

SW 8103 Project Seminar I Fall, 2004

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& by appointment
(sign up sheet on office door)

Course Overview

This third course in the research sequence builds on the beginning competence of understanding social research that was acquired in SW 8101 Introduction to Research or in an undergraduate social work research course. This course is taken either simultaneously or subsequent to SW 8102 Advanced Research, with both courses preparing students to develop a research proposal that will serve as a basis for completing the Masters Research Project. SW 8104 Project Seminar II follows this course and provides support and additional skills for implementing the research project and writing up the report. A separate sheet explains the relationship between SW 8101, SW 8102, SW 8103 and SW 8104 and the Masters Research Project. The relationship of this course to the rest of the advanced generalist curriculum will be discussed in class.

The broad goals of this course are for students to apply key research concepts to a particular community-based research need and to successfully complete a proposal for the Masters Research Project. Issues addressed in this course include research topic selection, literature reviews, formulation of research questions or hypotheses, methods of collecting data, methods of data analysis, and research proposal development. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Select a specific, community-based research topic, and focus this topic for a research project;
2. Complete a literature review;
3. Formulate specific research questions and/or hypotheses, for a research project;
4. Select an appropriate research design, instruments, and methods of analysis;
5. Complete a proposal for a Masters Research Project to their Supervisor's satisfaction; and
6. Submit and receive approval for their Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects) form.

Course Format

We will incorporate a variety of learning activities in attempting to accomplish the goals and objectives described above. Class sessions will be in seminar format and involve the instructor reviewing and explaining key concepts and working with students to apply these concepts to their research topics. A reading list appears below and an extensive bibliography of additional readings is in the *Masters Research Project Handbook*. Students will also be encouraged to participate in additional learning activities outside of class.

Students are encouraged to participate actively in the class. If you have ideas on how a certain topic might be presented or addressed, please express them; if you are aware of learning resources that are not being used, please suggest them. If we work together, I think this can be a very interesting and rewarding class.

Readings

The primary readings used for this course will come from:

The Masters Research Project Handbook (June or September, 2004 Edition)

Rubin, A. and Babbie, E. (2000). *Research Methods for Social Work (4th Edition)*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. (abbreviated R & B below)

Weinbach, R. W. and Grinnell, R. M. (2004). *Statistics for Social Workers (6th Edition)*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. (abbreviated W & G below)

The *Masters Research Project Handbook* will be distributed in class and both of the texts are available in the UMD bookstore under SW 8102. Additional readings will come from materials provided in class or available on reserve in the library, including the following materials:

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the APA 5th Ed.*. Washington, DC: APA.

A chapter on "Writing a Research Proposal" by K. Moss, in Grinnell, R. W. (1988). *Social Work Research and Evaluation (3rd Edition)*. Itaska, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. (abbreviated G88 below)

Student Evaluation

The requirements of this course include the following:

- seminar attendance
- critique of previous Masters Research (Plan B) papers
- development of timetable for research project
- presentation of research topic
- presentation of research question/hypothesis
- presentation of research design
- presentation of final progress report
- completion of research proposal

This course is graded on a pass-fail basis. Satisfactory completion of each of the requirements above will be necessary to complete the course. See "Guidelines for Requirements" for additional information about the bases for evaluation.

Students may demonstrate competency related to the broad goals of this course through alternative means by working with a learning contract. Please see Denny if you would like more information about this option.

Policy on Incompletes, Disabilities, Evaluation of Course and Instruction, and Ground Rules for Discussion

These policies and practices are the same for SW 8103 as for SW 8102. Please see the syllabus for SW 8102 for information on these topics.

Tentative Schedule: SW 8103 Project Seminar I

Class	Date	Topic	Reading
1	9/7	Introduction to the course; distribute materials	
2	9/14	Overview of the Masters Research Project	<i>Masters Research Handbook</i>
3	9/21	Writing the research proposal; working with the community; formulating the research problem	G88 429-444 R&B 1-170
4	9/28	Completing the literature review Human Subjects form (review on the Web prior to class); Preview timetables; research topic, and research question	R&B 601-631 R&B 560-600 read two approved Masters papers
	10/5	No class; meet requirements for St. Louis County Conference attendance Critique of previous Masters Research (Plan B) papers due	
5A (or) 5B	10/12 10/19	Presentation of tentative research topic; Research topic form due Timetables due	R&B 171-246
	10/26	No class; individual consultation with Denny by appointment	
6A (or) 6B	11/2 11/9	Presentation of tentative research question/hypothesis; Preview research methods Research question/hypothesis form due	R&B 247-464
	11/16	No class; individual consultation with Denny by appointment	
7A (or)7B	11/23 11/30	Presentation of tentative research methods Research methods description form due	W&G all
	12/7	No class; individual consultation with Denny by appointment	
8	12/14	Final progress report; summary and conclusion; evaluation of the course Final progress report form due	

Masters Research Proposal draft is due by December 10, 2004 to avoid taking an incomplete and to be eligible to take SW 8104 Project Seminar II in Spring, 2005. **Research proposal** for Seminar requirement is due **December 14, 2004** to avoid taking an incomplete for the class.

Note: All class members will meet together for class sessions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8. About half of the students will meet together for sessions 5, 6, and 7 so we will have time to discuss individual research topics, questions, and methods more fully. Group A will meet October 12, November 2, and November 23; and Group B will meet October 19, November 9, and November 30. We will split students into Groups A and B in late September.

SW 8103 Project Seminar I Guidelines for Requirements

1. Because of the seminar nature of the course, **attendance** is required at all class sessions. The instructor also recognizes that other life events (e. g., illness) may prevent you from attending every session. Please schedule an individual meeting with Denny to make up for any session that you miss.
2. You will be asked to **critique** two previous Masters Research (Plan B) Papers that you read. Criteria for critiquing the paper and a form to submit will be provided.
3. The **timetable** for the research project includes a list of the various tasks that remain for you in completing your research project and the anticipated dates of completion for each of these steps. Leave a column to fill in the actual date that the step was finished. Because of the nature of the research process, the timetable is usually a dynamic guide that changes as the time required to complete the research tasks become clearer. A sample will be provided in class.
4. You will be asked to present your **research topic** in class and turn in a copy of a completed form used to organize your thinking about the topic. You will be asked to describe the general topic of your research and to identify and define key concepts associated with this research topic.
5. The **research question/hypothesis** will be presented to a group in class and handed in to the instructor. Criteria for a quality research question/hypothesis will be discussed in class.
6. The presentation of the **research methods** involves describing the tentative 1) population and sample, 2) general research design, 3) data collection procedure, and 4) data analysis plan that you could use in your research project. A form to turn in to the instructor will be provided, and this requirement will be discussed further in class.
7. The **presentations of a final progress report** describe the progress the student has made in completing the research project according to the timetable developed. The report includes a discussion of limitations or difficulties encountered and how these were addressed. The focus is not so much on whether or not one is rigidly adhering to the timetable, but rather on providing an opportunity to be affirmed for the progress made and to receive support for moving on to the next steps.
8. The **research proposal** will be completed when the criteria for a proposal in the Masters Research Handbook (or the separate handout) have been achieved. Students who plan to complete the Masters requirement through completion of an expanded Personal Practice Model do not have to work with an agency to develop the research proposal and will be able to complete an abbreviated proposal for this course. The research proposal in particular will be discussed more extensively in class.

Each of the items described briefly above will be discussed in class and can be clarified further in discussions with Denny. Forms and samples will be provided for most requirements.