COURSE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

SW 780 has been designed to be taken during the final semester of the MSW program for students who have a special emphasis in working in public child welfare. The course is an advance research-oriented seminar that engages students in an effort to address current needs of children and families who come to the attention of public child welfare agencies. Emphasis is placed on the theoretical perspectives and research approaches used to examine programs and policies affecting children, youth, and their families in the public child welfare system.

Students complete a group research project reflecting the student’s interests and needs in working with children and families in child welfare. Outcomes of this seminar will be for students to develop a research project that includes: 1) a research paper; and 2) presentation – which will provide the use of research knowledge in making practice and policy decisions that improve services within the public child welfare system. Attention will also focus on ethical, racial/ethnic, gender and sexual orientation issues, and their impact on each stage of the research process.

Students will be prepared to participate in a range of social work research activities that include 1) conceptualizing of a research problem; 2) extensive review of the literature; 3) research designs; 4) measurement; 5) data collection; 6) evaluation of data; and 7) presentation of findings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

As a result of taking this course students will:

1. Demonstrate abilities to differentiate and selectively apply social work knowledge and theories within the context of child welfare research.
2. Evaluate potential strengths and limitations in the use of evidence based practice, and practice based evidence in working with individuals, families, groups and within service delivery systems.
3. Increase understanding of how child welfare research influence practice and service delivery.
4. Apply critical thinking within the context of social work research by analyzing practice situations, policies, and current issues relevant to child welfare practice.
5. Increase abilities to integrate multiple sources of theoretical knowledge, research based knowledge and wisdom.
6. Increase abilities to communicate the impact of research findings on practice and policy decisions.
7. Understand how professional values, ethics, and standards influence public child welfare research.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical issues involved in conducting research with vulnerable populations.
9. Evaluate the validity of research findings reported in the child welfare literature.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completion of SW 780, students will demonstrate competencies in the following areas: (EPAS: Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, Council of Social Work Education)

EP 2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
Social workers apply ethical decision-making skills to promote the well-being of children and families; they:

- Utilize research in accordance with ethical standards generally agreed upon by scientists, and consistent with the values of the social work profession (class discussion, IRB assignment and final research paper)
- Distinguish how cultural, racial, and/or gender perceptions can influence the research process and outcomes (class discussion, research critique assignment and final research paper)
- Understand the interplay between professional ethics and personal values in social work research as they relate to one or more populations at risk (class discussion and final research paper)

EP 2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
Social workers distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom; they:

- Identify sources of empirical literature and analyze best practices literature to guide an evidence based practice recommendation (final research paper and presentation)
- Be able to conduct a critical literature review (final research paper)
• Be able to generate research questions that will inform social work practice (final research paper)

EP 2.1.6 Engage in research informed practice and practice informed research

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidenced-based intervention, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery, as demonstrated by:

• Critically analyzing empirically based articles ranging from descriptive to epidemiological to experimental (final research paper)
• Summarize the conclusions within one or more practice oriented problem areas of the empirical literature (final research paper)
• Demonstrate a thorough understanding of research methodology (research critique assignment, final paper and presentation)
• Identify and assess the adequacy of evidence-based practices to use in their own social work practice (research critique assignment, final research paper and presentation)
• Develop and conduct research studies based on the needs of the diverse populations they encounter (final research paper)

EP 2.2.10(b) Assessment

Social workers collect, organize, and interpret client data; they:

• Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage with diverse individuals to gather, analyze, and interpret client information in a coherent and objective manner (final research paper)
• Consistently gather qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources, form coherent meaning from the data, and use the resulting information to make recommendations and plan interventions that meet standards for child welfare social work practice (final research paper)

EP 2.2.10(c) Evaluation

Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

• Analyze and assess, from a research methods perspective, the empirical literature related to a particular intervention (final research paper)
• Develop a research study to evaluate the needs of service delivery systems and/or evaluate programs and services used to provide services to diverse populations (final research paper)
COURSE FORMAT

As a seminar, the content will be covered through individual and group exercises, lectures (both instructor and invited experts), and small group discussions. Handouts and readings will be provided in class where appropriate. Active participation and full preparation by each student for each class is expected. Students are also required to behave professionally in the classroom and to treat the instructor and their peers with respect.

READINGS

There is no required textbook or course reader for this course. Required readings are either provided directly by the instructor or available on Blackboard. However, students are strongly encouraged to consult the textbook(s) used in SW 690 and SW 791 when writing class assignments.

REACHING ME

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any aspects of this class. Office hours are Thursdays 3-4 pm. I am also available by email, phone or appointment. Email is the best way to reach me. I try to respond within 24 hours.

BLACKBOARD – Students are responsible for checking, regularly, Blackboard for updates, assigned articles, etc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires graduate level reading, writing, and analytical skills. Assignments are designed to enable students to integrate and apply class content. All written work will be assessed on clarity of presentation, organization, and the ability to integrate and apply concepts presented in class. There will be four written assignments, one presentation, and a group evaluation assignment. In addition, you’ll be required to complete the IRB human subjects’ tutorial and submit an IRB application to the SDSU IRB for approval. Both assignments are required to conduct research and for the completion of the final research paper.

ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE UPLOADED TO BLACKBOARD BY THE DEADLINE DATE AND TIME.

GRADING RUBRICS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS ARE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD FOR DOWNLOAD BY STUDENTS.

1. Problem Statement & Draft Literature Review (15 points) DUE: February 19, 2015 by 4:00 pm

Provide a 4-5 page description of the child welfare issue you want to address. The paper should include an introduction of the issue (i.e., urgency of the problem being addressed) along with research questions you want answered. A brief literature review should also be included to justify the study of the research topic. The theoretical or conceptual framework being used to ground your research questions should also be included.
2. Research Critique (10 points)  
DUE: March 12, 2015 by 4:00 pm  
Professional social workers are expected to be critical consumers of research. The ability to read and evaluate the methodology and conclusions from an empirical research study is a key skill you have developed. The purpose of this assignment is to attend the Student Research Symposium either on March 6 or 7 and describe one research study presented (poster or oral presentation). You should include a critical analysis of the literature review, the sampling method, the research design, the measures chosen, the statistical analysis used, and the outcomes and conclusion(s). The paper should also include your critique of the research conducted (i.e., whether the research is appropriate or any suggestions for improvement). This is a 2-3 page paper in APA format.

3. Draft of Final Paper (10 points)  
DUE: April 23, 2015 by 12:00 pm  
Because the final paper will be submitted to the San Diego County Child Welfare Services Program and Planning administration, a complete draft of the final paper is due for review and feedback by the instructor to provide students time to finalize the paper for final review by CWS.

4. Final Paper (35 points)  
DUE: April 30, 2015 by 4:00 pm  
A 12-16 page research paper that includes: 1) title page; 2) abstract; 3) introduction and background; 4) methods; 5) results; 6) discussion; 7) implications; and 8) references. The paper must be in APA format.  
The final paper will be submitted to the San Diego County Child Welfare Services to inform social work practice and/or policy implementation.

5. Presentation (20 points)  
Due: May 7, 2015 by TBD  
Students are required to provide a PowerPoint presentation about their research study. The presentation should be between 15-20 minutes and should include the following: 1) research statement; 2) research questions; 3) theoretical framework; 4) relevance for diverse communities; 5) data analytic techniques; 6) study findings; 7) and implications for social work practice and/or policy. Include tables, graphs or figures as necessary.

6. Group Work Evaluation (10 points)  
Due: May 9, 2015 by 11:59 pm  
Each student is required to complete a group work evaluation for each member of their team. Points for this assignment will be taken from the points given by each group member to their two group members. The total possible points for each student are 5 points from each group member, totaling 10 points. Points will be added to the student’s final grade. Failure of a student to submit the assignment will automatically result in a deduction of 10 points from the student’s grade, and an addition of the 5 points to the group member’s grade.
Additional Required Tasks:

Students are required to complete the following assignments/task necessary for the completion of the final paper.

1. **Human Subjects Training Certificate**  
   **DUE:** February 26, 2015 by 4:00 pm  
   All investigators submitting a research protocol for review at SDSU to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) are required to complete the human subjects’ tutorial, which covers ethical principles and practices when conducting research involving human subjects. You are required to complete the tutorial and submit the certificate of completion to the instructor.

2. **IRB Application**  
   **DUE:** March 5, 2015 by 4:00 pm  
   Federal regulations require that all research involving the use of human subjects be approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the institution at which the research is conducted to ensure that proper ethical considerations are made. For purposes of this course, you'll be required to submit the “Exempt – Existing Data Outline” form found at SDSU’s IRB website. The outline includes an abstract, purpose and background, data source, methods, potential benefits, and potential risks/risk management. The form is to be submitted to SDSU’s IRB for approval. No research activities can take place without the IRB’s final approval, so it is in your best interest to submit the IRB application as soon as possible as approval can take between 3-4 weeks or longer.

   A copy of the IRB application must be submitted to the instructor to forward to the Child Welfare Services Program and Planning for data extraction.
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Statement &amp; Draft Literature Review</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Group Work Evaluation</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
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Grade Assignment (in accordance with the policies set forth in the Graduate Bulletin):

- **A** 100-95%
- **A-** 94-90%
- **B+** 89-87%
- **B** 86-84%
- **B-** 83-80%
- **C+** 79-77%
- **C** 76-74%
- **C-** 73-70%
- **D+** 69-67%
- **D** 66-64%
- **D-** 63-60%
- **F** 59% or less
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Assessment of Research Knowledge</td>
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<td>January 22</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Review of Research Concepts - <em>CWS Guest Speaker</em></td>
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<td>January 29</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Fundamental Components of Research Proposals - <em>SDSU Library Guest Speaker</em></td>
<td>•Bwisa, H.M.</td>
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<td>February 5</td>
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<td>February 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>•Mennen, F.E., &amp; O’Keefe, M.</td>
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<td>•Ayon, C., &amp; Aisenberg, E.</td>
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<td>February 19</td>
<td>PROBLEM STATEMENT &amp; DRAFT LITERATURE REVIEW DUE-</td>
<td>•Child Welfare Outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>•ICAN Report – pp.127-157</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>•Villagrana, M.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>•Dettlaff, et al.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Research Ethics with Vulnerable Populations IRB Application</td>
<td>SDSU IRB – Human Subjects Tutorial</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS</strong> – Attendance at the Student Research Symposium at SDSU on March 6 OR 7</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
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<td>IRB APPLICATION DUE TO SDSU IRB FOR APPROVAL-</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Accessing Child Welfare Data - <em>The California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare Guest Speakers</em></td>
<td>•Vandivere, S., &amp; DeVooght, K.</td>
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<td>March 12</td>
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**Students are expected to complete the assigned reading(s) for the week PRIOR to class.**

**Please note due time for this assignment - 12 pm.**

***Students are to bring a copy of their final paper to the presentation for the Child Welfare Services Program and Planning administration.***
POLICIES AND CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Attendance
Class attendance is required. Students are expected to attend each class session and arrive on time including return from breaks. In case of extreme emergencies and serious illness, students should take responsibility for informing the instructor prior to the class. Failure to regularly attend the class and demonstrate comprehension of the readings through discussions will be considered in assigning the final grade.

Academic dishonesty and Plagiarism
Please adhere to the guidelines set forth in the Graduate Bulletin (see Regulations of the Division of Graduate Affairs) concerning this issue. Not adhering to these guidelines will result in an immediate referral to the SDSU Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Late Assignments
Late assignments without point deductions will only be accepted in the case of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (i.e., illnesses, accidents, family emergencies, etc.). Computer problems are not acceptable excuses for lateness. Students should inform the instructor of any concerns that may prevent completion of an assignment. Unexcused late assignments will receive a 5% deduction for each day the assignment is late, including weekends.

Incomplete Grade
On rare occasions an “incomplete” grade may be granted as long as the student does not have to make up more than 30% of the required course work. If the student wishes to request an “incomplete”, he/she must discuss this with the instructor. A written plan outlining the action to complete the course must be approved and signed by the student and instructor. It is expected the student will complete course work within a one-month period.

Mobile Phones and Laptops
Mobile phones should be turned off during class time to avoid distracting others and detracting from the learning process. Refrain from using laptops for anything unrelated to the class.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Please note that any disability accommodations will be kept confidential. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based
on disability cannot be provided until you have presented the instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

SDSU Writing Center. Writing resources and feedback on paper. http://www.writingcenter.sdsu.edu/

SDSU Standards for student conduct. http://csrr.sdsu.edu/conduct_html

SDSU Safe Zones. http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/lgbtq/safezones.aspx#resources