PROGRAM EVALUATION
SOCIAL WORK 831/PSYCHOLOGY 773/SOCIOLOGY 865
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on theoretical and strategic issues in designing and implementing formative or summative evaluations of preventive interventions including assessment of fidelity to a model and assessment of impact, with special attention to the effects of the socio-cultural context in which the intervention takes place. Our working definition of culture is the sum total of the knowledge passed from generation to generation within a given society including language, religion, political structure, economic and legal systems, norms of behavior, ideas about illness and healing (Castillo, 1999). Our focus on socio-cultural context includes attention to the interface with race, gender, and poverty. Topics include: (1) translation of theory into measurement and specification of variables, (2) experimental designs, (3) appropriate development of measurement tools that are both stable (reliable) and sensitive to change, (4) alternative data sources (observational, self-report, archival data including clinical records and management information systems, focus group, key informant), (5) development of timely and ongoing stakeholder and community involvement in design and implementation of evaluation, (6) ethical issues, and (7) where appropriate, sampling issues.

The course is interactive. We will use a mix of lecture, guest lecture and student led discussion to provide examples and applications of course concepts. The Journal of Social Work Education has a call for papers relevant to this class; those enrolled in class via the SSW may opt to use the opportunity to write the final paper as manuscript for submission to this issue – the class paper is due at the end of the term, the special issue manuscripts are due in the beginning of Feb, giving those who wish to time to revise for submission. A copy of the call for papers is included in the description of final paper options.
COURSE OBJECTIVES:
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. Understand implications of social and cultural factors for program evaluation.
2. Assess the evaluability of a program.
3. Develop experimental and quasi-experimental program evaluation designs.
4. Select or develop appropriate measurement tools.
5. Understand strengths and weakness of a variety of data sources.
6. Choose relevant theories and operationalize relevant constructs.
7. Identify stakeholders and their role in evaluation.
8. Understand methods to enhance utilization of evaluation.
9. Have a critical grasp of ethical issues at each stage of the evaluation process, including a working understanding of means to address these issues.

TEXTBOOK:

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Course grade is based on class participation (40%) and a final paper (60%).
Participation includes:
(1) Active participation in class discussions (20%)
(2) Leadership in class discussion – two students will lead discussion each week. To lead discussion, each student will select 2 class sessions and prepare 1-2 discussion questions on the assigned readings that must be posted on Course Tools no later than noon on Sunday preceding that week’s Monday class; the students will then lead discussion of these questions, including feedback from the week’s lecture or presentation (20%)
The final paper includes two components leading up to the final paper, worth 60% of the final grade:
(3) A short paper draft (5-8 pages) due midway through the semester.
(4) A short verbal presentation (10 minutes) on the last class period that overviews the evaluation and highlights issues for class discussion.
(5) Final paper about 15 pages not including references. Students are expected to build on and not duplicate work from other classes.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR PAPERS:
Short draft:
a. Select a prevention program of interest either from the published literature, one the student is working with or has worked with (or for Prevention Trainees) one the student has designed.
b. Provide a concise description of the program and its operation, including purpose, intended participants, staffing, setting, activities, service intensity, etc.
c. Construct a logic model which charts a process evaluation what does the intervention entail, who does what, where, how.
d. Include a description of how culture and other social context features are relevant.
Final paper: *Evaluation Design for a Prevention Intervention*

The final paper is expected to be about 15 pages long (not including references, figures, or tables) and cover the following:

a. Background information – concisely provide necessary information on the agency, the program, context, etc. adapted from the draft paper.
b. Specify the program theory, that is, the mechanisms through which the intervention is expected to produce its intended outcomes; this includes a model of the independent and dependent variables, the proximal and distal outcomes, mediating and moderating factors.
c. Present the focus or aims of the evaluation study, including specific hypotheses or evaluation questions. Provide a rationale for why this focus has been selected.
d. Overview of the evaluation design (experimental or quasi-experimental) and a rationale for its selection, including how the evaluation design will operate, selection of participants, etc.
e. Identification of indicators that will be utilized, rationale for their selection, how and when indicators will be obtained. You do not need to specifically identify which scales, measures or instruments will be used. However, you should provide definitions of the key dependent and independent variables, both in conceptual and operational terms. Discuss possible alternative sources of information. Specify how program fidelity will be assessed.
f. Detail how culture and social context are handled in design and measurement. Identify possible limitations, including participant availability, likely biases or confounds, the effects of gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc., considerations on evaluation outcomes. Discuss the feasibility of the evaluation design; what barriers are likely to be encountered? How will these be overcome?
g. Discuss potential ethical issues in evaluation design, data collection or analysis.
h. Describe the plan for involving stakeholders and for disseminating results.

Alternative final paper: Manuscript for Special Issue of Social Work Education, Promoting and sustaining evidence-based practice (*Guest Editors: Harold Briggs, Barbara Friesen, Nancy Koroloff, and Janet Walker*)

For those of you in the SSW who would like to submit to The Journal of Social Work Education, I am happy to work with individuals or small groups in developing a manuscript as final paper. The focus is on evidence-based practice but of course evaluation is an evidence-based practice so this should work well. The focus is on the role of social workers and social work education in promoting and sustaining evidence-based practice. Submitted manuscripts should demonstrate relevance to social work education. All authors are encouraged to address diversity in their manuscripts. Examples of topics include:

- Historical context and rationale for evidence-based practice;
- Evidence-based practice and cultural communities;
- Effective approaches for preparing social workers to use evidence to guide practice decision-making including linking classroom to field
- Ethics and evidence-based practice;
• The policy context for evidence-based practice;
• Adoption, diffusion, and maintenance of evidence-based practice; Challenges to the implementation of evidence-based practice
• Role and use of theory in evidence-based practice
• The future of evidence-based practice.

Four copies of the manuscript and a PC-formatted disk with the word file, identified as submission for the special issue are to be mailed to Journal of Social Work Education, CSWE, 1725 Duke Street, Suite 500, Alexandria, VA 22314-3457, with RECEIPT by February 1, 2006.

EXPECTATIONS:
Class interactions - All students are encouraged to fully participate in class, especially if they do not understand the material. This evaluation course should be a fully interactive one; no question will be regarded as a stupid one by the instructor. (However, the instructor will reserve the prerogative of asking students to meet separately if discussion or questioning is so extensive that it infringes on the topics which other students need to have covered.) Please provide the instructor with feedback if points are not clear or if presentations are not providing useful information. The classroom should be an open forum for free exchange of differences of opinion and for discussions of these differences and for promoting understanding.

Attendance - Students are expected to attend every class session. Students should inform the instructor in advance of expected absences which are unavoidable. If any emergency arises, students are expected to notify me or leave a message at my office as soon as possible.

Written products – Written products are to use APA American Psychological Association formatting.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

1. 9/12 - Overview of the class, overview of program evaluation

   In this first class, I present an overview with examples of the issues that program evaluation is meant to address. Along the way, the goals and purpose of program evaluation will be discussed and types of evaluation including outcome research, efficacy vs. effectiveness vs. replication evaluation and links between evaluation and culture/diversity will be noted. All of these issues will remain themes throughout the semester.

   Readings:
   Chapter 1 of the Rossi text *An Overview of Program Evaluation* provides just that, a simple summary. The readings are more detailed, providing an ethical/values frame, a description of methods controversy, and an explicit outline of cultural/majority-minority generalizability issues that is well thought through and worth a more careful read.
2. 9/19 - Formulating and assessing need: Is there a program/what would one look like?

Under conditions of uncertainty, is it better to act or to refrain from action? This is one of the critical questions for those who provide human services – doing nothing may mean continuing the status quo, or doing something (‘treatment as usual’) may be the way to continue the status quo. Literature on regret suggests that we are more upset if things go awry when we have done something different than if things go awry when we did the usual thing. This suggests that creating a new program requires clear documentation that it is needed while simply running existing programs may not. When the ‘treatment’ or program has never been evaluated, which is more ethical? Can all programs be evaluated? In this session, one goal is to outline how need for a program is assessed and a second, linked goal is to outline how needs assessment is linked to an outline of a program to be provided.

The University of Michigan requires that researchers receive basic training in ethical treatment of human subjects by reading through materials describing the rationale for protections and history of protocols to provide protections. The website is http://www.research.umich.edu/training/peerrs.html, anyone who has not yet become certified should do so. Program Evaluation involves human subjects as recipients of service or as those influenced by policies and programs, we will be discussing values and ethics concerns throughout the semester.

**Assignment:** Complete IRB certification (send in the confirmation email)

**Readings:**
The Rossi book provides a clear overview of the issue of needs assessment, while the Chandola paper describes a particular attempt to analyze antecedents of needs as a basis for making program development decisions.
Rossi et al., Chapter 4 - Assessing the Need for a Program


3. 9/26 - Program theory: similarities/differences with lab experiments and survey research

In this session we continue the discussion begun in session 2 on the nature of the program to be evaluated, defining the term ‘program theory.’ Programs are to have an underlying, logical, and plausible theory that will provide key constructs to be tested to determine if the program had the expected effects and produced the expected outcomes. Parallels and differences between program theory and social science theory more generally will be discussed.

Readings:
Chapter 5 of the Rossi text, Expressing and Assessing Program Theory provides a general overview as well as an introduction to logic models which will continue to be discussed in session 4. The Bickman article provides explicit discussion of program theory, attempting to distinguish theories of risk and theories of change, both of which are needed for program evaluation.

Rossi et al., Chapter 5 Expressing and Assessing Program Theory


4. 10/3 - Process/formative evaluation and logic models

This session focuses on designing and drawing logic models to make sense of the process to be evaluated. We will work in groups to develop logic models of programs of interest to students. Combining the description from Rossi Chapter 5 and Kellogg, groups will decide what to include and how to present it, students interested in working toward a journal article submission should consider using this time to develop an integrated model during this time. To set the stage, at the beginning of class, each student will be asked to briefly describe the planned focus of his or her final paper.

Readings:
The chapter provides an overview of the functions to be monitoring in addition to the intervention itself. The Kellogg Foundation handout provides the models they accept as logic models, though all are clearly limited.

Rossi et al., Chapter 6 Assessing and Monitoring Program Process
5. **10/10 - Monitoring change, assessing program fidelity**

This session seeks to consider the nuts and bolts of assessing whether the intervention actually occurs as planned and whether behaviors actually change as planned. How is fidelity assessed, how might questions asked influence answers given, how might culture influence this?

**Readings:**
The Rossi chapter sets the stage by outlining what needs to be measured and monitored. Harachi reading provides a general overview of issues whereas the Ialongo reading provides a specific example.

Rossi et al., Chapter 7 *Measuring and Monitoring Program Outcomes*


**OPTIONAL PAPER DUE:** Present Program Theory or Logic Model

6. **10/24 - Evaluation designs: experimental and quasi-experimental design**

In this session we discuss what experimental and quasi-experimental design looks like when applied not to a lab experiment or a survey but to program evaluation.

**Readings:**
The Rossi chapters provide clear and simple description of the issues, while the readings focus on the actual process issues and pitfalls.

Rossi et al., Chapter 8 *Assessing Program Impact: Randomized Field Experiments*
Rossi et al., Chapter 9 *Assessing Program Impact: Alternative Designs*


7. **10/31 - Cost Benefit Analysis**

**Guest Speaker: E. Michael Foster**

After deciding that a program is needed and determining what programs might make sense given the problem to be addressed by the program, evaluators must consider which of the possible interventions are likely to be cost effective – that is provide benefits that are real at a cost that is sustainable. This session focuses on figuring out if the program is worth the cost of running it. Clearly this is an important aspect of program evaluation and requires a set of skills often ignored in more basic evaluations. Our guest speaker will address these issues and has provided a reading list useful for actually carrying out cost-benefit analyses.

**Readings:**
The readings for class are highlighted with an asterisk, the others are provided for those who wish to spend more time on this issue for the final paper or other work. (Chapter 11 in Rossi provides a simple overview).

*Rossi, et al., Chapter 11 *Measuring Efficiency*


8. 11/7 - Outcomes – practical significance

This session provides an overview of what to do with the data collected and what effects likely mean.

Readings:
The Rossi chapter, as always, provides a simple and coherent overview. The two articles deal with issues not typically of much interest for those not involved in evaluation of programs and interventions.

Rossi et al., Chapter 10 Detecting, Interpreting and Analyzing Program Effects


9. 11/14 - Outcomes: asking questions, getting answers

Part of program evaluation almost invariably involves obtaining self-reports of behavior or third-party reports of behavior. Participants typically answer our questions but the answers we hope to receive and the ones we get are not necessarily the same. This session provides an overview of what we know about influences on how questions are understood and what influences responses provided, integrating research on social cognition, conversational logic, and cultural/cross-cultural psychology.

Readings:


Fuchs, M. (in press.) Children and adolescents as respondents: experiments on question order, response order, scale effects and the effect of numeric values associated to response options.

10. **11/21 - Presentation of a prevention program evaluation: School-to-Jobs**

The next three sessions provide examples of evaluations of preventive intervention programs. This first session focuses on the program I developed, focused on reducing risk of school drop-out and underperformance in low income and minority youth. I will describe the process of setting up the evaluation (obtaining consent, randomization, training, fidelity assessment, and outcome assessment), theory of change, the intervention, and the evaluation – including direct effects, mediated effects, and moderation analyses. Readings include articles describing the intervention and documenting outcomes as well as fidelity assessment checklists.

**Readings:**

Oyserman, D., Bybee, D. & Terry, K. (pending revisions). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* (will be posted on Ctools when available)


11. **11/28 - Presentation of a prevention program evaluation: Family Intervention Programs**

**Guest Speaker: Mark Eddy**

This is the second session in which an example of a prevention research program is used to study how programs are evaluated. In this session, our guest speaker is Mark Eddy, from the Oregon Social Learning Center. During his career, he has been involved in the development and evaluation of a number of family-based programs to reduce risk and promote positive outcomes for children and teens. He will provide a framework for development and a process for assessment of family-based intervention with emphasis on his recent meta-analytic synthesis of what is known about the effectiveness of family-based prevention.
(Readings will be provided by speaker)

12.  12/5 - Presentation of a prevention program evaluation: Violence Prevention in Schools

I will present the work of Rowell Huesmann, who was a key methodologist on an interesting study focused on reducing violence risk in schools – the underlying rationale, to work both at school and with families at home, seemed reasonable, yet published evaluation results suggest that the intervention was not very successful in reducing violence. The goal of the discussion is to examine the program theory and evaluation plan as an example of how program evaluation of preventive intervention occurs.

Readings:


13.  12/12 - Student presentations

This is the final class and so the goal is to provide a summative experience. Each student or student group will have about 15 minutes to present a targeted overview of their work. The goal is to present briefly the evaluation or journal paper, targeting a key question for class input.