

Department: HDFS

Course No.: 2004W [205W]

Title: Understanding Research Methods in Human Development and Family Studies

Credits: 3

Contact:Jane Goldman

WQ: W

Catalog Copy: 205W. Understanding Research Methods in Human Development and Family Studies. Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: STAT 100V or 110V . Prerequisite or corequisite: HDFS 190 . Open only to HDFS majors. Not open for credit to students who have completed HDFS 290, HDFS 290 or HDFS 290W . Open to sophomores or higher.

Overview of research methods used in human development and family studies, with emphasis on (1) the social context in which research occurs and is used, (2) strengths and limitations of social science research methods, and **(Jane Goldman)**Includes topics such as hypothesis formation, measurement of social variables, research ethics, data collection techniques, and interpreting results.

Course Information: Goals for students: to understand basic concepts in research methods used in human development and family studies; to recognize the social context in which research occurs and is used; to recognize strengths and limitations of social science research methods, and to be able to read and understand published research reports.

Three exams: short answer and/or multiple choice. In class written exercises. Writing assignments (described below).

Themes: Hypothesis formation, reviewing research literature, measurement of social variables, research ethics, research designs, sampling, data collection techniques, interpreting results, and the relationship between research and practice and public policy.

W Criteria: Writing assignments for the course focus on helping you develop your skills in some of the types of professional writing that are related to work in the field of Human Development and Family Studies. In writing these papers you are to put yourself in the "role" of director of a comprehensive family service organization that is concerned with services and public policy issues concerning individuals (children, adolescents, young adults, and middle-age and older adults) and families. In this capacity you will be asked to complete the assignments listed below. Dates for first drafts and for final drafts are listed on the course schedule. Details concerning each assignment will be handed out in class. All papers must be handed in on time. Guidelines for professional writing are presented in the Szuchman (APA format) book. Each week in class we will review several sections of *The Elements of Style*, which is a classic guide to help improve your overall ability to express yourself clearly in writing. In preparing your assignments you are to focus on format, grammar, and professional appearance, as well as content. All

papers are to be proofread very carefully. Proofread from a paper copy. Do not depend on a computer program to do your final proofreading. In order to pass the class each of the writing assignments must be completed with a passing grade. Points will be deducted for late papers. Plan ahead, and at least every 15 minutes save copies of files on a separate disk. All returned papers are to be kept until after you have received a final grade for the course.

1. A short paper describing the organization for which you are the director. You will describe your organization's mission, the population(s) your organization serves, the structure of your organization, and the primary issues faced by your organization's clients. (2-3 pages)
2. A memo to members of your staff outlining ethical guidelines for evaluating research proposals submitted to your agency. (2 pages).
3. A short paper discussing conducting research with marginalized and/or oppressed groups. (2-3 pages)
4. A brief summary of a research article for a newsletter for your clients. (2 pages)
5. A brief questionnaire to be used by your agency for evaluating a particular service that your agency provides. (2 pages)
6. An annotated bibliography of 10 articles about a social issue impacting the lives of the clients served by your agency. (5 pages)

Writing assignments account for 40% of the final grade.

The instructor will provide detailed guidelines for each writing assignment. Students will write at least two drafts of each paper. The first draft will be reviewed by the course Teaching Assistants. Some papers also will be reviewed by other students, with a focus on helping them develop editing skills. The instructor will provide detailed feedback on the final draft, and students will be encouraged to use feedback from earlier papers to prepare future papers. A book on Writing APA style will be assigned to help students learn the writing skills relevant to their future careers. In addition, *The Elements of Style* will be used as a guide to help students improve the overall tone and clarity of their writing. Students will be encouraged to visit the Writing Center as needed.

Role of Grad Students: The class will involve two hours of lecture each week with the faculty member and one hour a week in a discussion section of 19 with the TA. Graduate Teaching Assistants will attend the main lecture, hold office hours to talk with students, and meet with students once per week in discussion sections of 19 students each. Each graduate student will supervise two one-hour sections. Each assistant will be required to complete the training for "W" course TAs that will be offered through the Writing Center. They also will be required to complete the training programs for TAs offered through the Institute for Teaching and Learning. TAs for this class will be advanced students with background in research methods and whose writing has been evaluated by the faculty.

Writing assignments will be discussed in these discussion sections. Graduate students will be supervised by the faculty member in charge of the main lecture and will meet regularly with that faculty member to discuss the course and the students. Teaching Assistants will be mentored regarding how to grade student papers. The instructor will provide guidelines for grading papers, including a grading rubric and specific instructions for evaluating student writing. At the beginning of the semester, the instructor will

work closely with each TA and provide feedback on the TA's progress in learning to grade papers. Because instructors will read final drafts and provide detailed comments on these final drafts, this will serve as an additional “check” on TA grading.