

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Social Work
SW 610--Computer Applications in Social Work Practice
Spring, 2008

Course Time: 7:00 - 9:40
Location: HT-189
Office Hours: Wed. 6-7 (HH-109);
By Appointment

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I. Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a practical knowledge of social work research by combining a conceptual understanding of introductory statistics with the use of a widely used social science statistical analysis computer application (SPSS—Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This course will provide you with continuity and linkages to your previous experience in Social Work 690 (Research Methods in Social Work) and your future experience in Social Work 791 (Evaluation of Social Work Practice). This course will cover topics relevant to learning how to use social work research in social work practice in an effort to better serve people in need.

II. Course Objectives

A. Knowledge Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a practical knowledge and application of research methods in social work practice.
2. Develop a working understanding of one statistical software program that will guide data analysis for survey and intervention research.

B. SKILL OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Demonstrate an ability to apply principles of social work research methods into practice settings.
2. Demonstrate an ability to develop reliable and valid research questions.
3. Develop skills in identifying types of research design and data to be collected.

4. Demonstrate skills in analyzing data collected through both survey and intervention research.
5. Demonstrate skills in using data to determine the efficacy of an intervention or to evaluate the effectiveness of a program.

C. Value and Ethics

Students will be able to:

1. Integrate social work values and ethics into the application of social work research methods.
2. Identify specific values related to the use of research protocols and statistical procedures.
3. Identify ethical dilemmas as they arise in use of research in social work practice.

III. Overview of Course

For most of the semester, class time will be roughly split between lecture and hands-on laboratory experience using the SPSS statistical analysis program. Through the use of demonstrations and class activities, lectures will reinforce the statistical concepts covered in the text. I have also tried to integrate the concepts discussed in the textbook and in lecture with your SPSS instruction (and assignments); however, not every lecture will map directly to what is covered in the text or in lecture. A significant portion of each lecture will also be dedicated to demonstrating the application of research methods and statistics in social work practice through the use of the SPSS data analysis program. The remainder of class time will be used to work on SPSS homework assignments which will be assigned throughout the semester. In addition to the SPSS homework assignments, you will also be assigned two data analysis/research projects using the SPSS program. In addition to the homework assignments and the data analysis projects, four short exams will be given during the semester.

IV. Course Textbooks

Rowntree, D. (2004). *Statistics Without Tears: A Primer for Non-Mathematicians*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston. **(Required)**

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Feeney, B. C. (2006). A Simple Guide to SPSS for Windows for Version 12.0. Wadsworth Publishing. **(Optional)**

V. Course Requirements

Student knowledge of 1) applying research methods in social work practice, 2) introductory statistical concepts, 3) using SPSS, 4) the development of research questions, and 5) the analysis/interpretation/reporting of research results will be assessed by the following assignments and exams:

1. Seven SPSS assignments (25% of final grade)
2. Four multiple choice, true/false exams covering topics from the book and lecture (25% of final grade)
3. Two data analysis projects (50% of final grade)

Assignments

Assignments will be given based on SPSS-related topics discussed in class. All assignments are due at the beginning of each class period.

Grading of Assignments

All assignments will be graded on a 10-point scale. **Full credit** (i.e., 10 points) is awarded only for especially meritorious work (no errors). Assignments with minimal errors will be given a score of 9 (**Full partial credit**). **Partial credit** (8 points) will be given to assignments with errors. Please provide an answer to every question. **No Credit** will be given for homework assignments turned in more than one-week late (see class policies below—section VIII, class procedures) or for assignments with multiple missing answers. Homework assignments will be returned the following class meeting.

Exams

Four exams based on the required text and lectures will be given during the semester. Makeup exams will be given only on rare occasions (see class policies). Please bring a scantron form (**882-ES scantron**) for each exam. Exam results will be returned the following class meeting.

Data Analysis Projects

Based on datasets which will be made available in class, students will complete two data analysis projects. Each project will involve: 1) a brief literature review, 2) development of one or more hypotheses, 3) testing of these hypotheses through data analysis, 4) interpretation and discussion of findings. Specific requirements for the data analysis projects will be provided when the projects are assigned later in the semester.

VI. Course Grades

Grades will be administered in accordance with the policies set forth in the Graduate Bulletin. The following grading scale will be utilized:

A = 100-95	C = 76-74
A- = 94-90	C- = 73-70
B+ = 89-87	D+ = 69-67
B = 86-84	D = 66-64
B- = 83-80	D- = 63-60
C+ = 79-77	F = 59 or less

Course Grading Guidelines:

1. Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work that not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content, but also shows that the student has (a) undertaken complex tasks, (b) applied critical thinking skills to course assignments, and/or (c) demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to course assignments. The degree to which the student demonstrates these skills determines whether he/she receives an A or an A-.
2. A grade of B+ is given to work that is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-satisfactory understanding of the material being tested, and has exceeded expectations of the course assignments.
3. A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of course assignments. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on assignments and meets the expectations of the course.
4. A grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than satisfactory on course assignments, reflecting only a moderate grasp of content and is below expectations.
5. A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of course assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.
6. Grades below a C- denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in a student's performance on assignments.

The instructor will evaluate students' written work in accordance with the graduate grading guidelines. Completion of all components of a written assignment would result in a grade of B. As per the guidelines above: A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on the assignment and meets the basic expectations of the course. Grading will begin with the assumption that the student has met the requirements of the assignment, and all papers/presentations will begin with a score of 85%, slightly higher than a mid-range B. Areas of the assignment that are judged to demonstrate more-than-

satisfactory understanding of the task will receive additional credit and areas that are less than satisfactory effort, including omissions or reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations, will have credit deducted.

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 or she must discuss this with me. A written plan outlining the action to complete the course must be approved and signed by the student and myself. It is expected the student will complete course work within a one-month time period.

VII. Expectations of students

As an instructor, I have several expectations of my students:

1. Come to class prepared. Please read the text before lecture. This is critical and the assigned readings each week are generally no more than 25 pages. Lectures are designed to build upon the material presented in the text and to help you understand the concepts you will be expected to know for the SPSS assignments, exams and data analysis projects.
2. It is *extremely* critical to successfully completing course work in this class that you have a good understanding of the research methods material covered in Social Work 690. I suggest that you review the textbook from SW690 over the next few weeks.
3. If you do not have an email account, please secure one. In addition, I expect you to check your e-mail messages regularly for any changes or updates that I may need to announce regarding our class.
4. Please purchase a USB flash drive for use with the SPSS program. These can be purchased at the book store or any office supply store. A flash drive with 1 GB of storage can be purchased for around \$15.
5. Please turn in your assignments by the due date. Late work will only be accepted in the case of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (illness, accidents, etc.). See class policies.
6. I encourage you to ask me questions and utilize my office hours when you encounter any problems or if you’re having difficulty with the course.
7. I strongly encourage you to find yourselves workmates in this class. However, I expect your assignments to represent your own work.

VIII. Class Policies

1. **NASW Code of Ethics:** The NASW Code of Ethics is an academic standard at the SDSU School of Social Work. Students are expected to maintain a high standard of professionalism and to follow all the principles of the NASW Code of Ethics (Revised, 1996). The Code of Ethics specifies that social workers should be “continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them” (NASW, Revised 1996, Ethical Principles). Adherence to the Code of Ethics includes placing clients’ interests in highest priority, maintaining client confidentiality, demonstrating appropriate professional boundaries, treating one’s colleagues with respect, and maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
2. **Attendance:** Attendance is not required but highly recommended. Absences and partial class attendance can significantly interfere with students’ ability to meet course objectives.
3. **Participation/Classroom Etiquette:** Class participation means to be actively engaged in the learning process. I encourage you to contribute comments, ask questions and be an active participant in the learning process. Cell phones should be turned off during class time to avoid distracting others and detracting from the learning process. Please do not use the lab computers to check email, surf the web, or do other work while you are in class.
4. **Academic Honesty and Integrity:** Please adhere to the guidelines set forth in the Graduate Bulletin (see Regulations of the Division of Graduate Affairs).
5. **Assignments:** SPSS assignments are due at the beginning of each class. Late assignments will only be accepted in the case of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (i.e., illnesses, accidents, family emergencies, etc.). Computer and printer problems are not acceptable excuses for lateness. Students should assertively communicate any concerns that may prevent completion of assignments. Students should inform me in advance if unforeseen circumstances beyond their control prevent completion of work. Please contact me as early as possible if you have an emergency that impedes turning your assignment in on time. If a student cannot complete the assignment by the due date, he or she must meet with me as soon as possible to develop a plan and time frame for completion of the work. SPSS assignments turned in late for any reason other than a verifiable emergency will be assessed a one-point penalty. Assignments turned in more than one week late will not receive credit.
7. **Exams:** Make-up exams will only be offered to students who have received prior approval from me or in cases of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (see #5 above).
8. **Data Analysis Projects:** Late data analysis projects will only be accepted in the case of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (see #5 above). Projects turned in more than 1-week late will receive a full-grade reduction (i.e., A- to B-).

Class Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	SPSS Topic	Readings
1/23	Course Overview	SPSS Overview and Data Entry	Chapter 1 (Rowntree)
1/30	Research Methods and Statistical Inquiry		
2/6	Descriptive Statistics	Using SPSS to Compute Frequencies, Means and Measures of Dispersion	Chapter 2 (Rowntree)
2/13	Presentation of Data Exam 1 (1/23-2/6)	Creating Presentation Ready Tables and Graphs in SPSS	Chapter 3 (Rowntree)
2/20	Shapes of Distributions	Data Recoding and Manipulation	Chapter 4 (Rowntree)
2/27	Project 1		
3/5	Project 1 Exam 2 (2/13-2/27)		
3/12	Statistical Significance		Chapter 5 (Rowntree)
3/19	Comparing Samples	Comparing Proportions and Significance Testing	Chapter 6 (Rowntree)
3/26	Comparing Samples II		
4/2	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
4/9	Statistical Relationships: t-tests and ANOVA Exam 3 (3/12-3/26)	Comparing Means using SPSS: t-tests and Analysis of Variance	Chapter 7 (Rowntree)
4/16	Association and Prediction	Correlation and Regression	Chapter 8 (Rowntree)
4/23	Project 2		
4/30	Project 2 Exam 4 (4/9-4/23)		
5/7	Project 2		

Course Assignments and Projects

Date Assigned	Assignment/Project	Topic	Date Due
1/23	Assignment 1	SPSS Overview and Data Entry	2/6
2/6	Assignment 2	Using SPSS to Compute Frequencies, Means and Measures of Dispersion	2/20
2/13	Assignment 3	Creating Presentation Ready Tables and Graphs in SPSS	2/27
2/20	Assignment 4	Data Recoding and Manipulation	3/5
2/27	Project 1	Analysis and Interpretation of Survey Data	3/26
3/19	Assignment 5	Comparing Proportions and Significance Testing	4/9
4/9	Assignment 6	Comparing Means using SPSS: t-tests and Analysis of Variance	4/23
4/16	Assignment 7	Correlation and Regression	4/30
4/23	Project 2	Analysis and Interpretation of Intervention Data	5/14