

SW 9000

Directed Study

(3) credit hours

Master Syllabus

I. Course Domain and Boundaries

This course offers doctoral students the opportunity to examine a specific area of social work knowledge working closely with a member of the social work faculty who has substantive interest in the proposed field of study. The subject matter of the course will relate to the student's research interests as well as the faculty member's area of expertise and research inquiry. The primary products of this course are an extensive literature review as well as an annotated bibliography that could serve as the foundation for the student's subsequent dissertation research.

II. Knowledge and Skill Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student will demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill in the following:

1. Ability to formulate an area of study and participate in defining a process for knowledge building in relation to the area of study.
2. Ability to orally discuss and critically analyze key issues of the subject matter studied in the course.
3. The ability to conceptualize key issues and research questions relative to the area of study.
4. Complete projects demonstrating a critical analysis of a specific dimension or aspect of the subject and its relationship to other dimensions or aspects of the subject.

III. Guidelines for Literature Review

The literature review has five goals and will be judged by how well they are achieved:

- It shows an in-depth, detailed and nuanced understanding of a specific issue, topic or question in social work;
- It shows an awareness of the theoretical issues and arguments raised and discussed in the literature on the topic;
- It shows an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the extant research literature on the topic;

- The ideas, concepts and arguments advanced in the paper are expressed with precision and rigor;
- The paper demonstrates the relevance of the topic for social work practice and/or social welfare policy.

The exact focus and strategy of the literature review is to be arrived at in consultation with the individual faculty member supervising the directed study. Although the length and structure of the literature review will depend on the type of material involved and the research question addressed, at minimum, the review needs to include the following sections:

- *Introduction and Statement of the Problem.* The first few pages should make it clear what the paper is about and how the subject will be approached and analyzed.
- *Literature Review.* The literature review shows that the student has immersed him/herself in the subject, has read extensively about it, and has drawn ideas, concepts and arguments from a variety of sources. A *minimum of 30 research articles* should be included as references in the review.
- *Discussion.* This section states and justifies the description, analysis and argument on the topic in a precise, readable and rigorous manner.
- *Implications for Social Work Practice/Social Welfare Policy:* This section evaluates the implications that the topic has a particular aspect of social work practice or policy.
- *Conclusion.* The conclusion summarizes the main argument of the essay as shows how the work enhances our understanding of the subject.

The *minimum page length* of the master's essay is *25 pages of text plus bibliography* of works cited.

IV. Guidelines for the Annotated Bibliography

Students should prepare annotations for *a minimum of 30 research articles* on the topic of study. *Each annotation should be one page in length, on average* and include the following items:

- *Citation.* Complete reference for the article formatted using the style delineated in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition.*
- *Purpose of the Study.* Identify the questions and/or hypotheses that frame the research.
- *Study Population.* Identify the size and most salient characteristics of the study population (e.g., a sample of 250 low-income minority households residing in the city of Detroit) as well as how it was selected.
- *Research Design.* What research design was employed in the study?
- *Key Findings.* What are the major findings from the study?
- *Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study.* In what areas was the research strongest? What are the limitations of the study from the perspective of research, policy, and/or practice?

V. Role of Student and Instructor

See University Statement of Obligations of Students and Faculty Members on the teaching-learning process.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

The literature review and annotated bibliography will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Careful synthesis and use of secondary sources to address research topic
- Depth of thought
- Linkages to social work practice and/or social welfare policy
- Clear, logical and effective organization of ideas
- Smooth, efficient, graceful and error-free prose