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### SWK 600: Research Methods I

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**College of Staten Island  
Department of Social Work  
SWK 600: Research I**

**Instructor:**

**Office Location:**

**Telephone:**

**Email:**

**Office Hours:**

**Class Days/Time:**

**Classroom:**

**Section:**

**Credits:**

**Course Description**

First in a two course sequence. This course is designed to help students gain an understanding of and appreciation for the use of research as a tool for professional evidence-based practice. Students are introduced to the concepts and skills underlying a systematic approach to social work research, including basic research terminology, the scientific method in social work, the value of research in social work, research ethics and the social work value base, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs to evaluate programs and practice, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and preparation and use of research reports. The emphasis in the course is on equipping students with the research knowledge and skills needed to engage in the evidence based practice process at all levels of social work practice. As part of that process, students learn how to critically appraise sources of scientific evidence and how the criteria for that appraisal will vary depending upon the purpose of the research.

Prerequisite: Admission to MSW program

**Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes**

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

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior

- (CSWE, 2015, Competency 1)
2. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice  
(CSWE, 2015, Competency 4)

### **Course Measures of Student Learning Outcomes**

LO1: Group Presentation; Group Research Ethics Submission; Self-Evaluation; Peer-Evaluation

LO2: Weekly Tests; Critical Evaluation of Two Research Articles; Group Literature Review; Group Presentation; Group Research Proposal; Group Research Ethics Submission; Self-Evaluation; Peer-Evaluation

### **Instructor Bio**

Welcome to SWK 600: Research Methods II! I am a social work academic who has over six years of practice experience in medical social work, child and family therapy, and tobacco cessation and prevention. I have taught in higher education since 2004, which included teaching at the Universities of Bath and Bristol in the United Kingdom. I came to CSI in 2014 and now serve as the MSW Program Director. I am an active researcher with numerous publications in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in books, and am the author of nine textbooks. I have current research projects that focus on ageism and older adults' perceptions of aging, and social workers' perceived use of theories and methods in practice. I draw upon my research experience and projects in teaching research methods to illustrate how to conduct research as well as critique research. I am passionate about research and in helping future social workers becoming evidence-informed social workers. We will learn from each other in this course and my aim for you is to become critical consumers and producers of research. When I'm not working on my research or teaching, you can find me playing with my two-year-old son in Manhattan, or running along the Hudson river.

**Positionality Statement** - I identify as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, currently able-bodied woman who is married to a white man and we have a two-year-old boy together. Given my identities and position as Professor, I acknowledge the elements of privilege and power that I have and how this can impact and shape the spaces I enter. I aim to create a learning and teaching environment that is safe and equitable and where everyone feels a sense of belonging. I will get things wrong and make mistakes along the way. My hope is that you will bring to my attention anytime I have failed to create a safe and equitable space and I will work to make changes.

### **Required Texts/Readings**

All readings and other course materials will be available online (and free of charge) through the Blackboard course site, or you can access the textbook directly by clicking on the hyperlink below under the heading "Textbook". The only thing you

will need is a computer and reliable internet access from which you can access the course.

### **Textbook**

["Scientific Inquiry in Social Work "](#) by Matthew DeCarlo is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

### **Recommended Reference Text**

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed). American Psychological Association. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3216-1.

Available at CSI Library, Reserve BF76.7.P83 2020

### **Classroom Policies and General Polices**

#### **Content on diversity, oppression, social and economic justice**

This course will include attention to the impact on oppressed, vulnerable, and at-risk populations with a strong emphasis on understanding the processes that perpetuate oppression and unequal access to systems of power. Of special interest is the role that institutional racism, sexism, transphobia/homophobia/heterosexism, xenophobia and ethnocentrism, poverty, alienation, and other oppressive conditions that play a role in shaping the research agenda and overcoming its limitations to promote social and economic justice.

#### **Center for Students Accessibility syllabus statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Center for Student Accessibility at 718.982.2510/ [CSA@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:CSA@csi.cuny.edu) or visit the Center in 1P-101. You can also check out the Website at [www.csi.cuny.edu/csa/](http://www.csi.cuny.edu/csa/).

#### **Weather policy and instructions**

It is the general policy of the College not to cancel regularly scheduled classes because of weather conditions. However, there are instances where especially adverse and hazardous weather conditions make it impossible to travel and to conduct academic activities at the campus. Students can find out about decisions to close the College because of extreme weather by dialing 718.982.3333 or 4444 any weekday, 24 hours a day. If there is any trouble reaching this number, call Public Safety at (718)982-2116. Students will also be notified of important closures or information via CUNY Alert, which is an emergency notification system that will enable the College of Staten Island to advise students, faculty and staff of an emergency (a severe snowstorm or violent person on campus, for example), and provide timely information to protect lives and minimize campus disruption. Students

are auto-enrolled in the CUNY Alert system. If you need to modify your account, please visit the website <https://www.cuny.edu/cuny-alert/>

### **Use of personal email addresses**

Students should only use their CSI, CUNY email address when contacting the Instructor. The Instructor will not respond to any personal email addresses. The Instructor will only respond to student emails that come from a CSI, CUNY email. Instructors respond within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.

### **Names/Pronouns**

I will use the name and gender pronoun you want to be known by if you let me know. Otherwise, the course roster I have will reflect your name as it appears on CUNYFirst. CUNY's policy on names (including info on how to change your name on some unofficial records) can be found at [CUNY's Policy on Names](#)

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all sessions and completion of any online activities is expected. Attendance will be taken at each session. A student will not receive the full participation points if they do not attend all the sessions. A student who is absent for more than 15 percent of the class hours in the semester will be assigned a grade of WU (withdrew unofficially), subject to the discretion of the Instructor. Fifteen percent equals six hours for a course that meets three hours a week. A student who does not attend a course at all will be assigned a grade of WN (withdrawal, never attended). The potential absences are intended as an insurance policy, not an entitlement. Some faculty may allow a student to make up the missed time by submitting an additional assignment, for example, similar to the college policy on absences for religious observations, below.

### **Policy on absences for religious observations**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for the religious needs of students who are missing class due to religious observance. However, students are required to make up any work that is missed due to the absence. Because our students encompass a diverse multi-cultural community, it is likely that some religious observances may be less well known and requests will present opportunities to learn about the religious celebrations of many different cultures.

Requests for absences for religious observances should be made in sufficient time prior to the observance to allow for the professor to make the appropriate accommodations (develop an assignment to be completed in lieu of the class session, etc.). In general, approval will not be considered unless requested at least five (5) working days prior to the day of religious observance.

### **Grade of incomplete (INC)**

A report of Incomplete can be given in place of a grade when the work for the semester has been passing but has not been completed, because of illness or some other reason that, in the opinion of the instructor, justifies such a report. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for an incomplete. The student must

initiate the request prior to the final day of class. The instructor has the prerogative to grant or deny the student's request. If an incomplete is granted, a contract for completion must be negotiated between the student and the faculty member.

### **Student Expectations**

1. Complete readings and assignments prior to each class session/online session and participate actively and thoughtfully in the discussion of the designated content.
2. Respectful communication that expresses beliefs and ideas without personal attack.
3. The use of critical thinking to evaluate and respond to course material.
4. Complete all course work by assigned dates. Exceptions will only be made for emergencies in which case the instructor must be notified prior to the due date. Late assignments will be graded down by  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 point off for each day late.
5. Students are urged to prepare each written assignment with great care. We expect that, in writing papers, students will demonstrate excellent communication skills and language facility. Please take the time to proofread your work and assure that your style, spelling and grammar reflect a high level of quality. In addition, you should be familiar with the APA style manual (7th Edition) and use it in your assignments where applicable. A useful resource for APA style can be found at [Purdue Owl](#). Many students find the use of grammar and spell check programs such as Grammarly to be helpful. Finally, please be aware of the significance of non-discriminatory language for both written and oral presentations.

Any instructor may refer a student to the Department of Social Work's writing tutor for voluntary assistance, as needed. If the problem is serious and/or persistent, any instructor may **require** a student to work with the writing tutor; when participation is required, the instructor notifies the student, the Department Chair, and the Department's Administrative assistant, who schedules and tracks participation and notifies the Chair and instructor of such. Failure to participate in required writing assistance can jeopardize assignment and course grades and, potentially, academic standing in the program.

6. Students should allow sufficient time to arrive to the online meeting on time. Late arrival is disruptive to the class. Students who frequently arrive late or leave early will lose participation points at the discretion of the instructor.
7. Students should ensure their cameras are on when attending the online sessions so that all students can engage with each other. Please ensure minimal background noise and distractions.
8. This syllabus may be changed with prior notice to the class via Blackboard or in class.
9. Students will not plagiarize. This includes failing to use quotation marks for a source that you cite and quote exactly, as failure to use quotation marks, and a page number when available, indicates that you have put the cited content into your own words. Please see our academic integrity policy at



matrix when reading through your articles (examples are on Blackboard – Week 3). Write a critical report assessing methods, outcomes, and applicability to social work practice (see Appendix A for grading rubric). Due September 29<sup>th</sup> (week 5), 4-6 pages plus references and your completed synthesis matrix.

3. Group Literature Review (10%). As part of the group research projects, each group is to write one literature review that provides a statement of the question(s) to be researched and why it is important to carry out the study. As part of this assignment, students must conduct a review of current theory and previous research on your topic and prepare a literature review that uses at least ten peer-reviewed journal articles. (See Appendix B for grading rubric) Due October 19<sup>th</sup> (week 8), 8-10 pages plus references.
4. Group Presentation (5%). Each student group will present their research proposals to the class during the last three weeks of the semester. The presentations will last approximately 20 minutes and will conclude with 5 minutes of questions from the audience. Every member of the student group must present at least one aspect of the presentation. The presentation will cover all the major headings of the research proposal report. Students will need to use audio/visual material as appropriate.
5. Group Research Proposal (30%). Each student group will submit a research proposal. (See Appendix C for an outline for the report – and Appendix D for grading rubric). This research proposal will be implemented in the next social work research class (SWK 602). **Please note:** for qualitative studies of individual interviews, students must include at least 7 participants; for quantitative studies students must include at least 30 participants. Please discuss your specific needs with the instructor for further clarification and instructions. (Due December 9<sup>th</sup> (week 15), 15-20 pages plus references).
6. Group Research Ethics Submission (5%). Each student group will submit their research proposal from Research I to the Instructor for research ethics approval. The research ethics form will be distributed to the class via Blackboard (located in the Research Ethics Forms folder under Week 5). Approval by the Course Instructor is essential to move forward with research. (Due December 9<sup>th</sup> (week 15), completion of standard research ethics form).
7. Self-evaluation on participation in group research project (5%). Each student will assess their performance and participation in the group research project. The score you give yourself will count as 5% of your final grade. Failure to complete this task will result in a “0” for this assignment. (Due December 9<sup>th</sup> (week 15), submission of self & peer evaluation form on Blackboard).



8. Peer evaluation on participation in group research project (5%). Each student will assess their group members individually on their performance and participation in the group research project. The score you give your peers will count as 5% of their final grade. Failure to complete this task will result in your peer receiving the maximum grade. (Due December 9<sup>th</sup> (week 15), submission of self & peer-evaluation form on Blackboard).
  
9. Participation in Class Discussion and Activities (5%). Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and ready to engage in discussion around the readings and participate in the activities. Participation includes asking and answering questions, providing feedback to colleagues, coming to class prepared with assignments, and interacting with your colleagues in small-group activities. You cannot receive the full participation points if you do not attend all class sessions.

### **MSW Grading Scale**

#### Points Grade

94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
72 and below	F

**SWK 600: Research Methods I**  
**Course Schedule**

Please note: The schedule is subject to change with fair notice, which may be made in class and/or via Blackboard.

**Table 1 Course Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
1		<p>Preparation: Access Textbook online and Read Chapter 1: Introduction to Research; Review Syllabus; Become familiar with the Blackboard page for SWK 600</p> <p>Topics: Introduction to the class and our online forum; Establish group norms; Review syllabus and course expectations; Class discussion on Introduction to Research; Meet your Group; Group Roles</p>
2		College Closed
3		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group, establish group roles, and identify a topic you would like to explore for your group research proposal; Read Chapter 2: Beginning a Research Project</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 3 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topics: Beginning a Research Project</p>
4		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss the literature review; Review the videos and information on plagiarism and APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition) style (on Blackboard); Read Chapter 3: Reading and Evaluating Literature</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 4 Test in Blackboard (Plagiarism and APA Style)</p> <p>Topic: Library Instruction &amp; Reading and Evaluating Literature</p>
5		<p>Preparation: Meet with you group to review consent forms and the Research Ethics Submission Forms on Blackboard, and review your literature review; Read Chapter 4: Conducting a Literature Review and Chapter 5: Ethics in Social Work Research</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 5 Test in Blackboard; Critical Evaluation of Research Article with synthesis matrix</p> <p>Topics: Ethical and Scientific Guidelines for Social Work Research</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
6		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss your literature review; Develop research question(s) and bring to class; Read Chapter 8: Creating and Refining a Research Question</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 6 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topics: Creating and Refining a Research Question</p>
7		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss your literature review; Read Chapter 9: Defining and Measuring Concepts and Chapter 11: Survey Research</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 7 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topic: Measurement; Survey Research</p>
8		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to finalize your literature review; Read Chapter 10: Sampling</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 8 Test in Blackboard; Group Literature Review</p> <p>Topic: Sampling</p>
9		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss your methodology; Read Chapter 13: Interviews and Focus Groups</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 9 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topic: Qualitative Methods</p>
10		<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss your methodology; Read Chapter 7.2: Causal Relationships and Chapter 12: Experimental Design</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 10 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topic: Causation; Experimental Design</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	11/9/20	<p>Preparation: Meet with your group to discuss your methodology; Read Chapter 15.1: Evaluation Research and Chapter 15.2: Single-Subjects Design</p> <p>Assignment Due: Week 11 Test in Blackboard</p> <p>Topic: Evaluation Research; Single-Subject Design</p>
12		<p>Preparation: Bring your draft group research proposal to class, including copies of your consent form and research ethics submission.</p> <p>Topic: In-class research proposal workshop</p>
13		Topic: Group presentations
14		Topic: Group presentations
15		<p>Topic: Group presentations</p> <hr/> <p>Assignment Due: Group Research Proposal; Group Research Ethics Submission; Self-Evaluation (on Blackboard); Peer-Evaluation (on Blackboard)</p>

**Appendix A**  
**Critical Evaluation of Two Research Articles (15%)**  
**Grading Rubric**

<b>Area of Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
Summarize the article	5	
Did they mention obtaining research ethics, IRB, or Human Subjects Review?	5	
Who were their subjects? Was it a diverse sample?	5	
How were subjects recruited?	5	
What methods were used in this study?	10	
How were the data collected?	10	
How were the data analyzed?	5	
How does the research inform social work practice?	15	
Critical analysis integrated throughout	20	
Free of grammatical and spelling errors	5	
Good structure and organization	10	
Adherence to APA style (7 <sup>th</sup> ed.)	5	

**Total Score:**

**Overall Comments:**

**Appendix B  
Group Literature Review (10%)  
Grading Rubric**

**Note:** The literature review should be a summary (synthesis!) of empirical articles related to your research topic. You should include at least 10 references. This should “tell the story” of what you learned from reading the articles and not a review of each article, one at a time. The literature review should be informed by social work practice and research. This literature review will be revised based on Instructor feedback and integrated into your research proposal. You should identify the gaps that remain in the research on your topic. Do not use first person language.

<b>Area of Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
Introduction provides an overview of the research proposal/topic	5	
Introduction provides an overview of significance to social work	5	
Literature review identifies the problem and gap in knowledge	10	
Inclusion of the material is relevant to the research topic	15	
Inclusion of at least 10 peer-reviewed journal articles	10	
Literature review provides a synthesis of material	20	
Literature review ends with how your study will help fill the gap	5	
Critical analysis integrated throughout	10	
Free of grammatical and spelling errors	5	
Good structure and organization	10	
Adherence to APA style (7 <sup>th</sup> ed.)	5	
<b>Total Score:</b>		<b>Overall Comments:</b>

## **Appendix C**

### **Group Research Proposal (30%)**

The research proposal is an opportunity for students to investigate a topic of interest to them and apply the knowledge they have learned through the course. Each student group will submit a 15-20 page paper (plus references and appendices) detailing their proposed research project. It should follow the outline below. The page numbers are approximate for each section and are for guidance only.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To propose a research study relevant to social work practice that integrates all course content and concepts and that will demonstrate the student's mastery of the course.
2. To demonstrate mastery of a scientific and scholarly writing style consistent with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
3. To demonstrate writing skills that evidence appropriate organization, development and presentation of ideas, and excellent grammar, syntax, and critical thinking skills.

#### **Requirements:**

1. Your proposal must conform to all aspects of APA style in both formatting and language.
2. Your proposal must contain the following sections in the following order:
  - a. Title Page
  - b. Abstract
    - i. A short (less than 250 word) introduction to your study, focusing on Part 2.
  - c. Part 1
  - d. Part 2
  - e. References
3. You must cite a minimum of 10 references from peer-reviewed journals.
4. Your proposal should be about 15 – 20 pages in length, double-spaced—including abstract, but excluding title page, and references.

#### **Part I: Background and Significance (7 - 9 pages)**

##### **A strong Part 1:**

- Contains a lot of specific facts from outside sources, few sentences without citations.
- Provides a clear argument in each paragraph, using facts and theories to support each argument
- Contains very few quotes, if any
- Synthesizes facts from other sources into a coherent argument
- Is clearly organized around the author's arguments (not by the questions below)
- Uses transitions, topic sentences, and other elements of formal writing

- Problem statement and implications contain specific facts and citations to support arguments

A weak Part 1:

- Relies heavily on a few sources
- Quotes heavily from sources
- Includes irrelevant details from sources
- Has long passages with no citations or sources
- Uses first-person language, idioms, stigmatizing or biased language, or informal language

Part 1 must address the following questions/areas:

- A. Problem Statement (1/2 – 1 page)—What problem does your proposal address?
  - a. How many people are affected by this problem?
  - b. Why is this an important social problem?
  - c. How does it affect other important social issues or focal populations?
  - d. Why is your population an important one to study?
- B. Literature Review (6 – 8 pages) (what do we already know? what do we need to know?)
  - a. Describe all of the information from the literature that is important to know about each variable in your research question
  - b. Describe all of the information from the literature that is important to know about the relationship between the variables in your research question or the concept(s) you are exploring
  - c. What other variables or social forces influence the variables in your research question or concept(s) you are exploring?
  - d. Describe what is known about your target population
  - e. Define key terms and explain theories that are important for understanding your topic
  - f. Identify consistent findings across studies
  - g. Identify gaps and controversies in the literature
- C. Research question and hypothesis
  - a. State your research question and hypothesis. You can have more than one, but you need to explain you conceptualize and measure each question in this proposal.

**Part II: Methodology (usually around 7 – 10 pages)**

For Part 2, it is a good idea to use headings to address each area (design, sampling, etc.).

A. Design:

- a. What overall design are you using and provide a rationale? (e.g., quantitative online survey, classic experiment, qualitative individual interviews, mixed methods)



- b. What are the specific steps you will take from beginning to end to carry out your design?
- B. Sampling:
  - a. What sampling approach will you use and why this choice of sampling? (e.g., availability sampling, quota sampling)
  - b. What are the strengths and limitations of your sampling approach?
  - c. What is your sampling frame?
  - d. What are your inclusion/exclusion criteria?
  - e. How will you recruit your participants?
- C. Measures:
  - a. Identify your variables and/or concepts and provide a definition for each.
  - b. If conducting a quantitative study, what is the operational definition (i.e. how will you measure) for your independent variable?
  - c. If conducting a quantitative study, what is the operational definition (i.e. how will you measure) for your dependent variable?
  - d. If conducting a qualitative study, how will you explore your concept(s)?
  - e. How will you collect data on these variables/concepts? What measurements will you use?
  - f. What are the strengths and limitations of this approach?
- D. Data Analysis: (very brief—less than 5 sentences)
  - a. What methods will you use to analyze your data?
- E. Ethics:
  - a. How will you ensure confidentiality and informed consent?
  - b. What other ethical considerations will you need to consider in carrying out this study?
  - c. What are the risks and benefits of the study? Why do the benefits outweigh the risks?
- F. Implications and conclusions:
  - a. Discuss how your study will benefit the discipline of social work, your target population, and the literature on your topic.
- G. Reference list
- H. Appendix (any additional information, such as data collection instruments or forms)

Adapted from: "[Research Proposal: Scaffolded Assignments and Exemplars](#)" by Matthew DeCarlo is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

**Appendix D  
Group Research Proposal (30%)  
Grading Rubric**

<b>Area of Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
Clear abstract introducing the purpose, scope, and method of your project	3	
Clear introduction that introduces your study and significance to social work	5	
Literature review describes the background and significance of study	5	
Literature review identifies the problem and gap in knowledge	5	
Literature review ends with how your study will help fill the gap and specifies your research questions	5	
Methodology describes overall research design	5	
Methodology describes the participants and sampling design	10	
Methodology identifies and defines the variables/concepts	10	
Methodology identifies data collection design, including measurement tools	10	
Methodology identifies the proposed data analysis	2	
Methodology ends with a discussion of ethical considerations	10	
Critical analysis integrated throughout	10	
Free of grammatical and spelling errors	5	
Good structure and organization	10	

Adherence to APA style (7<sup>th</sup> ed.)

5

**Total Score:**

**Overall Comments:**