
Day, Time: Monday, 2:00 - 4:50 p.m.

Professor: Sheryl Zimmerman, PhD, University Kenan Distinguished Professor and Associate Dean
Schools of Social Work and Public Health
Room 548J, School of Social Work (325 Pittsboro Street)
Phone: 919-962-6417 E-mail: Sheryl.Zimmerman@unc.edu (preferred)

Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00 – 2:00, and other times by appointment

Location: Room 137 Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building

COURSE DESCRIPTION. Students build advanced competence in research design, data collection, data analysis, and statistics by analyzing exemplary social work research and presenting independent learning projects within specialized areas of study.

Expanded Course Description. Students develop material for their comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal, completing independent learning projects that build substantive, theoretical, and methodological knowledge appropriate for their specialized area of study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the stages of social research with particular emphasis on formulation of the research problem and an advanced research design.

2. Describe critically the major conceptual frameworks, substantive theories, and research designs that inform their specialized area of study.

3. Describe issues in study populations, sampling strategies, and generalizability of findings in research in their specialized area of study.

4. Identify ethical issues and dilemmas that pertain to conducting and reporting scholarly research in their specialized area of study, including human subjects considerations.

Some of the activities by which students will meet these objectives include:

- Learn the requirements for preparing for the comprehensive examination, dissertation proposal, and dissertation.

- Identify areas of scholarly pursuit not yet accomplished through previous coursework (e.g., methodological skills) and next steps to accomplish academic goals (e.g., skill building; networking; selecting book vs. manuscript-style dissertation).

- Critically review pivotal scholarly works, intervention research, and related material in a specialized area of study and synthesize this material in writing and verbally; this material will form the basis of the comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal.

- Receive feedback on written materials and presentation style from classmates, the professor, and discussants.

- Meet with the dissertation chair on a regular basis to review material related to the comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal.

- Develop strategies for forming and working with a dissertation committee.

- Develop a timeline to prepare for the comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal hearing, and to complete the dissertation.
TEACHING METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS. This course is a seminar that has been designed to maximize progress on the tasks at hand – building expertise in a field of study and preparing for the comprehensive examination and the dissertation proposal. It promotes scholarly mastery related to the student’s area of social intervention research through focused reading and writing. It also promotes mastery of skills related to writing and making oral presentations.

The course has been outlined into six topical areas. The first five topics map to the competencies required for the historic comprehensive examination qualifying paper; the last one relates to the focus of the dissertation proposal.

1. Problem statement in terms of the specific pressing need within a field of study (i.e., background and significance)
2. Related theories and disciplines
3. Related conceptual model
4. Research designs and methods that have addressed it, as well as related interventions, other research, and evidence
5. Implementation challenges that complicate uptake
6. Promising research questions, interventions, and related design (i.e., aims and methods of dissertation)

Two sessions are devoted to each topic. The student will confer with the dissertation chair on a regular basis.

The first of the two sessions require the student to identify and review at least five key articles relevant to the topic in regard to the chosen specialized area of study, from which the student will begin to develop 3-5 pages of related text (with citations). The student will lead an informal discussion of this material, soliciting focused group feedback (20 minutes in total). Before the next session, the student is expected to consult with his/her dissertation chair on the topic.

The second of the two weeks will require the student to revise and refine the material based on feedback and additional independent study, and complete two activities.

- During class, the student will deliver a 15 minute formal presentation of the material; a handout of the presentation should be prepared for each class member (e.g., a copy of Powerpoint slides). Class members will provide feedback on the presentation style and content.
- By the Friday after class, the student will submit the related 3-5 pages of text (with citations) to the instructor and one peer (see last page of syllabus). Comments on this material are to be provided by the second following class session. The material is to be prepared according to the style guidelines in the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) and should represent the student’s best work.

At the end of the semester, the student will submit a summative paper that integrates all written assignments and reflects the feedback received, and further fleshes out the 3-5 pages submitted for each topic.

In addition to the methods and assignments noted above, the instructor will provide and discuss relevant material throughout the course (e.g., identifying funding priorities, selecting committee members, understanding authorship).

Given the highly interactive nature of this course, students are expected to attend and prepare for all class sessions.

GRADING SYSTEM AND POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS. The design of this course makes distinguishing entirely satisfactory performance (P) from clear excellence performance (H) difficult. If a student is striving to achieve a grade of H, he/she should meet with the instructor to discuss what it will entail to do so. Otherwise, students who complete the work successfully will receive a P. Late assignments will be accepted and/or incomplete grades assigned only in special situations with prior approval.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. Refer to the APA Style Guide for information on the attribution of quotes. Written assignments should contain a signed pledge stating “I have not given nor received unauthorized aid in the preparation of this work.” In accordance with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General.

PREREQUISITES

SOWO 900  Conceptualizing Social Problems to Inform Interventions
SOWO 910  Research Methods in Social Intervention
SOWO 911  Introduction to Social Statistics and Data Analysis, or equivalent
SOWO 914  Measurement in Social Intervention Research
SOWO 940  Development of Social Intervention Models
POLICY ON THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM. Electronic devices may be used, but the use of these devices for non-class related activities is prohibited. Students are not to use their computers or other electronic devices to check e-mail or Facebook, or for any other non-course related reason, while class is in session.

WRITING SUPPORT. Clear, cogent writing is an essential skill for social work professionals. Writing support is available to all students through the School’s Writing Support Team; the team can help strengthen students’ writing skills by sharing strategies for organizing information, presenting a cohesive argument, ensuring clear communication, and mastering the APA writing style. Writing Support offers a learning opportunity for students and does not merely copyedit student papers. Writing support is available by phone, in-person, or by e-mail; e-mail a requested appointment day and time to SOSWwritingsupport@gmail.com. In addition, see the Writing Resources and References page on the School’s website (under the Current Students tab: https://ssw.unc.edu/students/writing).

ACCESSIBILITY AND RESOURCES SERVICES. The School of Social Work aims to create an educational environment that supports the learning needs of all students. The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (UNC) facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. The Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) Office at UNC has been established to coordinate all accommodations. If you might need accommodations at any point during the semester, contact ARS prior to the beginning of the semester or as early in the semester as possible so that they can assist you; this process takes time. You can visit their website at http://accessibility.unc.edu, and contact ARS by email (accessibility@unc.edu) or phone (919-962-8300). The accommodations process starts with ARS and helps instruct faculty at the School of Social Work on how best to proceed. As a School, we are committed to working with ARS and students to implement needed accommodations for all of our students. In addition to seeking ARS supports, also reach out to your instructor to communicate how best your needs can be met once you have begun the ARS process.

ASSIGNED READING (available on Sakai)


ADDITIONAL READING


The written assignment is a critical examination of a social problem/issue about which the student intends to develop expertise and focus his/her dissertation work. It follows a sequence of steps that require a careful review and analysis of the problem/issue, including issues related to race, justice, and equity; the theoretical frameworks that explain it, and other disciplines that address its etiology and/or solution; the related conceptual model; previous research that has studied it; relevant implementation challenges; and necessary next steps. As students complete the assignment, it is expected that they will acquire mastery of the literature in their chosen field of study.

Through the course of the semester, and in regular consultation with their dissertation chair, students will write a critical analysis (at least 30 pages in length) that fully addresses the following topics.

(1) The social research problem/issue and its background and significance (i.e., pressing need), being attentive to issues related to race, justice, and equity

(2) Integrated theoretical frameworks/perspectives for understanding the pressing need, and other disciplines that address the same need, weaving the other disciplinary perspectives into the text

(3) Related conceptual models (e.g., risk/protective factors, mediators/moderators, short/long-term outcomes)

(4) Previous research that has addressed the pressing need, including:
   - Research designs and methods, considering issues inherent to the problem/issue (e.g., ethics)
   - Interventions and other research (e.g., epidemiological or policy studies, case reports, evaluations)
   - Related evidence (if not addressed earlier)

(5) Implementation challenges that complicate uptake of promising interventions

(6) Conclusions and implications/next steps (i.e., significant, innovative, transformative research questions and related research designs)

Tables and figures (i.e., the conceptual model and others as appropriate) and citations are in addition to the 30 (or more) pages, and the material is to be written in accordance with the guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

It is expected that this written assignment will be suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and that sections of it will be included in the student’s dissertation proposal and dissertation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: Aug 27</td>
<td>Course orientation (including syllabus and regular meeting with chair)</td>
<td>Onken</td>
<td>Informal discussion of (1) problem statement/pressing need</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. <strong>Problem statement/pressing need</strong> (e.g., incidence, prevalence, outcomes, risk and modifiable factors) based on ≥ five key articles (i.e., background/significance)</td>
<td>Top topic specific</td>
<td>After class, review with chair (instructor will contact chair re: expectation of frequent contact)</td>
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<td>Additional discussion topics (instructor): Making academic presentations, other</td>
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<td>Week 2: Sept 3</td>
<td>Holiday; no class</td>
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<td>Week 3: Sept 10</td>
<td>Academic writing, Part I</td>
<td>Topic specific</td>
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<td>Guest instructor: Diane Wyant</td>
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<td>Week 4: Sept 17</td>
<td>1. <strong>Problem statement/pressing need</strong></td>
<td>Uehara</td>
<td>Formal presentation of (1) problem statement/pressing need</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Related theories (three or more) and disciplines</strong> based on ≥ five key articles</td>
<td>Gehlhart</td>
<td>Informal discussion of (2) theories/disciplines; after class, review with chair</td>
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<td>Additional discussion topics (instructor): Selecting committee members, other</td>
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<td>Written (1) due 9/21 to instructor and Diane Wyant</td>
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<td>Week 5: Sept 24</td>
<td>2. <strong>Related theories and disciplines</strong></td>
<td>Topic specific</td>
<td>Formal presentation of (2) theories/disciplines</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Conceptual model</strong> (e.g., definition of variables, independent and dependent variables) based on ≥ five key articles</td>
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<td>Written (2) due 9/28</td>
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<td>Additional discussion topics (instructor)</td>
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<td>Week 6: Oct 1</td>
<td>Individual consultation (set appointment with instructor)</td>
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<td>Week 7: Oct 8</td>
<td>Academic writing, Part II</td>
<td>Topic specific</td>
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<td>Guest instructor: Diane Wyant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Oct 15</td>
<td>3. <strong>Conceptual model</strong></td>
<td>Topic specific</td>
<td>Formal presentation of (3) conceptual model</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Critical review of previous research/literature</strong> (designs, methods, interventions, other research, related evidence), based on ≥ five key articles</td>
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<td>Informal discussion of (4) previous research/literature; after class, review with chair</td>
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<td>Week 9: Oct 22</td>
<td>4. <strong>Critical review of previous research/literature</strong></td>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>Written (3) due 10/19</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Implementation challenges</strong> that complicate uptake (and how to overcome them) based on ≥ five key articles</td>
<td>Helfrich</td>
<td>Informal discussion of (5) implementation challenges; after class, review with chair</td>
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<td>Discussion topic (instructor): Implementation science</td>
<td>Weiner</td>
<td>Written (4) due 10/26</td>
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<td>Week 10: Oct 29</td>
<td>Individual consultation (set appointment with instructor)</td>
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<td>Week 11: Nov 5</td>
<td>5. <strong>Implementation challenges</strong></td>
<td>Thabane</td>
<td>Formal presentation of (5) implementation challenges</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Promising research questions, designs, and interventions</strong> (i.e., aims and methods of dissertation proposal)</td>
<td>Grand Challenges</td>
<td>Informal discussion of (6) promising avenues; after class, review with chair</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Race/social justice/equity in international research: Dr. Gina Chowa, Dr. Rain Masa</td>
<td>website</td>
<td>Written (5) due 11/9</td>
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<td>Additional discussion topics (instructor)</td>
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<td>Week 12: Nov 12</td>
<td>Race, social justice, and equity in the context of research ethics</td>
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<td>Guest instructor: Dr. Kim Strom-Gottfried</td>
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<td>Week 13: Nov 19</td>
<td>6. <strong>Promising research questions, designs, and interventions</strong></td>
<td>Hasche</td>
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<td>Discussion topic: Passing your comprehensive exam, writing your dissertation proposal, securing a dissertation grant, finishing your dissertation, selecting journals, funding</td>
<td>Top topic specific</td>
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<td>(<a href="http://gradschool.unc.edu/etdguide/pdf/etdguide.pdf">http://gradschool.unc.edu/etdguide/pdf/etdguide.pdf</a>); The Writing Center, Dissertations (<a href="http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/">http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/</a>); UNC Graduate School Ethics</td>
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<td>Requirements (<a href="http://gradschool.unc.edu/ethics.html">http://gradschool.unc.edu/ethics.html</a>)</td>
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<td>Week 14: Nov 26</td>
<td>Individual consultation (set appointment with instructor)</td>
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<td>Week 15: Dec 3</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>Additional discussion topics (instructor): Research grant administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals: Dec 10</td>
<td>No class; papers due</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Integrated paper due 12/10 to instructor and dissertation chair</td>
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## ADDENDUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Reader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Receive dates are Fridays; comment due dates are Mondays, one full week later)</td>
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</table>
| Premela Deck | (1) Problem statement/pressing need  
Receive 9/21  
Comments Due 10/1 |
| Annie Francis | (2) Related theories and disciplines  
Receive 9/28  
Comments Due 10/8 |
| L.B. Klein | (3) Conceptual model  
Receive 10/19  
Comments Due 10/29 |
| Michael Lazar | (4) Research/literature critique  
Receive 10/26  
Comments Due 11/5 |
| Sarah Rabiner | Chair: |
| Chair: | |
| Chair: | |