Course Description:

This course will cover beginning level evaluation that builds on basic research knowledge as a method of assessing social work practice and strengthening clients, communities and the social programs, and the systems that serve them. It thus addresses the evaluation of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services. Students will learn to assess and apply evaluation methods from various perspectives, including scientific, ethical, multicultural, and social justice perspectives.

Course Content:

This course will focus on the direct application of the analytical skills associated with developing and implementing evaluation designs that are appropriate for social work practice. Students will examine the evaluation of social work programs with particular attention to populations at risk, including people of color, women, the poor, and gay and lesbian groups. Students will be introduced to models of evaluation derived from social science and social work theory and research. They will learn to apply these models as they develop skills in critically assessing evaluation methods and their fit with the social context.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and choose the type of evaluation that is appropriate to answer questions consonant with a program’s developmental stage.
2. Specify a program for evaluation and its theory of change.
3. Recognize and apply evaluation and data collection methods that are appropriate to the evaluation context.
4. Plan an evaluation of social work practice.
5. Understand dissemination strategies that engage the policy and/or practice communities with the results and findings of evaluation activities in order to foster changes in polices and programs.
6. Critically evaluate existing evaluation studies for their consistency with the values reflected in the curricular themes.

Course Design:

The course will use diverse pedagogical methods, including lectures, participatory discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and experiential exercises related to course materials. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity**: Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence evaluation processes and outcomes. Because a collaborative, participatory process is critical to evaluation of social work interventions, attention to diversity is imperative for proper implementation of evaluation in social work contexts.

- **Social Justice and Social Change**: Students will develop the capacity to analyze the impact and efficiency of services and policies as they relate to social change and social justice. Participatory, collaborative, change-oriented evaluation processes, and appropriate dissemination activities, can promote the achievement of social justice and change and therefore are emphasized in the class. Also important are an examination of the role of power in evaluation, and the development of knowledge, skills, and capacities that evaluation participants can mobilize to shift imbalances of power and resources.

- **Promotion and Prevention**: Students will develop the capacity to develop and evaluate prevention and promotion, as well as rehabilitation programs, designed to reduce risk of onset of problems and promote healthy development.

- **Social Science**: Students will strengthen their capacity to use theoretical and empirical social science literature to develop and understand whether interventions are appropriately designed and scientifically sound.
Course Assignments and Expectations

Students are expected to complete all reading assignments prior to the appropriate class and to use them as the basis for informed participation in class discussions. It is expected that students will submit work on schedule. Failure to meet these expectations may result in reduction in grades.

It is further expected that students will attend all classes unless legitimate and/or special reasons exist for absences or tardiness. Legitimate absences include those due to health problems that can be documented, unanticipated family emergencies, and observance of religious holydays. Any such absences or tardiness should be discussed directly with the course instructor, and students must make arrangements to complete class work which is missed. Students with more than two unexcused absences may risk failure.

Course expectations include completion of four assignments, that will be weighted in the following manner along with class participation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEERRS Certification</td>
<td>(Due Sept. 23)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Specification</td>
<td>(Due October 28)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement Critique</td>
<td>(Due November 4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling and Design Plan</td>
<td>(Due November 11)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Report</td>
<td>(Due December 2)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mock IRB Application</td>
<td>(Due December 2)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
<td>(Due Dec. 2 &amp; 9)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>(Due December 9)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>(Ongoing)</td>
<td>10</td>
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**PEERRS Certification**: Students will complete the University of Michigan Program for Education and Evaluation in Responsible Research and Scholarship (PEERRS) training modules. PEERRS is a web-based instruction and certification program for members of the University community engaged in or associated with research in order to help participants improve their knowledge and awareness of responsible research practices. The modules are: (1) *Foundations of Responsible Research Conduct* - publication/authorship, intellectual property, conflict of interest, signatures, plagiarism, misconduct reporting; (2) *Research Administration* - UM procedures/forms, PI responsibilities, pre- and post-award activities, federal regulations, important contacts; (3) *Conflict of Interest* - definitions and recognizing potential conflicts, responsibilities toward students/colleagues, consulting and conflict of commitment, sponsored project and technology transfer issues; and (4) *Human Research* - basic module provided in three versions -- clinical research, health sciences and social/behavioral sciences. It covers definition of human subjects research, why human subjects research is regulated, regulatory and ethical responsibilities of the PI, IRB, and University.

Instructions for taking the modules to become certified are found in the following website: http://www.research.umich.edu/training/peerrs.html#modules
**Program Specification:** Students will work with their field instructor to select a program or problem within the agency for the purpose of writing a proposal that would lead to an evaluation project. Students will design a logic model for the program and will answer a series of questions about the program including: 1) the client and/or system conditions that the program attempts to address; 2) a delineation of the major program model, including its assumptions, theoretical base, empirical base, and practice rationale; 3) a description of the major program processes and/or activities; 3) a listing of the program’s stated goals and objectives and 5) an enumeration of both the expected immediate and long-term outcomes and a rationale for why these are expected to occur. A handout with more details regarding this assignment will be distributed in class several weeks prior to the due date.

**Measurement Critique:** Students will be asked to read an article or report about a process or outcomes evaluation in order to identify an instrument that they might use in the evaluation of the program described in the first assignment. They will then be asked to discuss the populations/samples upon whom the instrument was developed and/or standardized; the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the measure; and the instrument’s sensitivity to change and ease of administration and completion. A handout with more details regarding this assignment will be distributed in class several weeks prior to the due date.

**Sampling and Design Plan:** Students will be asked to identify a design and sampling plan that might be use in the evaluation of the program. The design part of this paper will include a description of the research design which will be used. Students will also be asked to discuss the strengths and limitations of the chosen design in terms of its ability to answer the evaluation question under study. In the sampling part of this paper, students will be asked to formally identify the population of interest and the sample they would use in their evaluation, including a discussion of the type of sampling to be utilized, a description of how this sampling technique will be implemented, and anticipated problems in gathering the sample or with sample attrition? A handout with more details regarding this assignment will be distributed in class several weeks prior to the due date.

**Data Analysis Report:** A number of hands-on activities have been designed to help students acquire an understanding of data collection, coding/recoding of variables, data management, data analysis, dealing with missing data, and reporting of results. Some of these activities include entering data into a software program (e.g., SPSS), downloading zipped data from email communication, conducting internet-based analyses of large datasets, analyzing data with various statistical software programs, creating and interpreting graphs with SPSS and Excel, and writing a report based on the results of these analyses. A handout with more details regarding this assignment will be distributed in class several weeks prior to the due date.

**Mock IRB Project Application:** Students will submit a “mock” application to the IRB for their proposed project in order to have hands on experience with this important process. Students will need to design an appropriate consent form as part of their study and IRB application process. Applications will be submitted via the “sandbox” option provided by eResearch. Go to: http://www.umich.edu/~eresinfo/sandbox.htm
**Class Presentation, Participation, and Discussion:** Each student will have 20’ to present the content of their final paper “evaluation proposal” to the class. Presentations are expected to be formal as if students were presenting their proposal to a group of stakeholders that are considering funding the proposal or making a decision about whether to fund or cut a project based on the evaluation. A handout with more details regarding this assignment will be distributed in class several weeks prior to the due date.

**Final Paper – Evaluation Proposal:** Building upon and augmenting the work already done during the semester, and utilizing readings and classroom activities, students will be asked to present a final evaluation proposal. It will incorporate information from the program description, measurement, and design and sample reports already completed. In addition, students will be asked to do a number of additional tasks, including an articulation of the major research questions, the assumptions of the proposed study, the probable data collection strategy, as well as an analytic plan. In addition, students will be asked to discuss the limitations of their proposed study, as well as to report on how they propose to use program stakeholders in at each stage of the evaluation process. The final paper should be about 20 pages, including title (cover page) and references (no less than 10 articles), and should follow either the Vancouver Style or APA style of citations. The style is not as important as is consistency.

All assignments will have an outline for students to follow. Since each assignment relates to an important step in the evaluation process, and builds on the assignment that precedes it, students are urged to contact the instructor if they wish to discuss their ideas prior to submission or to discuss issues after their papers are returned to them. It is strongly suggested that students follow the outline provided by the instructor when completing each of the assignments, as these will be detailed and provide the student with a blueprint for successful completion. Assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class section — late papers will be accepted only at the instructor’s discretion.

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and, when appropriate, use appropriate referencing and bibliographic formats. Papers should have page numbers and should be proofread prior to submission, since the quality of the paper will be impacted by its visual presentation, the use of proper grammar and spelling, and other ‘pride of authorship’ issues.

**Attendance/Participation:** Attendance is a basic requisite for participation in this class. Participation is important because it serves to address students questions and to clarify information regarding material covered and assignments, provides feedback to the instructor in terms of how well students are learning, and provides the opportunity for the instructor to modify activities accordingly. Also, the simple activity of sharing ideas from various points of view enhances learning. Further, prior research has shown that grades are correlated with attendance, perhaps for the above reasons. Assessment of your participation does not depend solely on the quantity of your involvement in class discussion and class exercises, but also on the quality of your contributions.

A sign up sheet will be distributed during class for you to sign up. Make sure to print your name clearly. Attendance will be graded as follows:
Missed classes | Points accrued
--- | ---
2 or less | 10
3 – 4 | 8
5 – 6 | 6
7 – 8 | 4
9 – 11 | 2

Grading Criteria For Written Assignments and Presentations: Each written assignment is given a letter grade: (1) the grade of A+ will be given to high-quality work that clearly goes beyond the content of the course and the expertise students are expected to master. Other grades will be determined based on the following criteria: (2) grades of A or A- are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates very good mastery of content but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades is determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student; (3) a grade of B+ is given to work which is judged to be very good -- this grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material being tested in the assignment; (4) a grade of B is given to student work which meets the basic requirements of the assignment -- it denotes that the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations; (5) a grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations; (6) variations of the C grade reflect a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement; (7) grades between D and F are applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student's performance on the assignment. Late assignments accepted by the instructor will be graded down by at least one step in the grading scheme.

Final Grades

Final grades will be determined by summing the points earned for each assignment, and rounding the score to the nearest letter grade, with some discretion left to the instructor to round up if other factors come into play. Issues of student tardiness will, if necessary, be factored into this score after this calculation has been completed. The following grades will be assigned based on the percentage of points accumulated:


REQUIRED TEXTS/MATERIALS


A list of readings and dataset will also be distributed on the first day of class.
TOPICAL OUTLINE

Session 1 – Sept. 9, 2005
Topics: Introductions, Class Overview and a Discussion of Program Evaluation.

Class activities: 1. Detailed discussion of assignments.
2. Distribution of data in SPSS via a zipped file by email.
3. Introduction/review of SPSS and other statistical programs (e.g., STATA, SAS, EPIINFO, SUDAAN, EXCEL).

Session 2 – Sept. 16, 2005

Class activities: 1. Discussion of an evaluation project and mock submission of an IRB application. Go to: http://www.irb.research.umich.edu/IRB_Health/New/background.html#applicationprocess
2. Conducting literature reviews and locating instruments for the purpose of evaluation and grant writing. Guest speaker: UM SSW Librarian.
3. Examples of meta-analysis and systematic reviews.

Basic Readings: 1. Royse et al., Ch. 1-2, 13.

Session 3 – Sept. 23, 2005

Class activities: 1. Guest Speaker: Ms. Lucille Smith, Executive Director Voices of Detroit Initiative (VODI).
2. Discussion of community-based research with racial/ethnic minority populations.
3. Data entry, coding and recoding with SPSS.

Session 4 – Sept. 30, 2005

**Topics:**
Needs assessments and specifying programs and their components to develop and evaluate programs.

**Class activities:**
2. Creating logic models.
3. Data analysis exercise: Obtaining and interpreting frequency distributions.

**Basic Readings:**
1. Royse et al. Ch. 4, 13.

Session 5 – October 7, 2005

**Topics:**
Blending quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluation research. Conducting formative and process evaluations. Introduction to measurement issues in evaluation.

**Class activities:**
1. Quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze data.
2. Guest Speaker: Dr. Karen Staller will discuss qualitative methods.
3. Data analysis exercise: chi-square and t-tests.

**Basic Readings:**

Session 6 – October 14, 2005 – NO CLASS. Instructor will be in DC evaluating proposals for the Health Services and Research Administration (HRSA), U.S. Government. Students are expected to use this day to further work on their various assignments.
Session 7 – October 21, 2005

Topics: Continued discussion of formative and process evaluations and measurement issues in program evaluation. Begin discussion of research designs.

2. Example of measurement issues from the University of Michigan Student Life Survey and the Detroit Center for Research on Oral Health Disparities.
3. Discussion of pros and cons of various research designs.
4. Data analysis exercise: Graphing data and interpreting graphs and charts.

Basic Readings: 1. Royse et al. Chs. 6-9

Session 8 -- October 28, 2005

Topics: Continue discussion of single subject designs and group research designs.

Class activities: 1. Guest Speaker: JoAnne O’Rourke, MSW, Senior Research Associate-Social Sciences, ICPSR will discuss SAMHDA’s project and how archived data can be used to conduct needs assessments and program evaluation.
2. Continue discussion of pros and cons of various research designs.
3. Data analysis exercise: Conducting Internet-based statistical analyses.

Basic Readings: 1. Royse et al. Ch. 9

Session 9 — November 4, 2005

Topics: Program Monitoring and Improvement.

Class activities: 1. Examples of program monitoring and improvement activities in the State of Hawaii (e.g., school-based drug prevention program), in Florida (e.g., anti-tobacco “truth” campaign), in Detroit (Oral Health Center), and in the nation (RWJF-funded national survey of School Administrators to study the effects of school policies and activities on students’ obesity).
2. Guest Speaker: Ginny Laetz, MA, Researcher at ISR. Conducting a national evaluation of schools.
3. Data analysis exercise: Overview of ANOVA and regression techniques.

Sessions 10 & 11—November 11 & 18, 2005

Topics: Outcome evaluations. Cost analysis.

Class activities: 1. Discussion on outcome evaluations using the same examples of projects presented in Session 9.

Basic Readings: 1. Royse et al. Ch. 10.

Session 12 - November 25, 2005. THANKSGIVINGS HOLIDAY!

Sessions 13 & 14 – December 2 & 9, 2005

Topics: Pragmatic issues in evaluation research. Writing reports/grant proposals.

Class activities: 1. Student presentations.
2. Class critique and assessment of students’ presentations.
3. Final data analysis exercises.
4. Course evaluation.


LAST DAY OF CLASS: Friday, December 9, 2005. Final papers are due by NOON on or before this day.