm conceptual foundation for research practice and the integration of research into a wide range of social work activities, this course will expose students to social science research ethics and the fundamental elements of social science research methods. Approaches to intervention research, social research and development, clinical research with individuals and groups, single-subject design, case study, qualitative approaches, use of narratives, and process studies will be explored. Students will be required to design an intervention research project and assess its strengths and weaknesses.

This course aims to

- Develop a scientific attitude towards the empirical research process and become familiar with the basic characteristics of social research.
- Understand the nature of the components which are fundamental to the development, and completion of social science research.
- Critically examine the factors involved in the selection of research designs appropriate to the study of social services.
- Acquire knowledge and understanding of various research methods and statistical analysis applicable to social work settings.

## 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

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

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)
1.	Describe the strengths and limitations of various kinds of social research methods and explain the appropriate use of each method.	25%
2.	Demonstrate knowledge of research methods and statistical analysis applicable to social work settings; identify strengths and limitations of social work research.	25%
3.	Demonstrate a basic understanding of the nature of programme evaluation through appropriate research.	10%
4.	Select and implement appropriate research methodologies in social work settings.	20%
5.	Demonstrate appropriate use of SPSS software by selecting, implementing and interpreting statistical analyses.	20%

## 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No.	TLA1	TLA2	TLA3	TLA4	TLA5	Hours/week (if applicable)
CILO 1	√	√				
CILO 2	√	√	√	√		
CILO 3	√	√	√	√		
CILO 4	√	√	√	√		
CILO 5	√		√		√	

### TLA1: Lectures

The instructor will provide lectures to introduce the topics. Guest lecturers may be invited. Students are required to read “required readings” before the class.

### TLA2: Class Discussions

Classroom discussions organized around intellectual input given in lectures.

### TLA3: Small Group Study

Students form small study group to formulate a research proposal, plan the class presentation and learn to work together for a task.

### TLA4: Student Presentation

Student group presentations to explore the Q & A format of critical learning skills.

### TLA5: SPSS Training

In addition to the 3 hour lecture per week, this course will provide an additional 13 hours of supplementary hands-on training for the students in using the SPSS software to select, conduct, and interpret descriptive and bivariate statistical analyses.

## 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No.	Type of Assessment Tasks/Activities	Weighting (if applicable)	Remarks
CILO 1-4	AT1: Research article critique	25%	
CILO 1-4	AT2: Group presentation	10%	
CILO 1-4	AT3: Group research proposal	40%	
CILO 2, 5	AT4: Individual statistical analysis	25%	

### AT1: Research Article Critique

Students will chose a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research article (from among choices provided by the instructor) and write an individual critique of the article. The critique will focus on the appropriateness of the research methods used, whether the methods were correctly applied, and whether the authors' conclusions are warranted. Strengths and weaknesses of the article should be highlighted.

### AT2: Group presentation

Students will provide a small group presentation to the class on their research proposal which will include an oral presentation in English for each student and a group powerpoint presentation.

### AT3: Group research proposal

In small groups, students will develop a research proposal (4000-5000 words) to evaluate the effectiveness of a social work intervention (treatment). The proposal will include a detailed literature review on the definition, prevalence, risk factors and consequences of the social problem selected. A review of theories used to explain the social problem as well as a review of outcome evidence from relevant research studies will provide a basis for selection of the intervention (treatment) to be evaluated. A detailed research design will include discussion of the reliability and validity of measurement, a sampling plan, and plans for data collection and data analysis. A critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal will also be incorporated into the assignment.

### AT4: Individual statistical analysis

Using an existing data set provided by the instructor, the students will independently complete an assignment to demonstrate their knowledge via correct selection, application and interpretation of statistics using the SPSS software.

**5. Grading of Student Achievement:** Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grading criteria in relation to CILOs</b>
A+ A A-	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base, well organized and well documented literature review, carefully integrated research design (incorporating ethical issues, measurement, sampling, study design, data collection and analysis plan). Excellent grasp of knowledge as measured by quiz results.
B+ B B-	Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature. Some very well-done sections of the research paper that may contain some inconsistencies in quality or unclear intellectual linkages. Good grasp of research knowledge as measured by quiz results.
C+ C C-	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material. Some well-done sections of the research paper, but of inconsistent quality and with unclear or poorly developed linkages. Moderate grasp of research knowledge measured by quiz result.
D	Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course. Conceptually coherent research proposal that suffers from major limitations in section development and/or conceptual linkages. Minimal grasp of research knowledge measured by quiz results.
F	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature. Poor grasp of research knowledge measured by quiz results.

### Part III

#### 1. Keyword Syllabus

##### 1.1 Social Science Research Methods

Scientific inquiry. Scientific logic. Epistemology. Problem formulation. Reliability and validity of measurement. Single-subject design. Survey research. Qualitative research methods. Quantitative research methods. Mixed methods. Causal inference. Internal validity. Threats to internal validity. Alternative and rival hypotheses. External validity. Probability and non-probability sampling methods. Statistics. Descriptive and inferential data analysis. Program evaluation.

##### 1.2 Research Ethics

Human subjects research. Informed consent. Voluntary participation. Protection of human subjects. Anonymous and confidential studies. Incentive vs. inducement. Ethics review boards. Expedited and full ethics reviews. Promoting the development of research knowledge.

#### 2. Recommended Reading

##### Essential Texts

Engel, R.J. & Schutt, R.K. (2010). *The Fundamentals of Social Work Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

### **Supplementary Texts**

Blanksby, P. E., & Barber, J. G. (2006). *SPSS for social workers : An introductory workbook*. Boston: Pearson.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jones, J. H. (1981). *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. London, England: Free Press.

Minkler, M. & Wallerstein, N. (2003). *Community based participatory research for health*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

Monette, D.R., Sullivan, T.J., & DeJong, C.R. (2005). *Applied social research: A Tool for the Human Services*. (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thompson Learning.

Padgett, D. K. (2004). *The qualitative research experience*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Strauss, A. L. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Tashakkori & Teddlie (2002). *Mixed methods for the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

### **Recommended Guidebook for APA Style Formatting**

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

Szuchman, L. T. & Thomlison, B. (2007). *Writing with style: APA Style for social work* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Wadsworth Publishing Company.

### **Articles**

Bae, S.-W., & Brekke, J. S. (2003). The measurement of self-esteem among Korean Americans: A cross-ethnic study. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 9(1), 16-33.

Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1999). Introduction: The role of critical thinking in the helping professions. In *Critical thinking for social workers: Exercises for the helping profession* (Rev. ed., pp. 3-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Herie, M., & Martin, G.W. (2002). Knowledge diffusion in social work: A new approach to bridging the gap. *Social Work*, 47 (1), 85-95.

Heineman, M.B. (1981). The obsolete scientific imperative in social work research. *Social Service Review*, 55(3), 371-397.

Klein, W. C., Bloom, M., & Chandler, S. M. (1994). Is there an ethical responsibility to use practice methods with the best empirical evidence of effectiveness? In W. W. Hudson & P. S. Nurius (Eds.), *Controversial issues in social work research* (pp. 100-112). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Proctor, E. K. (1990). Evaluating clinical practice: Issues of purpose and design. *Social Work Research & Abstracts*, 26(1), 32-40.

Schuerman, J.R. (1982). Debate with authors: The obsolete scientific imperative in social work research. *Social Service Review*, 56(1), 144-148.

Sherraden, M. (2000). Asking questions well: The role of theory in applied social research, keynote address. *Proceedings of the twelfth national symposium on doctoral research in social work*. (pp. 1-21). Columbus, Oh. Ohio State University, College of Social Work.

York, R. O. (1997). Developing the literature review for a research study. In *Building basic competencies in social work research: An experiential approach* (Appendix A, pp. 349-358). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

### **Online Resources**

National Associate of Social Workers: <http://www.naswdc.org>.

National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (NGC) - A public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines: <http://www.guideline.gov>.

The Elements of Style - A rule book for writing. You can read it online: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.

USC Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug\\_plag.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm).

Forum: Qualitative Research - An online journal of qualitative research: <http://www.qualitative-research.net>.

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research: <http://www.iaswresearch.org>.

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

American Evaluation Association: <http://www.eval.org>.

Social Work Resources and Research Guide <http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork>

Guide to locating Tests and Instruments <http://www.apa.org/science/faq-findtests.html>.

<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>  
on survey research and sample size calculator.

<http://ihome.cuhk.edu.hk/~b103405/ls2001/>  
web site introducing social research methods by CUHK in Chinese.

<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/mpu/research/index.html>  
research projects of SS and SA staff.

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~lane/rvls.html>  
virtual laboratory on statistics.

<http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw>  
World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers.

<http://www.socialwork.com.hk>  
sites on social work resources in Hong Kong.

<http://www.surveyconsole.com/console/showSurveyLibrary.do?surveyID=169>  
free Survey Template Library.

<http://www.odh.state.oh.us/Data/OFHSurv/OFHSChartBk8Cover.htm>  
Women's Health By Race and Ethnicity, Ohio, 1998.

<http://www.medschoolchat.com/printarticle128.html>  
Positioning Women's Health Curricula in US Medical Schools.

<http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/20020507a-index.cfm>  
2001 Kaiser Women's Health Survey - Women's Health in the United States: Health Coverage and Access to Care.

<http://www.researchmethods.com/>  
Research Method Workshop.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse>  
Logic Model Course.