EVANGEL UNIVERSITY

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Behavioral & Social Sciences

SWK 480: Research Methods in Social Work

Fall 2025

Faculty Information



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Office location: Trask 303K

Office hours: T/H 12:30-3:00

Course Information

Credit hours: 2

Course dates: August 28-December 6

Meeting times: Monday 12:00 – 3:00 PM

Location: ZM103

Required Textbooks

Engel, R. J., & Schutt, R. K. (2016). *The practice of research in Social Work* (4th ed.). SAGE.

ISBN: 1506304265

Evangel University Mission Statement

Evangel University is a comprehensive Christian university committed to excellence in educating and equipping students to become Spirit-empowered servants of God who impact the Church and society globally.

Department Mission Statement

The Evangel University Social Work Program prepares generalist social workers who seek to ethically integrate their faith and practice within diverse settings, as social change agents and empowering leaders, with a commitment to enhancing the quality of life of all people and communities.

Catalog Description

This course has been designed to give students a basic understanding of the research process and the skills to design individual research projects. This course is part one of two parts designed to allow students to work through the issues relating to research in social welfare and social work practice. Issues related to the role of scientific inquiry in social work will be addressed as well as specific issues related to research design. The final portion of the research sequence will be completed next semester when the student completes an individual research project and presents it to students and faculty. Social Work students should take this course simultaneously with SWK 498 and SWK 499.

Course Purpose

This course provides students with a basic understanding of the research process and will culminate at the conclusion of SWK/SOCI 496 with a research project designed, completed, and presented by the student. Students will study and discuss the purposes and processes associated with social work and sociology research. They will learn about the theory, techniques and methods of research. Students will be guided in the conceptualization and design of the research project and will write a professional quality research proposal to investigate a social work or sociology topic or problem. Students will also gain a greater understanding of the research process and increase their ability to utilize and critique empirical studies of others to support professional interventions with clients and theory building.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify, critique, and develop the various parts of a research report (Comp4)
2. Identify the differences and advantages of single-subject, experimental, survey, field, and qualitative research designs (Comp 4).

3. Develop research instruments with an understanding of reliability and validity of measurement (Comp 4).

4. Develop an understanding of the research process and methods, and their application to the evaluation of social work practice and programs (Comp 4,9)

5. Increase the ability of students to use and critically examine existing empirical research literature with an emphasis on issues regarding cultural diversity, minority populations, gender, and sexual orientation (Comp 2, 4)

6. Understand the importance of ethical behavior in the conduct of research and the presentation of research results (Comp 1,4)).

7. Increase the ability of students to identify potential and real problems in research regarding sampling and validity in regards to minorities and populations-at-risk (Comp 2,,3, 4)

8. Identify problems and potential problems related to cultural diversity, minority populations, gender, and sexual orientation as may be related to research projects (Comp 1, 2, 4).

9. Locate, comprehend, critically analyze and evaluate research articles in social work and related disciplines and apply the findings to practice, policy and service delivery. (Comp 4).

10. Demonstrate active involvement in the Christian community and/or community at large as a knowledgeable and skilled researcher (Comp 4,10).

11. Develop beginning research skills necessary to plan and carry out all phases of quantitative research to build knowledge related to the practice of social work at the case, program and policy levels. (Comp 4, 9).

CSWE Competencies

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
4. Engage in Practice in-formed Research and Research-informed practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
7. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Course Format

Practicum is conducted in the field at social service agencies. To oversee student's practicum activities, I will conduct individual student consultations and onsite agency visits, with educational supervision sessions and remediation assignments as deemed necessary.

SWK 480 COURSE SCHEDULE FALL 2025 Subject to Change			
Date	**Topics & Assignments**	**Reading**	**CSWE Comp**
Week 1 08/25/25	Topic: Course Introduction; Syllabus Review Due: • None	Syllabus, E & S Ch. 1, 2; Appendix B, Appendix C	
Week 2 09/01/25	• **No Class – Labor Day**		
Week 3 09/08/25	Topic: Intro/Ethics Due: • Assignment 1 • Assignment 2		1,3,4,5
Week 4 09/15/25	Topic: Ethical and Scientific Guidelines Due: • Assignment 3	E & S Ch. 3	1,3,4
Week 5 09/22/25	Topic: Exam and Measurement Due: • Exam 1 (Chapters 1-3) • Assignment 4: Proposal Topic	E & S Ch. 4	4
Week 6 09/29/25	Topic: Measurement and Sampling Due: • Assignment 5	E & S Ch. 4 and 5	4
Week 7 10/06/25	Topic: **Sampling and Causation and Research Design** Due: • Assignment 6	E & S Ch. 5 and 6	4

Week 8 10/13/25	**NO CLASS-FALL BREAK**		
Week 9 10/20/25	Topic: Group Experimental Designs and Single Subject Designs Due: • Assignment 7 • Phase 1: Proposal Introduction	E & S Ch. 7, 8	4
Week 10 11/04/25	Topic: Exam Due: • Exam		4
Week 11 10/27/25	Topic: Survey Research Due: • Assignment 8	E & S Ch. 9	3,4
Week 12 11/03/25	Topic: Qualitative Methods Due: • Phase 2: Intro & Literature Review	E & S Ch. 10	1,3,4
Week 13 11/10/25	Topic: Qualitative Data	E & S Ch. 11	4
Week 14 11/17/25	Topic: Evaluation Research Due: • Phase 3: Measurement Tool	E & S Ch. 13	4,9
11/24/25	Topic: Quantitative Data Analysis – Note: no class 11/24 Due: None	E	4
12/1/25	Topic: Wrapping up; Student Presentations Due: • Phase Four: Methodology and Final Polished Proposal • Oral Presentation		1,4
Finals Period 12/8/25	Topic: Midwest Christian Psychology Conference Due: • Attendance and Presentation is Mandatory at the Conference (Assignment 10) • Conference Date TBD		1,4

Course Policies and Requirements

Preparation

Practicum duties and co-enrollment in (at a minimum) 3 traditional classes make for an ambitious senior year. I suggest you develop an organization and time management system ASAP. Purchase a professional planner/appointment calendar. Establish a schedule that includes time for your internship hours, class, studying and homework, sleep, self-care, and yes, fun. Learning time management and balancing work-personal life obligations is part of being a professional. It is worth the investment of your time and energy to get organized and develop a routine NOW *before* you get behind and overwhelmed.

Attendance

Social work study requires professional behavior in the classroom along with expectations of preparation for and participation in seminar discussions and activities. Class begins at 12pm, at which time attendance is taken. Demonstrate professional behavior by attending class and arriving on time.

Attendance is expected; therefore, points are not earned for your attendance. Students are expected to be present and actively participate in classroom activities by giving feedback and discussing class-related topics. In general, students should not be absent from class sessions. Absences are expected to be preceded by contact with the instructor. **Students absent more than two class sessions will be dropped from the course.**

If you are unable to attend class, must arrive late or depart early, please notify the instructor. The instructor will accommodate students in cases of *documented, serious illnesses and family emergencies* that preclude their attendance in class or affect their ability to submit course assignments.

Communication

More so than any other time in your studies, clear communication is key. If you have questions or concerns or experience difficulties at practicum, please contact your instructor by email or visit during office hours. Do not suffer in silence. Seek assistance.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

As members of a learning community, students have responsibilities to other students as well as instructors. The use of electronic devices in the classroom is intended to enhance the learning environment for all students. Kindly silence cell phones during class unless extenuating circumstances are discussed with the professor prior to class. Research indicates that when students misuse

devices in class, not only do their grades suffer, but also for those students around them. Use your devices courteously and wisely.

The Temporary Grade of Incomplete

Incomplete Request Form

Academic Integrity Policy

Any and every instance of academic dishonesty compromises the mission of Evangel University and violates the standards we hold as people of Christ and practitioners within our professional fields. Evangel expects its students to exhibit the highest level of integrity for all course work. While discussion and collaboration are encouraged as part of course interaction, **all work submitted in any course** (seated, online, or hybrid) **must be the original work of the individual student. Therefore, students are expected to understand and avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, which includes falsification, cheating, collusion, and plagiarism and facilitating academic dishonesty.**

NOTE: Every instructor is responsible for stating their own policy pertaining to AI. Here is a link to some suggested policy statements that could be used in your syllabus.

Accommodations Statement

Evangel University is committed to equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Please view the following page or contact the Center for Student Success for more details:

Accommodations Statement

Course Assignments

Exams

Students will participate in three exams spaced evenly throughout the semester to demonstrate understanding of the material being studied. Each exam will be worth 100 points. These exams will consist of a variety of questions assessing conceptual understanding and the ability to apply the material to research settings. Exam items will be multiple choice, short answer essay, and longer essay requiring recall, synthesis, and application of the course material. Students absent on the day of the exam will need to have contacted the instructor prior to the exam to make up the exam. Students not contacting the instructor may not have opportunity to make up the exam. The make-up exam may be uniquely designed for the student.

Exercise Assignments 1-10

Exercises will be assigned throughout the semester to allow integration of the concepts being studied. Each assignment will be typed and in APA format, with cover page, and reference page as appropriate. The title page and reference list page(s) do not count toward the page length specifications stated with each assignment. Point values for each exercise will be identified at the time of the assignment. All exercises will be typed and meet the standards of professional social workers. Major assignments and their point values are listed below. Additional assignments may be made during the course. *NOTE* Unless otherwise instructed, all assignments are to be uploaded to the appropriate Course Commons drop-box by 12:00pm on the day they are due. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other APA writing convention errors can result in a 10% score reduction for each individual assignment.

Assignment 1 - Research Scavenger Hunt

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4, Comp 6

Students will be provided a list of tasks to be addressed by using materials in the library and information obtained on the internet. Each student will be expected to complete the assignment by doing their own hunt. Freeloading is not acceptable. 25 points.

Assignment 2 – Classifying Research

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4

Select three empirical research abstracts from a peer-reviewed social work or sociology journal. Write a brief report and annotated bibliography on each (you can search for "annotated bibliography" at https://owl.english.purdue.edu for an example and description). Include the citation and title of the article, a brief summation of the article (no more than a paragraph), and the appropriate classification of each article according to the four categories mentioned in Chapter 1 of the text (descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, and evaluation). Also, identify the research instrument(s) utilized in the study (survey, empirically based measurement tools, etc.). 20 points.

Assignment 3- Ethical Research Certification

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4

Conducting social science research with human subjects, requires the utmost of ethical practice. There are very specific guidelines that Behavioral Scientists must follow. The thoroughly learn these guidelines, students must take a short certification course and pass each module quiz, found at the National Institute of Health. This certification teaching module can be found here: Welcome to Annual Ethics Training | NIH Ethics Program In order to pass this assignment,

students must scan their certificate, and upload it to the corresponding drop box in Course Commons. 30 points.

Assignment 4 – Developing the Research Proposal

CSWE Comp 4

Complete exercise 2 and 3 on the top of pg.26. Select a topic for your research proposal, and briefly explain why you feel this topic would be worth studying. Write 4 possible research questions for your topic. 10 points

Assignment 5 – Measuring Variable

CSWE Comp 4

Provide a nominal and operational definition of one of the concepts associated with your research topic, and then complete practice questions 5 and 6 on pg. 108 of your textbook. Be sure to locate an article that is similar to what you wish to accomplish with your research study. 20 points

Assignment 6 - Sampling Design

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 2, Comp 4, Comp 9

Select five empirical journal articles and identify the sampling method used in each of these. Note strengths and weaknesses of the methods including randomness and non-response. How confident would you be to make generalizations in these studies to a larger population? Would different sampling strategies be preferred? Identify the research instrument(s) used within the study, and discuss your opinion of their choice of a research instrument, the cost, and how to acquire a copy of each instrument, if available. **This may require you doing extra work to find this information.** Provide a two page report to summarize your work. 30 points

Assignment 7 - Single-Subject Design Project

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4

Students will develop a hypothetical research project where single-subject design techniques could be used. The hypothetical project should be based upon a hypothetical client at the practicum agency. Students should identify the construct being studied, an operational definition of the construct, and the design of the study. Students should then construct a graph indicating the hypothetical progress of the client while at the agency. 50 points

Assignment 8 - Constructing Questionnaires

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 2, Comp 4

Create a survey instrument of at least 10 questions on a topic that could be studied on the Evangel University campus. In class, you will submit your instrument to be critiqued by your fellow students. Points will be awarded based on the quality of your instrument as well as completing critiques for the other instruments presented. (15 points)

Assignment 9 – Research Presentation Critiques

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4,

Using the forms provided provide feedback and critiques to each of your classmates that present their research. These critiques will be given to them to help them critique their presentations for the Midwest Psychology Research Conference. 25 points

Assignment 10 – Research Presentation Critiques

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4

Attend the Midwest Psychology Research Conference in conjunction with Evangel's Psychology program. Attend 2 presentations and analyze their work. Using the critique form provided, compare and contrast the two presentations. (25 points).

Extra Credit

For every chapter outlined, to include vocabulary words defined, students can earn 1pt extra on the exam testing those chapters. Outlines must be typed, and an average of 2-4 pages expected per chapter

Research Proposal

CSWE Comp 1, Comp 4

Completed Research Proposal 150 points

The guiding purpose of this course will be the creation of a proposal for a research study that will be completed in the spring semester. This proposal will contain sound thinking and methodology, as well as be plausible for the student to complete within the time, financial, and sampling constraints of the course. It is imperative for students to stay current with each stage in order to not fall behind in the research process.

Students will complete the research proposal in three phases.

Phase I

The first phase will be an overview of the research proposal and consist of the introduction and some literature review. Minimum 5 sources, 4-5 pages. This phase will be worth 35 points. For full point consideration, the following parts must be included:

- Introduction (1-2 pg's)
  - Brief Overview of Topic ♣
  - Statement of the Problem
- Purpose of the Research (1/2 pg)
- Significance of the research
- Research Questions or Hypotheses (1/2 pg)
- Beginning Literature Review (1-2 pg)

Also, note that Research Questions and Hypotheses are not typically included in this beginning introduction section, but for the purpose of this stage of proposal creation, you will include them. They likely will morph and change as you move through your proposal creation, and they will move to the Methodology section at the end of the term when you finalize your proposal.

Phase II

The second phase of the research proposal will focus on the improvement of the literature review, and revisions made to the introduction section. Minimum of 10 sources. 7-10 pages. This phase will be worth 50 points. The following parts must be included:

- Revised (best yet) Introduction, Purpose, Hypotheses/Questions
- Improved and comprehensive Literature Review

Phase III

The third phase of the research proposal will focus on improvement and continued development. Included in this phase should be the beginning discussion of the options for research tools (measures/instruments) you will be utilizing for your study, and a brief overview of the methodology that the student is considering. The student will be able to earn an additional 15 points. Minimum 10 sources, 8-12 pages. The following parts must be included:

- Revised (best yet) Introduction, Purpose, Hypotheses/Questions
- Revised (best yet) Literature Review
- ½- ¾ page discussion of the proposed research tool, to include how you will locate and obtain it prior to use in February.
- Identification of the Independent and Dependent variables

Phase IV- Completed Proposal

The final phase of the research proposal will include the finalized methodology to be used in the proposed research project, including the finalized chosen research instrument. It will be combined with the previous submission and be worth an additional 50 points. Minimum 10 sources, and 15 pages in length. Total points for the research proposal will be 150. The following parts must be included, and should follow the final Research Proposal Format provided by your professor.

- Revised and completed: Introductory Section
- Revised and completed: Literature Review
- Completed Methodology section to include
  - Research design (process for carrying out the research, independent and depended variables etc.)
  - Sample
  - Instrument
  - Plan for data collection

- Plan for data analysis

Include an Appendix with a copy of the instrument you will be using. If you are creating it yourself, you must have a draft complete for this final proposal. If you are using an already created and validated instrument, a copy should be attached.

Assessment

Grading Policy

*All senior-level classes including seminar and the practicum experience require students to pass by earning a "C-" or greater in the course. Students earning less than a "C-" will be dropped and required to retake the class and practicum.

End-of-course grades are final as posted and will not be changed unless there is a mathematical error. Please do not ask me to raise or improve your grade; grading is not a negotiation. Scoring and point ranges are clearly outlined. This policy is to ensure equal treatment for all students.

Late/Missed Assignment Policy

All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* on their respective due dates. The instructor will accommodate students in cases of *documented serious illnesses, family emergencies, and participation in University-sanctioned activities and programs* that preclude students' completion of practicum-related activities and paperwork. Late submissions received within 24 hours receive 20% point deductions. Late submissions received after 24 hours receive 50% point deductions. Late submissions after 48 hours receive no points. *Please note that paper documentation of practicum activities is still required in order to receive course credit even if they are submitted late for reduced or zero points.*

Grading Scale

100%	92%	89%	86%	82%	80%	76%	72%	69%	66%	62%	59%
93%	90%	87%	83%	80%	77%	73%	70%	67%	63%	60%	0%
A	**A-**	**B+**	**B**	**B-**	**C+**	**C**	**C-**	**D+**	**D**	**D-**	**F**

How Do I View My Grades?

University Resources

Canvas

CANVAS Student Orientation

The Center for Student Success

The Center for Student Success

EU Libraries

EU Libraries

EU Libraries Off Campus Access

The Write Place

The Write Place