

Course Descriptions

SOW 6358 & SOW 6359 – Measurement for Social Work Research 1 & 2 (Required Core)

This course focuses on the development, testing, and use of measurement tools in social work practice research. Emphasis is placed on understanding the conceptual relevance and operational clarity of theoretical constructs, and on the methods available for designing and validating instruments to measure them. Qualitative and quantitative techniques are examined for their varying contributions to item development and scale construction, and data analytic strategies for determining psychometric characteristics are explored.

Taught over two consecutive semesters, the course provides an opportunity for survey and rigorous critique of measures currently available for specific social work applications, including intrapsychic, interpersonal, social, organizational, and environmental variables. Students will conceptualize a construct as the focus for instrument development, and carry out a validation study from item development through data collection, analysis, and preparation of a manuscript suitable for publication. Variations in measurement expectations, structure, and performance are examined in light of diversity considerations including characteristics of person, environment, and history.

SOW 6407 – Survey Research Methods (Selective)

This course builds on previous basic research methods coursework that introduced students to survey designs. The class will equip students to design, conduct, and critique survey research. Particular attention will be paid to surveying hard to reach or disenfranchised populations (methods and ethics involved) and reducing sources of error (sampling, coverage, measurement, non-response). Topics include: types of survey designs, survey sampling strategies, and data collection, questionnaire construction (writing and ordering questions and response categories; pre-testing items), interviewing techniques, coding and analyzing data, and report/manuscript writing. Students will gain practical experience by examining existing surveys and data as well as by devising their own surveys and collecting pilot data.

SOW 6418 – Introduction to Linear Modeling for Applied Social Research (Required Statistics)

This course represents the Statistics II requirement for the Social Work Doctoral curriculum. Through seminar and related computer lab exercises, students receive training in linear model analysis that prepares them for additional and advanced statistical coursework, such as SEM, path analysis, factor analysis, and HLM. This course emphasizes multiple regression (MR), which is used widely in the social sciences to assess relationships among data derived from a variety of research designs. Theoretical and procedural aspects of MR are highlighted. Students learn to conduct MR using categorical and continuous independent measures and interactions. Logistic and probit regressions also are explored. Application of these methods to social work research is emphasized in a required 1-hour lab. In this lab, students will learn how to use SPSS and/or SAS, how to clean and manage data, and how to analyze existing Social Work data sets. Special emphasis will be placed on relating data analytic techniques to the issues of research participants that are members of vulnerable and oppressed groups. An introductory level statistics course is a prerequisite.

SOW 6466 – Social Work Research Using Secondary Data (Selective)

This course introduces students to the concepts, strategies and methods associated with secondary analysis of data and how secondary analysis is related to social work research. Both classroom and lab components of the course pay particular attention to acquisition, manipulation, and maintenance of

public-use data, and longitudinal analysis. Students will demonstrate competence in problem conceptualization by defining a problem and research question in their social science research area. Students will identify and obtain an appropriate public-use dataset to answer their proposed question. They will develop and demonstrate an understanding of issues in secondary analysis through data exercises on this data set with an emphasis on longitudinal analysis. Students will also identify practical and ethical dilemmas in using secondary data, especially as they relate to research with vulnerable populations.

SOW 6490 – Introduction to Scholarly Writing (Required Core)

This course will provide incoming doctoral students with 1) an introduction to the process of scholarly writing, 2) an opportunity to develop and hone their writing skills in the context of communicating effectively to the scientific community and, most important 3) an opportunity to develop and integrate the dimension of “scholarly writer” into their professional identity. This course is based on the assumption that scholarly writing is a way of thinking. As such, students will learn how to pursue their writing goals from a framework of depth and critical thinking.

SOW 6492 – Foundation Research Methods (Required Core)

This course will focus on basic research methods, including problem formulation, ethical considerations in planning and conducting research, assumptions, conceptualization, hypothesis building and testing, basic sampling, and various non-experimental, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs. This course will provide a range of theoretical and political perspectives encompassing both deductive and inductive research traditions. Research in the deductive mode usually operates through first constructing and then testing deductions derived from existing theory. Inductive research stresses the complexity and socially constructed, context-sensitive nature of social reality. The course begins with a brief overview of the history and philosophy of science to include the examination of ways in which epistemology relates to problem formation and research design. A variety of research designs and their strengths and limitations will be discussed, along with methods for each. Throughout the course, an emphasis will be placed on ethical research practices, cross-cultural diversity and research methods, and the potential implications of social and behavioral science research on vulnerable populations.

SOW 6494 – Advanced Research Methods (Required Core)

Students in this course will build on their previous learning to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the research enterprise. The course will focus on developing specific advanced competencies in conceptualization, sampling, design, measurement, data collection, and data analysis. Students will also identify practical and ethical dilemmas common in research, especially as they relate to membership in vulnerable populations. They will exchange ideas with their colleagues and lead discussions in a variety of research topics.

SOW 6495 – Systematic Reviews in Social Work Research (Required Core)

This course will familiarize the student with the philosophy and methodology of designing and conducting systematic reviews of research relevant to social work. A general critique of social work research will include foci on the selection and review of published research articles. Critiques that are more specific will examine methodological issues unique to particular problems and diverse populations, and include the synthesis of literature in students’ areas of specialization.

SOW 6496 – Qualitative Research Methods (Required Core)

This course will provide an opportunity to develop knowledge of and skills in qualitative inquiry with an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. Specifically, students will identify the

usefulness of qualitative methods in developing a base of knowledge, the depth and detailed orientation of the field inquiry, and the usefulness in understanding sensitive topics that are often the focus of social work research. Content on planning and preparing for qualitative research gives students an opportunity to understand relevant philosophies of science, methods of observation, use of theory, and the relationship of qualitative methods to other types of research culminating in the design of a research project to be completed during the course. Topics such as producing and analyzing qualitative data will provide students with a hands-on experience in the process collection, management, and analysis of data. A focus on interpreting and reporting qualitative data will provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate the various skills developed throughout the course.

SOW 6499 – Intervention Research in Social Work (Selective)

This selective course focuses on a developmental approach to social intervention research. It includes articulation of conceptual intervention models and their development, piloting, implementation, and dissemination. Micro, mezzo, and macro-level intervention models may be included as part of the course depending on the interests of students. Background in both theory building and research methods is required.

SOW 6755 – Theories and Models for Social Work Research (Required Core)

This doctoral seminar will use an evidence-based framework to prepare students to understand the role of theory in research, to critically appraise theories for their usefulness, and to utilize theory in conceptualizing research problems, developing research questions from these problems, and creating research designs.

SOW 6775 – Professional Issues in Social Work (Required Core)

This course is meant to further critical thinking about social work as a profession and social work education. Along with whether contemporary social work meets the definition of a profession, the following questions will be discussed: Has social work abandoned its historic mission? Should social work be reflexive? Can social work be distinguished from other professions? Can social work practice be evidence-based? Also examined are current issues in the academy in general, and social work programs in particular, including: Should college-level educators have Ph.D. degrees? Is tenure good for the academy? How can faculty mentor peers and doctoral students? Does social work education belong in the research university? Is there a continuum in social work education? How can social work education be evaluated? To what extent should technology be used to teach social work?

SOW 6945 – Practicum in Applied Research (Required Core)

The Practicum in Applied Research is a two-part course designed for students to engage in supervised research. This course will help students move from having a substantive area into developing a research agenda by planning, securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and executing their own work. Students will be encouraged to select a topic that is relevant to their own substantive area of interest. In the first semester, students will attend a seminar in which they will propose a project, prepare a work plan, and prepare an IRB application. At the same time, the student will develop a working relationship with an individual doctoral faculty member who will supervise the student's implementation and write-up of the research project in the second semester.

The goal of the practicum is to build students' research skills in a variety of areas – e.g., theoretical conceptualization, articulation of research questions, literature review, research design, measurement, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results. The expected final product of the practicum is a publishable manuscript or acceptable proposal for funding. At a minimum, the student is expected

to submit a formal written summary integrating the substantive, methodological, and data analytic components of the practicum at the conclusion of the practicum. The faculty supervisor evaluates the student's performance based upon the completion of the tasks specified in the practicum plan, the student's attainment of targeted knowledge and skills, and the quality of the final product. Grades awarded will be "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory," and students must receive a satisfactory grade in the first semester seminar to be eligible to progress to the individualized research in the second semester.

Note. Data collected in the research practicum may not be the same data utilized in the Dissertation. Practicum work may lay the foundation for Dissertation work, and the practicum supervisor may be a member of the student's supervisory committee, but this is not a requirement for successful completion of the practicum.

SOW 6930 – Teaching Seminar & Practicum (Required)

This course is designed to prepare students for college teaching. Students will be assigned as Teaching Assistants in foundation social work courses while taking this class. The aim of the course is to familiarize students with pedagogical theories and strategies for development and delivery of course content, course management, and assessment. Students will practice skills in the classroom and receive guidance and feedback from experienced instructors.

SOW 6960r – Preliminary Examination Preparation (3-12 credit hours)

This is designed to allow doctoral-level students to register for course credit hours while studying and preparing to take the Preliminary Doctoral Examination.

SOW 6980r – Dissertation Preparation (minimum 24 credit hours required)

This course represents credit hours taken following admission to candidacy and includes preparation and defense of the Prospectus and preparation of the Dissertation. Note that SOW 8985: Dissertation Defense (described as follows) is taken during the semester the student expects to defend his or her Dissertation.

SOW 8964r – Oral Preliminary Examination Defense

Students must enroll in this course during the semester that they expect to defend their preliminary examination. There is no cost associated with this course. The Doctoral Program Assistant must be notified before the Add/Drop period of the semester so the course can be created.

SOW 8985 – Dissertation Defense

Students must enroll in this course during the semester that they expect to defend their dissertation. There is no cost associated with this course. The Doctoral Program Assistant must be notified before the Add/Drop period of the semester so the course can be created.

Statistics Courses

At least three statistics courses are required, including EDF 5400 and SOW 6418. The other class may be selected from the list of courses in other departments with the approval of the doctoral program director, or your Educational Advisor/Major Professor. See the Doctoral Program Blackboard site for a suggested list of statistics courses throughout the university. Students who complete SOW 6418 may not apply EDF 5401 as a required statistics course. Many students choose to earn the Graduate Certificate in Measurement and Statistics from the College of Education, which typically requires two or three additional statistics courses. Information is available at the following link:

<http://www.coe.fsu.edu/Academic-Programs/Certificate-Programs/Graduate-Certificate-in-Measurement-and-Statistics>

You are encouraged to contact the department for updated information about the certificate.

Cognates

A cognate is a substantive graduate course taken outside of Social Work, which should be related thematically to the student's practice/research interests (e.g., mental health, social policy, substance abuse, research methodology, etc.). Choose your cognate with the advice and approval of your Educational Advisor or Major Professor. It can be advantageous to choose cognates that are taught by professors with graduate faculty status, because you may find them to be a good choice for your outside supervisory committee member(s). Your choice of cognates should reflect some central focus or theme in which you are attempting to develop expertise, and doctoral level courses are preferable. Students must complete three cognate courses. Students may take cognates offered in an on-line environment. NOTE, however, that some on-line courses at FSU do not qualify for a tuition waiver. If you plan to take an on-line cognate, you should confirm with the Doctoral Program Assistant that the course qualifies for a tuition waiver. Otherwise, you will be required to cover the tuition with your own funds.

Special Topics Courses

Four Special Topics courses are offered as electives for students who wish to work independently in their particular substantive area. These courses are SOW 6909r (Directed Individual Study), SOW 6916r (Supervised Research); SOW 6938r (Selected Topics in Social Work), and SOW 6904r (Readings in Social Work/Social Welfare).