ASHLAND UNIVERSITY SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT
SOCWK 250A
Research Methods in Social Science
Spring 2025

Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: MATH 208 (or corequisite), SOC 111
Fee and charges: none
Classroom: Schar 265
Class meeting time: MWF 11:00-11:50am
Instructor: Jennifer Schulz, PhD, MSW, LSW
Office: Schar 240
Office Hours: MWF 1:00 to 3:00 pm, F 1:00 to 2:00 pm
E-Mail: jjacobse@ashland.edu

To support student learning in the event of extended disruptions of face-to-face instructional activities, the format for this course may be modified.

Course description: An introduction to methodological techniques of research in the social sciences. Emphasis is placed on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies as they relate to building knowledge for practice and to evaluating service delivery in all areas of practice. Research ethics, analysis and evaluation of theoretical bases, research questions, analysis of data, and use of technology are covered.

Course content: This course is designed to help students understand and appreciate using research as a tool for professional, evidence-based practice with and on behalf of at-risk populations and to evaluate programs and practices. 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, sampling, alternative quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analytic techniques, and relevant information and computer technologies.

Student learning outcomes for the course:

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to complete the following tasks:

1. Using the scientific process, apply theories and empirically-based knowledge of variables that influence human development and behavior across the life span. (Program outcome/core competency 4)

2. Using the scientific process, evaluate the extent to which practice interventions were successful. (Program outcome/core competency 4)
3. Using the scientific process, analyze and formulate concepts for the effective delivery of social policies and/or programs. (Program outcome/core competencies 4 and 9)
4. Evaluate research studies and apply research findings to practice. (Program outcome/core competency 4)
5. Demonstrate effective professional writing skills.
6. Understand and incorporate the values and ethics of social work research as well as general social science research with emphasis on working with subjects who often are a part of an oppressed population group. (Program outcome/core competencies 1 and 4)
7. Demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development through the use of research methodology. (Program outcome/core competencies 4 and 9)

Note: Competencies listed above in parenthesis refer to the Social Work Competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2022.

1. *Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior.*
2. *Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice.*
3. *Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice.*
4. *Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice.*
5. *Engage in Policy Practice.*
6. *Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.*
7. *Assess with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.*
8. *Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.*
9. *Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.*

Required Text:

Schulz, J. (2025). *Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Bridging Research to Life.* Cognella.

Note: there will be a series of research articles for students to read in addition to text material. These articles will be provided to students through BLACKBOARD LEARNING.

The instructor does NOT lecture directly from the textbook. The assigned textbook and readings are designed to be a method of learning while class lecture and discussion is an additional method to deliver material. The instructor will extract topics from the assign readings and expand upon them in class. As a result, it is imperative that students have the textbook to read and maintain regular attendance for all class sessions. Relying primarily on only one method of instruction will not be sufficient to obtain a desirable grade for the course.

Attendance and Participation Class: Participation means regular class attendance, being prepared for class, and active class participation. When students participate actively in class discussions, they learn more and get more out of class. To be able to participate actively and with relevance to the course subject matter, it is important that you complete reading assignments prior to each class

session. It is the student's responsibility, whether present or absent, to stay aware of and remain timely with assignments. Missing classes and repeated tardiness will affect a student's grade in the course. Plan to attend every class, and let your professor know through email or phone call if illness or unforeseen emergency keeps you from attending class. Plan to be on time each class session and to stay until the completion of class.

As per student surveys, more than 4 UNEXCUSED absences will result in a drop in students' grades. More than 9 UNEXCUSED absences may result in a failure or Incomplete for the course.

Attendance Reporting:
Students are required to participate in a course-related activity within the first three days of the start date of the course. Students may be administratively withdrawn from the course and/or may lose financial aid benefits if a qualifying activity has not occurred between the student and the course work or faculty within the first three days of the course. Simply logging into a course online via the Learning Management System (LMS) is not considered qualifying activity. Student non-participation during the first 8 days of a course may initiate the administrative course withdrawal process. Student non-participation, mid-course, for 14 consecutive days may also initiate the administrative course withdrawal process. According to policies and procedures set forth by Ashland University's Department for Veterans' Services, AU will grant any service member requiring more than a 30-day leave a release from coursework. Contact the Office of Veterans' Services for more information regarding this process.

Academic Integrity Policy

Students are expected to abide by the academic integrity standards outlined in the official Academic Integrity policy. This policy document can be found in the student handbook and on the Office of Records and Registration website. https://catalog.ashland.edu/academic-affairs/undergraduate#class-coursework-and-academic-integrity-policy1. *Using computing resources in a manner that violates university academic integrity policies. Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, the submission of AI-generated content as one's original work is one such violation.*

Academic Support Services

The Undergraduate Center for Academic Support is designed to be a central location for students with resources like professional academic advising and peer tutoring. The staff emphasizes social, personal, and academic success, and advisors assist students with degree planning, course registration, campus resources, academic success strategies, and understanding of University policies and procedures. The Center for Academic Support is on the seventh floor of the library. For more information, visit their website at https://www.ashland.edu/academicsupport. Other academic support services include:

AU Tutoring and Learning Services at NO Cost for All Students

The Tutoring Programs Department provides peer tutoring in any of the undergraduate courses and the Academic Skills (time management, study skills, note taking and test-taking strategies). Also, AU partnered with TutorMe, an online 24/7 subject tutoring and a writing lab with professional tutors for all students (CCP, Undergrad & Grad) as a pilot project during fall 2023.

We offer one-on-one, drop-in, group study and Peer Led Team Learning in-person or virtually. You may contact Denisia Stoops at dstoops@ashland.edu or 419.207.6779. For more information, please check out the AU Tutoring website

The Writing and Communication Center (WCC)

The Writing and Communication Center (WCC) is a free service available to all Ashland University students in any major. The WCC can help you brainstorm, develop, and revise any type of written, visual, or oral assignment.

- Receive one-on-one feedback from a WCC Communication Coach on any project that involves communication— essays, speeches, group presentations, lab reports, poster presentations, video productions, and much more!
- Location: Archer Library, first floor (to the right of Lyceum Café)
- Appointments available: M-TH 9 am-9 pm and F 9 am-5 pm (same-day appts now available)
- To schedule an appointment, go to ashland.mywconline.com. (You will need to create an account the first time you use the scheduler.)
- For more information, visit our website (www.ashland.edu/wcc).
    - Email: wcc@ashland.edu
    - Phone: 419-289-5145

Student Accessibility Services Statement: It is Ashland University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please contact the Student Accessibility Center at 419-289- 5904, or send an email to au-sac@ashland.edu. The Student Accessibility Center and the course instructor will work together in order to establish accommodations and meet your learning needs.

The AU Counseling Services and Healthy Minds App

At Ashland University, there is a place on campus that will help you pursue your academic and personal goals. Personal counseling services are FREE to all students and are designed to enhance the quality of your university experience. Ashland University provides personal, social, academic or career counseling-related services to address a variety of students' needs. Students are also encouraged to get the Ashland

Healthy Mind app, available on Android and Apple devices. This app provides tips and tools for stress prevention and management, health services, meditation, calming media, and anxiety reduction, and highlights the Ashland University and Community mental health-related services. To contact Counseling Services at AU call 419-289-5307.

Library Assistance:
Archer Librarians are available to help with student research projects or assignments in-person and online. How? Schedule an appointment, email us at library@ashland.edu, or chat with a librarian.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty (this includes plagiarism) will not be tolerated. Consequences could involve assignment of a zero for a given exam or project, receiving a failing grade in the course, or additional university penalties. If you do not properly cite your sources within the text of your paper and in the reference list, you are stealing ideas and information. Read appropriate sections of the APA Style Manual which is on reserve in the library. Also, talk with the professor (before turning in a paper) if you have any questions about how to document correctly. Plagiarism is a serious matter and will result in severe penalties. All papers will be uploaded through the plagiarism software on Blackboard.

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are distracting to not only the student themself, but others around them. Additionally, one of the things college prepares a student for is working in the career field of their choice. Proper cell phone and other electronic device usage is not only part of the classroom, but also the workforce. There may be times during class when the professor asks students to use their electronic devices for an activity. Outside of that, please put all devices away. Failure to comply will be reflected in class attendance/participation grade.

Format style for formal papers: The APA Style Manual is the guide for documentation and format in this course. If you do not own a copy of the Style Manual, you will find a copy of it on reserve in the AU Library. The course professor is available to answer questions about documentation before papers are turned in. An excellent on-line manual for APA style can be found at:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/).

Montana Exam Information: All social work majors complete the Montana Social Work Competence Exam in the spring semester of the senior year as part of the Social Work Department outcome assessment. Students will be given a copy of the exam in advance. It is important to have information and sources on hand for answering the questions. Quick cutting and pasting from websites will not be adequate. In particular, students will need names, information and sources that relate to important developments in the history of the social work profession. Students also need names of theorists and the substance of their theories that will apply to social work practice both at the micro and macro levels. Students should keep highlighted notes from all social work classes and relevant electives so that information will be readily available when writing the Montana.

Assignments:

Research assignments overall: 45% (15% each) **(Due 1/22; 3/19; 4/16)**
Midterm exam: 15% (2/28/25)
Final exam: 15% (4/30/25)
Research proposal: 15% (**Due 4/25/25**)
Attendance and participation: 10%

As per student surveys, assignments turned in more than 2 days (48 hours) past due date/time will result in a drop in 10 points for each additional day they are late. Assignments will not be accepted more than 7 dates past due date/time unless prior authorization from instructor is received.

Research assignment rubrics are available on Blackboard and will be discussed in class by the instructor.

Important dates:

January 20**:** NO CLASS (MLK DAY)
February 28th: MIDTERM exam
March 3, 5 & 7: NO CLASS (Spring Break)
April 18 (Fri) and April 21(Mon): NO CLASS (Easter Break)

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (beginning 1/6/25):
Introductions, syllabus
Chapter 1: Introduction to Social Science Research Methods

Week 2 (beginning 1/13/25):
Chapter 2: Research Ethics & Videos

Week 3 (beginning 1/22/25- no class Monday 1/20/25):
In class on 1/22/25: Presentations for assignment 1
Finish presentations and Chapter 2 on 1/24/25

Week 4 (beginning 1/27/25):
Chapter 3: Conducting a Literature Review
In-class citation lab

Week 5 (beginning 2/3/25):
Chapter 4: Qualitative Research
In-class coding lab

Week 6 (beginning 2/10/25):
Chapter 5: Quantitative Research

Week 7 (beginning 2/17/25):
Chapter 6: Research Terminology
In-class article analysis

Week 8 (beginning 2/24/25):
Review 2/24 and 2/26
Midterm 2/28

Week 9 (beginning 3/10/25 after Spring Break)
Chapter 7: Program Evaluation and Single-Subject Design
In-class program evaluation activity

Week 10 (beginning 3/17/25):
Chapter 8: Statistical Methods

Week 11 (beginning 3/24/25):
Chapter 9: Sampling and Research Design

Week 12 (beginning 3/31/25)
Chapter 10: Survey Research
In class survey analysis activity

Week 13 (beginning 4/7/25)
Chapter 11: Careers in Research

Week 14 (beginning 4/14/25; no class Friday 4/18/25 due to Easter Break)
Research Proposal Practice

Week 15 (beginning 4/23/25; no class Monday 4/21/25 due to Easter Break)
Review for Final

2024-2025 Final Exam Schedule

Final examinations are to be given at the times provided by the Registrar's Office and will likely not be during our regularly scheduled class time. Please see the schedule below for the time our class is meeting. You can also find a copy of the Finals Week schedule at this link.

Need help understanding the schedule? Here is an example: Classes offered MWF from 9-9:50am will have a final exam on Wednesday, 4/30/25 from 8:00 to 10:00 am.

NOTE: All evening course finals will be held during their regularly scheduled time during Finals Week. Courses after 4 p.m. are considered evening courses. Classes meeting at irregular times will schedule their final

examinations between Monday 4/28 and 5/1 at a suitable time for the professor and students.

Final exam: Wednesday 4/30/25, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

Your professor has the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time.

Assignments
(All Due Dates are Tentative)

Research Assignments:

Module 1 – Science, Society, and Social Research

Assignment: Popular magazines and news sources often publish articles about a variety of topics relevant to the social sciences, including human behavior, relationships, and current events. These articles may be entertaining and even informative, but are they accurate, unbiased sources of information? As we have learned in class, humans are prone to biases, which can influence their perception of reality. For this assignment, you will locate a magazine or news article that is relevant to the social sciences, summarize the article, and evaluate whether the article is an accurate source of information. You will submit a one-page summary of your article and briefly present it in class on 1/22/25.

Due: January 22, 2025

Module 2 - The Process and Problems of Social Research

Assignment: Inductive research can be easily conducted by students. Choose a common social activity (e.g., grocery shopping, eating in a restaurant or cafeteria, waiting in line at a bank, courting rituals at a dance club). Students should go into the field for an hour and observe how people conduct themselves in this activity. Students should be attentive to patterns that emerge from the observation, but should try not to engage actors or make their observation too obvious (as this may bias results!) During the next class period, each student should present empirical generalizations based on these observations. If possible (but not required), students might then find some theory or research that corresponds to these generalizations and report as to whether their observations make sense given pre-existing research or theory. Each student must provide a brief (one page) summary of his/her observations. Each student is to turn in his or her own observations by uploading the assignment to Blackboard Learning.

Due March 19, 2025

Module 3 - Ethical and Scientific Guidelines for Social Work Research

Assignment: Students are to complete the CITI program for the Basic Course in Social & Behavior Research. Access to the self guided certification can be done using this link: https://www.citiprogram.org/members/index.cfm?pageID=50

After completion students will print out the certificate of completion and submit it to the instructor for credit.

Due April 16, 2025

Research Proposal:
For this signature assignment, students will create a research proposal. First, they will conduct a literature review to analyze existing research on their chosen topic. Then, they will identify a research question and hypothesis and propose a study to address this question. Students will identify a research design for the study, indicate how they will sample, and describe the procedures involved in the proposed study, including how they will analyze study data.

2023-2024 Final Exam Schedule
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Final Exam: April 30, 10:30am – 12:30pm

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