I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF COURSE

The goal of this two-semester course is to develop advanced competency in conducting research aimed at advancing social work practice and/or social welfare policy. The group research experience is intended to further develop the knowledge and skills acquired in undergraduate or core year MSW research courses through exposure to all phases of the research process under the supervision of a faculty research mentor. This aim is accomplished via active participation in a research team engaged in addressing a particular social work practice or social welfare policy question.

Since faculty research projects may span the course of several years, faculty research mentors will provide assignments or exercises that address both the tasks associated with particular phases in the research project as well as exposure to other elements of the research process that have been/might be addressed in earlier or later stages of the project.

This course provided an opportunity for social work practitioners to build the following competencies:

- Formulation of research questions/problems
- Development and implementation of appropriate research designs and instrumentation.
- Development of appropriate sampling designs.
- Use of appropriate data collection, coding and verification techniques.
- Evaluation of data using quantitative or qualitative analysis techniques appropriate for the research project.
- Interpretation of findings and dissemination of results to practitioners and policy makers.
- Understanding of the ethical issues associated with the conduct of social work research.
- Understanding of the diversity issues impacting the design and implementation of social work research.

II. PREREQUISITES

Completion of SW 7830 or 7810 for students admitted to the School with Advanced Standing.
III. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Formulate research questions with appropriate conceptual and operational definitions.
2. Develop critiques/syntheses/reviews of the relevant theoretical/research/practice literature.
3. Develop a research design appropriate to the research question under study.
4. Identify, design and validate new or existing instruments that will capture the information needed to address research question(s).
5. Select study populations in ways that reflect understanding of the ethical and diversity issues influencing the research design.
6. Execute a research protocol that (a) monitors data collection, (b) analyzes data using appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative techniques, and (c) reflects an understanding of the ethical and diversity issues influencing the research design.
7. Prepare a written report of the research findings.

IV. PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The extent of each student’s achievement of knowledge and skill objectives will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Completion of required assignments as articulated within the syllabus of a particular research group according to project guidelines and schedules.
2. Attendance and participation at group meetings.
3. Assessment of individual student project logs documenting effort and tasks completed on the project. For each semester, students are expected to commit approximately six hours per week to the research project in addition to scheduled group meetings.
4. Demonstration of writing competencies through assessment of required writing assignments.
5. Demonstration of analysis skills through assessment of required data analysis assignments.

V. REQUIRED MATERIALS

Students will be responsible for reading articles distributed in the group as well as supplemental materials assigned to support the research project.
All research projects aimed at collecting data for public dissemination of findings are required to submit their research protocols to the Human Investigation Committee for review and approval prior to the implementation of any data collection activities. Further, students will be expected to complete the University’s online course for the protection of research participants.

VI. COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course is taught using group discussion, individual/group assessments and critiques of relevant literature, hands-on application of research protocols, data management and data analysis tools. Students are exposed to all aspects of the research project and will be expected to actively contribute to the development, implementation and interpretation of the study.

VII. COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course is a partnership between the instructor and the students, both sharing responsibility in the learning process. The general expectations for students are identified as follows:

Attendance: It is expected that the students attend each group meeting in order to fully participate in the learning and research process. Each meeting will start promptly at its scheduled time.

Preparation: Students are expected to complete assigned readings and come to class prepared to participate in group discussions of these materials.

Student Participation: Student participation is a central part of the design of the course. It is expected that students will actively participate in group meetings and work teams.

Assignments: It is expected that students will turn in assignments on the day they are due and according to project guidelines. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be addressed in accordance with university policy.

Special Accommodations: Any student needing an accommodation due to a disability or special circumstance should speak with the instructor at the beginning of the semester.