

## **Social Work 298/299 Thesis/Project**

(2 units each)

### **A. SWRK 298 - Project. (2 units)**

Prerequisites: SWRK 292 and Advancement to Candidacy. See *Criteria for Thesis and Project*. Preparation, completion, and submission of an acceptable project for the master's degree. Approved for RP grading.

### **B. SWRK 299 – Thesis (2 units).**

Prerequisites: SWRK 292 and Advancement to Candidacy. See *Criteria for Thesis and Project*. Preparation, completion, and submission of an acceptable thesis for the master's degree. Approved for RP grading.

### **Course Rationale**

It is expected that training for advanced, autonomous social work practice would culminate in the independent production of a research project or thesis. The final project should provide evidence of originality, appropriate organization, clarity of purpose, critical analysis, and accuracy and completeness of documentation. This effort should be a significant critical analysis of the practice of social work. It is presumed that this experience will prepare one to better evaluate his/her own social work practice.

Work toward completion of the project should be started in SWRK 272T, Project/Thesis Seminar. SWRK 272T requires, at minimum, that students complete the problem statement and methodology chapters of their project or thesis and a draft of their literature review chapter. Students are also encouraged to complete literature reviews, develop instruments, and initiate data collection in SWRK 272T.

In SWRK 298/299, students are to complete their data collection and analysis and produce a completed project with the assistance of their project/thesis chair. Enrollment in SWRK 298/299 is contingent upon the completion of SWRK 272T with a grade of "C" or better.

Students are expected to complete their thesis/project in SWRK 298/299 during the last semester of the MSW program. This is the semester subsequent to their enrollment in SWRK 272T, Project/Thesis Seminar. Students, who have not completed their work, must re-register for the total units through regular registration. In some cases, this may require reapplication to the University if a student has not been in continuous enrollment. Fees are listed in the Schedule of Courses. Faculty is not available for summer advising.

CSUF General Catalog (2000-2001) contains the following information about project and thesis:

*No academic distinction is made between a thesis and a project. Either one is equally acceptable as a means of fulfilling the requirements for the master's degree. Specific departmental instructions or requirements should, however, be ascertained by the candidate before enrollment in courses 298 or 299.*

*The instructor of record for thesis or project must issue a letter grade on the Master's*

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*Degree Clearance form through the Division of Graduate Studies.*

*Critical and independent thinking should characterize every project. Mere description, cataloging, compilation, and other superficial procedures are not adequate (p. 476).*

### **Course Goals**

1. To implement a research study (based on a research proposal completed in SWRK 272T, Project/Thesis Seminar) that contributes to social work practice knowledge
2. To collect and analyze data for the research study, using methods appropriate to the research question/hypothesis and the student's research paradigm.
3. To provide a concrete research experience that also demonstrates sensitivity and understanding of the impact of culture, ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age.
4. To demonstrate compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics and CSUF human subjects guidelines in data collection, analysis, and the reporting of findings.
5. To complete a written report that includes a problem statement, literature review, methodology, data analysis, and conclusions/recommendations. The final report must conform to the style guidelines issued by the American Psychological Association (Fourth Edition).

### **Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

Students will demonstrate through the written production of a project or thesis the ability to:

- 1.1 Complete a problem statement that indicates the purpose of the study, the problem's link to social work practice, and the scope of the problem addressed.
- 1.2 Relate research findings to a theoretical literature review and/or a conceptual model and an empirical literature review.
- 1.3 Implement research methodology to test hypotheses or to answer researchable questions.
- 1.4 Use a completed and faculty approved research proposal to guide data collection, data analysis, and final report writing in consultation with project/thesis chair and readers.
- 2.1 Implement research design and data collection strategies that are consistent with the research questions and epistemological paradigms.
- 2.2 Implement data collection methods that maximize the validity and reliability of findings within the paradigm used.
- 2.2 Implement data analysis methods that are appropriate for the research question addressed and the concepts and variables measured.

- 2.3 Use computer technology and software to analyze data as appropriate.
- 2.5 Interpret findings from the data analysis and present them appropriately using charts, graphs, or narrative.
- 3.1 Incorporate culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age in the conceptualization of a social work problem.
- 3.2 Incorporate culture, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age in the design of the research study.
- 3.3 Incorporate culture, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age in the researcher's interaction with research subjects and the development of human subjects protections.
- 3.4 Implement instrumentation, data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures that are population specific and culturally appropriate to accurately incorporate the values, behaviors, cultural symbols, knowledge, and perspectives of the populations studied.
- 4.1 Implement a human subjects protocol that protects the confidentiality, privacy, and safety of research subjects.
- 4.2 Implement procedures to protect vulnerable populations at-risk. Most importantly, procedures must be developed to protect members of populations who may not be able to freely give "informed consent" to participate in the study (such as children, people with mental disabilities, and prisoners).
- 4.3 Develop and apply appropriate methods for storing data so that the identities of research subjects are protected.
- 5.1 Summarize research findings and link them to previous research in the field.
- 5.2 Based on findings propose a solution for the identified problem that is consistent with the research findings.
- 5.3 Describe the implications of the findings for social work practice, theory, social welfare policy, and future research.
- 5.4 Identify the strengths and limitations of the research project.
- 5.5 Report research findings with the quality of writing, format, and content that meet the standards appropriate for publication in a scholarly social work journal. The format for the project/thesis must conform to the style described in Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.).

## **Course Content**

- A. Statement of Purpose/Questions/Goals
  - 1. What is the purpose of your project/thesis?
  - 2. What are the primary research questions/goals?
  - 3. What is the scope of the problem to be addressed?
  
- B. Statement of Implications
  - 1. What are the implications of your project/thesis for social work practice?
  - 2. How can your project/thesis address existing needs?
  
- C. Statement of Theoretical/Conceptual Framework (applicable for quantitative and descriptive studies).
  - 1. What theories/conceptual frameworks exist which can help to explain how the variables in your project/thesis operate?
  - 2. How does theory suggest that the variables may be associated or related to one another?
  - 3. What hypotheses or research questions are offered linked to your study questions and are based upon theoretical literature?

For qualitative studies, address the following issues:

- 1. Description of value assumptions and approaches inherent in various types of qualitative research (applicable for qualitative studies only).
  
  - 2. Describe the limitations of previous theoretical frameworks used to study this research problem. (For example, if your study involves a feminist approach for research on women in prison you might describe the methodological assumptions behind this approach and review previous literature that explores why women are incarcerated. The limitations of this literature can be used to justify the use of a feminist research approach to this topic area.)
  
  - 3. Identify the primary research questions and concepts addressed.
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- D. Review of Relevant Empirical Literature
    - 1. How has the literature defined the major variables or concepts that areas addressed by your project/thesis?
  
    - 2. What previous studies have addressed these areas and what findings currently exist?
  
    - 4. Describe the limitations of previous empirical literature in relation to this topic area. Identify any “gaps” in the literature including those that may pertain to specific subpopulations or cultural groups. Justify the need for the study.
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- E. Methodology
    - 1. What method will you employ to answer your research questions, test your hypotheses, or achieve you project/ thesis goals.

2. Define your:
  - a. Concepts/variables (as applicable)
  - b. Research design.
  - c. Measurement approach.
  - d. Sampling strategy.
  - e. Data collection process.
  - f. Methodological limitations
  - g. Human subjects protections.
  
3. What data analysis methods were used to obtain your results?

F. Findings, Results, Conclusions:

1. Present appropriate data, graphs or charts, or construct a written narrative using to describe your results
2. Was the hypothesis confirmed or were the research questions adequately addressed with the data collected? If not, why?
3. What are the major findings/results/conclusions from your project/thesis?
4. Are your findings consistent with the previous literature?
5. How can the findings be used?
6. How do the findings contribute to social work theory?
7. What are the implications of the findings for social work practice?
8. Do the findings suggest that any changes in government or agency policies are needed?
9. What further research/work needs to be done within the topic area?

G. Reference List

- H. Appendix (research instrument, consent forms, related documents, charts, graphs, coding information, human subjects approvals, agency permissions, informed consent forms, letters of transmittal, and miscellaneous material not placed within the text).

**Required Purchases - Text**

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).

### Grading Criteria

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Met Conditions</b>	<b>Conditions Not Met</b>
<b>1.</b>	Problem statement provides information about the scope and origin of the problem (Minimum of 5-10 reference sources).		
<b>2.</b>	Problem statement links the problem to social work practice and describes the purpose of the study.		
<b>3.</b>	Problem statement clearly identifies the approach to research or the research paradigm used to conduct the study; the unit of analysis is identified.		
<b>4.</b>	Theoretical Framework identifies recent literature (less than 10 years old) that contains information about cause & effect relationships that pertain to the problem (quantitative approach), the strengths and weakness of this literature or offer information about factors expected to be associated with the problem (descriptive study). <sup>a</sup> For qualitative research or needs assessment studies, information on research gaps may be substituted using literature that describes appropriate approaches for conducting research among underserved populations (for example, women or ethnic communities. Give evidence that supports that findings may vary among different population groups.		
<b>5.</b>	Theoretical literature review contains a minimum of 10-20 reference sources.		
<b>6.</b>	Empirical literature review contains a critical review of research published during the last 10 years using a minimum of 20 empirical articles from professional journals, books, or research reports published by government and private organizations. <sup>b</sup>		
<b>7.</b>	Methodology section provides a realistic and concrete framework for research design, sampling, data collection, and analysis; choice of methods is logically derived from the student's review of the literature and the purpose of the study.		
<b>8.</b>	Research questions/hypotheses are clearly identified and are derived from the theoretical and empirical literature.		
<b>9.</b>	Primary research concepts are clearly defined and operationalized.		
<b>10.</b>	Human subjects protections are described that are realistic and will protect at-risk populations and provide confidentiality to respondents. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure informed consent.		
<b>11.</b>	Data collection employs one of the following methods: content analysis, observation, surveys, interviews, or		

	statistical analysis of existing data sets.		
<b>12.</b>	Student has taken appropriate steps to ensure that research instruments, human subjects material, and data collection instruments are appropriate in terms of language, cultural sensitivity, and social class.		
<b>13.</b>	An appropriate research instrument has been chosen or constructed.		
<b>14.</b>	Student has provided information on the validity/reliability of the instrument used or has taken steps to assess validity/reliability of constructed instruments.		
<b>15.</b>	Sufficient data has been collected to answer the research question. (Minimum of 10 subjects for a comprehensive qualitative study or 30 subjects for a quantitative study).		
<b>15.</b>	Data analysis methods are utilized that are appropriate for the concepts and variables measured. Appropriate use is made of charts, graphs, and written narrative.		
<b>17.</b>	Computer technology and software is used as appropriate to analyze data.		
<b>18.</b>	Conclusion chapter summarizes major findings and links these findings to the previous literature in the field		
<b>19.</b>	Conclusion chapter contains recommendations for social work practice or social policy that are derived from the study's findings. Implications for future research as also described.		
<b>20.</b>	APA style used for text, including proper format for citations and headings.		
<b>21.</b>	APA style is used for the reference list.		
<b>22.</b>	Writing style is adequate to communicate concepts and findings.		
<b>23.</b>	Text of the report (exclusive of reference list and appendices) contains a minimum of 50 pages.		

a. In a small number of instances, classic articles or texts that are more than 10 years old may be substituted. It is also appropriate to include references to legislation, regulations, and other programmatic materials or newspaper accounts that are used to describe legislative or political processes (primary source material). Note: this is only permitted for policy analysis projects.

b. One or two classic studies may be appropriate.

20 or more criteria	A
17 –19 criteria	B
14-16 criteria	C
12-13 criteria	D
Less than 11 criteria	F

## **Course Policies**

**Late Papers:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the respective due dates. Late assignments will be accepted, however, the assigned grade will be decreased by 5 points for each 24 hour period beyond the due date/time. An assignment may be re-submitted/re-written, after consultation with the instructor, ONLY IF 1) the assignment was originally turned in on time and 2) the original grade received is a “D” or lower (equivalent in points for the assignment). The final grade for the assignment will be an average of the original grade and re-evaluation. The student must request the opportunity to re-work the assignment within a week of receiving the graded paper and consult with the instructor re: areas of improvement and a re-submission date.

**Attendance and Evaluation:** The instructor has developed this course to be strenuous and intensive to achieve individual learning regarding human behavior and the social environment. It is anticipated that everyone takes this course seriously. All assigned reading must be read prior to class. University policy supports the learning process with the expectation of class attendance. Two (2) absences will be allowed without deduction; absences *for any reason* beyond the two (2) allowed absences will result in a 2-point deduction from your total points for each ½ to full class session missed and 1 point deduction for up to ½ class session missed. Note that, with excessive absences, this can result in a loss of more than the 10 participation points from your total. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on any announcements made and to catch up with the content that was missed (most handouts and important announcements will be posted on Blackboard but you should check with me and your classmates). If you must be absent from class, I would appreciate being notified by phone or email.

**Use of electronic devices (pagers, cell phones, etc.):** To minimize class disruptions, please turn these devices off during the class. If you are required to be “on-call,” please advise me at the beginning of class, turn off the “audio,” and sit near the door, so you can exit with minimal disruption to the class. Please advise me if you would like to use your laptop in class, record the lecture etc. Websurfing and reading email during class are not allowed.

## **University Policies**

**Students with Disabilities:** Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact Services to Students with Disabilities in the building across from Madden Library (278-2811).

## **Code of Academic Integrity – Honor Code**

Members of the CSU Fresno academic community adhere to principles of academic integrity and mutual respect while engaged in university work and related activities. CSU Fresno students will:

- a. Understand or seek clarification about expectations for academic integrity (including no cheating, plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration) as noted by faculty and on class syllabi, university catalogue, university web sites and other referenced sources. (APM 235, 241)
- b. Sign a statement at the end of all exams and assignments that “I have done my own work and have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work.”
- c. Take responsibility to monitor academic dishonesty in any form and to report it to the instructor or other appropriate official for action.

Referenced Policies from the University's *Academic*

APM 235--Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism

<http://www.csufresno.edu/aps/apm/235.pdf>

APM 241--Policy on Course Syllabi and Grading

<http://www.csufresno.edu/aps/apm/241CourseSyllabiandGradingMay2004>

APM 336--University Statement on Faculty Rights and

<http://www.csufresno.edu/aps/apm/336.pdf>

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** “Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term 'cheating' not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work.” Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the university. For more information on the University's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the [Class Schedule](#) (Policy/Legal Statements) or the [University Catalog](#) (University policies).

**Computers:** “At California State University, Fresno, computers and communications links to remote resources are recognized as being integral to the education and research experience. Every student is required to have his/her own computer or have other personal access to a workstation (including a modem and a printer) with all the recommended software. The minimum and recommended standards for the workstations and software, which may vary by academic major, are updated periodically and are available from [Information Technology Services](#) or the University Bookstore. In the curriculum and class assignments, students are presumed to have 24-hour access to a computer workstation and the necessary communication links to the University's information resources.”

**Disruptive Classroom Behavior:** “The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. ... Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop and understanding of the community in which they live . . . Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class.”

**Copyright policy:** Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of those who have produced the material. The copy in this course has been provided for private study, scholarship, or research. Other uses may require permission from the copyright holder. The user of this work is responsible for adhering to copyright law of the U.S. (Title 17, U.S. Code). To help you familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its [copyright web page](#). Digital Campus course web sites contains material protected by copyrights held by the instructor, other individuals or institutions. Such material is used for educational purposes in accord with copyright law and/or with permission given by the owners of the original material. You may download one copy of the materials on any single computer for non-commercial, personal, or

educational purposes only, provided that you (1) do not modify it, (2) use it only for the duration of this course, and (3) include both this notice and any copyright notice originally included with the material. Beyond this use, no material from the course web site may be copied, reproduced, republished, uploaded, posted, transmitted, or distributed in any way without the permission of the original copyright holder. The instructor assumes no responsibility for individuals who improperly use copyrighted material placed on the web site.

**Subject to Change**

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.